Report: Business Email

7 THINGS YOU MUST KNOW ABOUT "FREE" EMAIL

PERCEPTION	*PRODUCTIVITY*	*PERFORMANCE*

Discover the true costs and trade-offs for your business when selecting an email platform.

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With all the communication tools out there in today's highly connected world, email still remains a critically vital platform for business to develop and foster relationships with clients/customers and prospects, and manage/support employee and key stake holder communications. Forrester Research recently found 87% of communications within companies are via email, making it the linchpin of all communication avenues[1].

Many businesses are implementing mobile solutions to improve performance and productivity, so that employees on the go can be productive from smart phones and tablets. For small business striving for stronger employee and customer bases the benefits of mobile email is limitless.

Many small businesses find free email platforms to be an ideal solution while trying to establish themselves in the marketplace: They're free, registration is easy, and have the basic functionality needed. However, as organizations grow, certain risks and costs with these free services rear their ugly head that can impact several key areas:

- Perception of your brand
- Productivity and employees
- Performance on goals within an organization.

Although the immediate benefits of signing up for these platforms are attractive at first glance, limited features and security can be costly to the overall performance of a small business. A typical email user sends and receives on average 122 emails a day in 2015 and that is expected to grow to 126 emails a day in 2019, according to The Radicati Group[2]. That is upwards of 25,000 to 30,000 emails per year and growing, meaning an efficient email platform is a vital mission-critical asset to business success.

To effectively build perception and reputation among peers and customers, best-in-class organizations are looking beyond the short-term attraction of free email services, and are finding hosted email solutions that provide an array of business productivity features, such as calendar and contact sharing, mobile email capabilities, and cloud-based storage.

This white paper will out 7 key points you need to be aware of regarding the true costs and trade-offs small businesses must consider when selecting an email platform for their companies, as well as the necessary tools and technologies to optimize perception, productivity and performance among employees.

1. Brand – The Perception your email has on your Business

Today organizations that are on top have customer's attention, and attention means eyeballs on the prize. Getting those eyeballs to look at the prize is a struggle and constant fight and can be lost within seconds with a poor brand.

Email still remains the most powerful, flexible and commonly used tool to build and maintain relationships with customers and be in constant contact with vendors and partners. With this is mind an organization of 10 people will send over a quarter million emails per year, each one branded with the name of the email provider (i.e. gmail, Hotmail, Yahoo, YourCompany.com). A quick search will reveal that there are over 1 billion email accounts on gmail, Hotmail and yahoo combining to make a strong branding message for customers to look at them and not YourCompany.com.

By utilizing a company-specific domain name (Your www.) allows an organization to be recognized quickly and remain top-of- mind among prospects and clients. For example, which builds better brand awareness JoeSmith27@hotmail.com or Joe.Smith@YourCompany.com? By using domain based email addresses, small businesses will build awareness, recognition, and most importantly, trust, protecting a company's overall image as an organization that is professional and eager to do business.

In 2011 1&1 Mail and Media conducted a research study that found "3 out of 4 Judge Others Based Solely on an Email Address"[3] and they further go on to say "over half who use their email for work and incorporate an industry-specific domain portray a sense of professionalism and credibility to potential clients or patients. Using @lawyer.com, @teacher.com, or @doctor.com as a domain could then improve clientele's perception of a business and ultimately its bottom line."

Several content rich information services may be unavailable to an organization that leverages general "free" domain names, as they prohibit that content from being delivered to a non-organization.

Therefore, a "free" general domain name raises a red flag, which is exactly the last thing you want a potential client or customer to do. The results can be deleted communications, unopened messages, and even having messages reported as spam. This lack of trust can be a small business killer in areas of growth, relationship-building, and overall reputation.

2. Spam – A significant hidden cost to your Business

Regardless of the position within an organization, mailroom to boardroom, employee to management to executive, there is a daily challenge of dealing with spam. Google defines spam as an "irrelevant or inappropriate messages sent on the internet to a large number of recipients".

According to Radicati Group the average business user receives 88 email messages per day of which 12 are spam which is approximately 13.6%. In fact, small business employees spend approximately 29 minutes per day dealing with spam, according to the 2011 Report on UC and Cloud-based Services for SMBs, conducted by Webtorials. Regardless of the obvious detriments of spending quality business time sorting through messages, spam management is a constant struggle among small businesses that don't have the solutions or resources to address these issues efficiently.

Small businesses also must determine the potential impact of not having dedicated domain names for employees. If you consider that 84% of all email traffic is spam according to Radicati Group, an organization using a free, unbranded, email can be mistaken for spam resulting in undelivered or filtered email which is not easily available to potential clients and prospects. Large Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and some web-based email services are utilizing email authentication as an added strategy to fight spam invasion. These stronger spam measures compound the difficulty in getting your legitimate email delivered and opened.

