

E-mail Retention

To Save or Not to Save: That is the E-mail Question?

E-mail is one of the ***most unstructured forms of information*** an Organisation has to deal with. The “Association for Information and Image Management” in the US, estimates that 90 percent of business is now conducted through e-mail and a significant proportion of information contained in those e-mails could be classified as business records, documents that are essential to an organisation’s livelihood for legal, regulatory, continuity, or other reasons.

Despite the above, many organisations have **no formal e-mail storage policy** or if they have one not many of their staff are aware of it or adhere to the policy. Because of the unstructured nature of e-mail, employees often find it difficult to decide if the e-mail meets the requirements of being a business record or not. The easiest thing for them to do is to file the e-mail in some folder structure in their own mailbox. Once their mailbox gets full they either delete older e-mails purely on date or setup another folder structure in an alternate filing system, for example a Personal Folder (pst file), external to their mailbox to avoid dealing with the storage problem. The process of “Auto-archiving” e-mail is not sufficient it is just another Personal Folder.

These filing systems often have no organisational structure, are not monitored or reviewed and are purely based on each individuals preference for storing and retrieving information.

Without an appropriate and easily applied e-mail storage policy, organisations put themselves at risk. Organisations need to define what a business record is for their type of business or industry. Once that has been established an appropriate policy can be created. The next major step is to implement the policy which means a proper education and awareness program for all staff.

It is no good having a policy that no one knows about or totally disregards it because it is too hard to follow. Getting existing employees to change how they handle e-mail could be the hardest task of all. Organisation induction programs for all new staff also need to include training in the organisations e-mail storage policy.

This process must have support from all areas of management and a monitoring and review program must also be put in place to ensure adherence to the policy.

Acorn Training and Consulting can assist you in developing an e-mail storage policy and make your employees more effective in e-mail management. We have existing workshops in using e-mail effectively and can customise them to specifically include information regarding your e-mail storage policy.

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