



Leading home builder solves compliance needs and improves operational efficiency of Microsoft Exchange Server using Mimosa NearPoint



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— **Chris Formes**
IT Manager

CUSTOMER PROFILE:

Brookfield Homes is one of the 25 largest homebuilders in North America that operates in five local markets areas: San Francisco Bay Area, Southland/Los Angeles, San Diego/Riverside, and Sacramento in California, and the Washington D.C. Area.

Solution

For Brookfield Homes, Mimosa NearPoint was able to help them meet all of their major goals to improve Exchange management.

Benefits

- Meet Sarbanes-Oxley compliance requirements.
- Replace existing brick-level backups.
- Improved access to historical email.
- Reduce total Exchange storage.
- Reduce backup time.

Business Situation

For Brookfield Homes, Microsoft Exchange serves as the center of all email communication. All development sites are provisioned with full Internet access and email connectivity with the division headquarters in Costa Mesa California. A total of one hundred and fifty email accounts are managed in the Costa Mesa location on Exchange Server 2003. Prior to Exchange, the Costa Mesa division was running IBM Lotus Notes. Three years ago the email environment was migrated to Microsoft Exchange and now a total of 130 GB of email is being managed on Exchange.

Microsoft Exchange is fully integrated with the company voice messaging. “As a matter of good business practice and to reduce operational costs associated with Exchange, it became critical to find a way to protect email records and to reduce the amount of email storage,” said Chris Formes, IT Manager at Brookfield. “I analyzed our email usage and it was obvious that email contains important business information and in many cases is the only record of business decisions.”

“Brookfield is a publicly traded company and as such we are required by Sarbanes-Oxley (SOX) to preserve the email of our financial auditors for five years,” said Chris. “For preserving email and managing it with retention policies, the native features of Exchange were not enough. We needed to look for a 3rd-party solution to help us manage Exchange for compliance.”

“In addition to our compliance requirements, I felt it was also important to manage email for our own corporate record keeping. Interestingly enough, my users have come up with some creative means of their own to save email. For example, I found that my users were keeping all their sent items in the “Sent Item” folder of Outlook. In some cases, the number of email was in the tens of thousands. While this practice served the needs of the users, it has created an unnecessary storage burden on Exchange that is driving up my operational costs for Exchange.”

Brookfield users enjoy 2 GB Exchange mailboxes and executives have unlimited mailbox capacity. Daily full backups are performed and the time they take to complete is exceeding the backup window. Brick-level backups, a specialized form of Exchange backup geared for individual mailbox and message level recovery, are also performed and they currently take over 40 hours to complete. “I want to eliminate the brick-level backups all together and reduce the time of my full backups to less than two hours,” said Chris.

Mimosa NearPoint

“When I went shopping for a 3rd-party solution to help manage Exchange, my requirements included the ability to archive email for compliance, reduce overall Exchange storage and to replace my brick-level backups,” said Chris. “I was focusing my attention on an email archiving solution from Symantec, until my local VAR, VL Systems, introduced me to Mimosa NearPoint. I was immediately impressed with NearPoint and its unique ability to archive email and perform Exchange recovery.” Chris was also impressed that NearPoint did not require the installation of any agent software on Exchange. “It makes no sense for an email archiving solution to put any load on Exchange Server. Its purpose is to reduce load on Exchange, not increase it”.

Mimosa NearPoint was installed at Brookfield on Dell Servers and EqualLogic storage arrays. The total installation time was less than one day and no customization was required. “NearPoint installed right out of the box,” said Chris. “Overall the installation process went very smoothly

and the default configuration policies got my system up and running very quickly. I found the product documentation too lengthy for my tastes, so I just called their support line for help.”

For compliance, NearPoint’s data capture method performs off-host and captures all mailbox information for all mailboxes via the Exchange Transaction Log Files. “NearPoint hit the nail on the head for my compliance needs,” said Chris. “I liked being able to archive email for all users without impacting Exchange. I also did not have to pick and choose which users to archive for compliance.” Mimosa NearPoint archives email for compliance without requiring Exchange journaling. This eliminated the need to potentially re-provision Exchange to support the additional CPU, memory and storage needs of journaling, and it removes the need to move mailboxes into a single Exchange Store for journaling.

For Exchange recovery, NearPoint delivers capability for recovery of complete Exchange databases, mailboxes and individual message recovery. “Once NearPoint was installed, I turned off my brick-level backups,” said Chris. “Using NearPoint I can restore any mailbox in seconds with a simple point-and-click operation. Exchange mailbox recovery has never been easier. For message level recovery, I was very impressed with the self-service capability that NearPoint delivers via Outlook. I did not imagine that any email archive product could deliver such a powerful tool right in Outlook without any footprint on the desktop.”

“My end users are singing the praises of NearPoint with the new tools they can access to quickly search their email archive and restore individual messages,” said Chris. “Now I can begin to unravel some of the peculiar practices like keeping all Sent Items, once users become accustomed to using NearPoint to access all historical email.”

Reducing Exchange storage is a final requirement for Brookfield and the feature of NearPoint that they will use is called Mailbox Extension. Mailbox Extension is a policy driven process that removes attachments from Exchange Server based on a policy that defines limits for age and size. Attachments remain accessible via Outlook just as they normally are. Users double-click the message and the attachments are delivered from the archive and presented with the email in Outlook.

“I first ran Mailbox Extension with a two-year time limit and my Exchange storage was immediately reduced by over 25 percent,” said Chris. “My next step will be to reduce the time setting to twelve months, check the results and then reduce it to six months. I appreciate the fact that NearPoint runs the Mailbox Extension job off-host and does not impact Exchange. I can run it during the day and take it in chunks allowing me to monitor the resulting changes closely.”

A major benefit of reducing Exchange storage is to reduce the time to perform the nightly full backup. “I anticipate when I have completely finished my work with Mailbox Extension, I will be able to run my full backups in less than two hours, and the default configuration policies got my system up and running very quickly. I found the product documentation too lengthy for my tastes, so I just called their support line for help.” said Chris.

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Brookfield Environment

- Microsoft Exchange 2003
- Dell Servers (2650s and 2850s)
- EqualLogic PS300E Storage
- Symantec BackupExec 10d

About Mimosa Systems

Mimosa Systems, Inc. delivers next-generation information management solutions with Mimosa NearPoint™, providing a live content archive for Microsoft® Exchange Server. NearPoint unifies archiving, eDiscovery, recovery and storage management in a single solution, assuring email continuity and regulatory.

Mimosa is a Platinum Sponsor of the Microsoft 2007 Launch Events.



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