Business Leader(s) must acknowledge the business-wide benefits of leveraging dedicated domain names. By leveraging a business-branded domain name (www.), organizations can make their communication goals clear, thus, increasing the likelihood that messages will be opened and — most importantly — read.

3. Work Place Productivity: Do You Have The Right Tools?

The majority of businesses (87%) tap into email as a collaboration tool to share announcements, content and vital information, according to Forrester Research. As a result, the "short and to the point" communication once synonymous with email is being transformed to include lengthy messages and larger attachments, leading to longer wait times for email retrieval and message uploads.

When standard POP email servers are overwhelmed and systems go down, productivity for a small business is depleted. This is a constant problem among small and mid-sized businesses. In fact, company email systems experience a mean of 53 minutes of unplanned downtime within a month's time, according to a recent Osterman Research[4].

Hosted email solutions, however, typically guarantee 99.9% uptime, leading to improved productivity and more efficient connectivity.

If and when email operations are up, it takes the right tools to ensure success. Collaborative features, such as the ability to share contacts, calendars, to-do lists and files, as well as efficient archiving capabilities, are imperative to keep executives and employees on the same page regarding schedules, company developments, and content creation.

Companies that don't provide seamless access to information and resources across technology platforms can take a serious hit on not only productivity, but profitability, as well. Research from IDC reveals that inconsistent access tools, ineffective searches for updates and content can cost a company $3,300 per employee, per year. Meaning, a small business with 400 employees can experience a $1.32 million productivity loss in one year alone.

The ability to share calendars, contacts and tasks is a must in the highly connected business world. Employees and executives are constantly traveling and more on-the-go than ever. As a result, instant access to email accounts, mailboxes, important events, and other information is a necessity, rather than a luxury.

"Basic capabilities such as scheduling an appointment, receiving a reminder, tracking work, scheduling and coordinating work, and saving history of your tasks is what makes email special and will keep it special for a long time," Averett said. "A lot of the new social tools add special value, but email is still the heart of written communications. It's the most widespread in terms of number of users, and has the ability to connect with friends, relatives, strangers, customers, vendors and more; has been tested and is fully mature; and operates at an extremely high scale. You can't underestimate the importance of that ability to reach anyone at anytime."

Organizations are opting to implement hosting platforms to provide employees and executives with instant access to emails, calendars and contacts via mobile devices, including smartphones and tablets, which are becoming ubiquitous in the business world. The limited features of some POP and IMAP email systems allow no room for this form of flexibility and instant communication, which is now required for today's small businesses, especially as more organizations use mobile email, tablets, laptops, and other wireless tools as an integral part of their communication.

4. Mobility Imperative - Increased Connectivity Makes Seamless Collaboration a Necessity

Smartphone subscription and usage is growing at an unprecedented pace, making mobile email a practical and even necessary resource for on-the-go workers. In fact, an April 2011 study sponsored by Google showed that 82% of smartphone users check and send email with their devices[5]. This hyper-connected behavior even extends into after-work hours, according to Osterman Research. In its third annual research survey, Osterman revealed that a vast majority of workers (83%) check email using a smartphone or mobile device before and after a standard workday[6].

"A lot of small business owners are their own best salesperson, so when they're out traveling, meeting with clients and prospects, they can still be connected to all their other customers without being confined to a desk," Averett said. "That form of flexibility matters more and more since we're in a very dynamic business market. People need the freedom to move about and travel, and even have that flexibility in time. Long gone are the days when work was nine-to-five, and I think [small businesses] appreciate that. So being able to roll out of bed in the morning, answer a few emails and then get ready for the day, being flexible, and spreading work out, is imperative to small businesses"

Optimal email hosting platforms allow data to be synced automatically or when requested by users via BlackBerry, iPhone and Android, as well as from any laptop, desktop, or tablet device. Push service and real-time sync is provided for all account features, including basic mail and folders, contacts, calendars and tasks. Leading small businesses are taking note of the companywide benefits of implementation, including streamlined communication and task management, as well as instant access to calendar invitations across devices.

5. Support 24x7x365: A Must-Have for Business Performance

In the business world, productivity and performance go hand-in-hand. Daily operations are dominated by strict deadlines, new deals and partnerships, and customer care, all of which require immediate attention. Free email services create a greater chance of system downtime and, in turn, lackluster performance.

"About half of our email volume comes from system status information," said Woods. "Email is the primary notification vehicle for system alerts — without it, systems could go down and we'd never know."

Overall, email platforms such as Gmail and Yahoo! require excess maintenance, which

small business owners and their IT teams simply don't have the time for. Moreover, by partnering with a domain name provider such as GoDaddy, organizations are faced with sub-par knowledge of email functionality and resources.

Companies that employ hosted email platforms, however, optimize time management and financial resources. In fact, more than 60% of organizations are transitioning to hosted solutions due to lower total cost of ownership, seamless deployments and overall easier management than network-based providers, according to Forrester Research.

Hosted email solutions provide continual support on a 24x7x365 basis, allowing business owners and employees to focus on core operations, rather than back-end issues. Service providers, such as ourEmail.company, provide organizations with a staff of experts to address network issues in a timely manner, as well as in-depth set-up support. Transition representatives also are provided to allow companies to easily migrate from free email services to new, hosted platforms, efficiently.

"We are not a tech company — we don't have a lot of technical expertise," said Vranas of PROACT Search. "The Transition Team was super helpful in getting us setup, speaking in plain English, and not talking down to us."

Conversely, organizations that subscribe to free email services are simply left to consult message boards and help forums, where they will, hopefully, find a solution to any technical issues and answers to any follow-up questions.

"As a general rule, a paid email provider has a greater obligation and financial motivation to take care of your information and mail," Averett said. "However, the most critical piece is support, which is non-existent in free email platforms. If one of your critical communication tools doesn't have any back-up behind it, in terms of a human being that can help you find a missing message or track something down, that's a big problem for businesses."

6. Communication & Client Protection: The Free Email Game-Changer

Information and conversation protection is key to maintaining business integrity and sustaining relationships. Free email platforms often flood inboxes with advertisements and can easily access emails and information, leading to increased likelihood that customer and partner data will be compromised. This is a factor that many organizations ignore, due to the appeal of obtaining a service for free, according to Averett.

"The average [small business] today uses the email that was included when they purchased a domain name, or a free domain that came with an Internet provider, or possibly a Yahoo! or Gmail," Averett explained.

"To keep company and customer confidentiality top- of-mind, organizations must implement solutions that focus on email and are willing to provide features for security during message storage and transmission. Hosting companies integrate extensive security measures to help you protect data from physical threats, and other circumstances, including overheating, power outages, and fires. However, the continual protection of hosted systems is a key benefit of hosted solutions.

7. Building Business Relationships & Opportunities with Hosted Email Solutions

As businesses continue to veer toward digital channels to build and maintain relationships, as well as increase business, it is becoming more imperative for small business to follow suit, and most importantly, be armed with optimal resources.

Although smartphones and social tools are becoming ubiquitous in the business world, email still remains the solid foundation of all corporate communications, making a reliable email platform a vital asset to business productivity, profitability, and performance.

Gartner's Magic Quadrant for Managed Hosting, 2012, revealed key characteristics for an efficient service. The report read: "The most heavily weighted criteria for a hoster's ability to execute are service offering and service excellence, as reflected in the customer experience with sales, support, and operations."

Optimal email hosting solutions allow organizations across sizes and segments to streamline operations and to help ensure optimal email deliverability, uptime, and security. Providers also offer collaboration for employees and business owners to be constantly connected and are able to share status updates, events, and communications; ensuring streamlined and successful business operations.

With a reliable and sustainable email platform on hand, small businesses are armed with the tools, resources, and support to optimize brand perception, and drive productivity as well as performance, for continued business growth and success.

Conclusion: You Need Better Email

[OurEmail.Company](#) offers 1st in Class email solutions to its customers with amazing benefits like:

- ✓ Masive 100GB Mailbox size limit
- ✓ Huge 50MB file attachments capability
- ✓ Outlook Web App (OWA)
- ✓ Multi-layer Spam & Virus Protection
- ✓ RSS Subscription Delivery
- ✓ Share Contacts, Tasks, Calendar & Notes
- ✓ Calendar sharing with read/write options
- ✓ Free Mobile Sync for iPhone, Android, and Windows Mobile
- ✓ And many more ……

GET STARTED NOW

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[1] Forrester Research. The State of Workforce Technology Adoption: US Benchmark 2009-2015.

[2] The Radicati Group, Inc. Email Statistics Report (Executive Summary), 2015-2019

[3] 1&1 Mail & Media, Inc. Email and Communication Research. 2011

[4] Osterman Research. Why Email Must Operate 24/7 and How to Make This Happen. 2009

[5] Google. The Mobile Movement Study. April 2011

[6] Osterman Research. Osterman Research Third Annual Survey. November 2011