



University Health System Cleans Up Its Microsoft Exchange Network with DYS Email CONTROL! for Microsoft Exchange (ECX)

University Health System (UHS), a regional healthcare network in Knoxville TN, encompasses the University of Tennessee Medical Center, the region's largest medical center and provides healthcare support to East Tennessee residents. Its operations include over 4,000 physicians, nurses, caseworkers and administrative staff who rely on email to coordinate with colleagues and quickly convey confidential patient information.

As electronic medical records and e-Medicine initiatives sweep the health care industry, UHS has been upgrading its IT infrastructure to assure it remains as supportive as its patient care. In early 2006 UHS' IT staff realized that its Exchange 5.5 email servers were long-overdue for an upgrade. However, with over 160 Exchange and NT servers, and IT staff being fully employed solving operational issues and performing routine maintenance, IT staff knew that the potentially very risky Exchange upgrade needed to be well-planned and smoothly executed with little or no service disruption. "I needed help to quickly understand how our users used email, and how Exchange serviced that demand, before I could revamp our Exchange network architecture," said Jerry Hook, IT manager for University Health Systems. "The Exchange 2003 upgrade had to require minimal IT time and create minimal – if any – disruptions for my users."

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 JERRY HOOK, IT MANAGER,
 UNIVERSITY HEALTH SYSTEM

The migration had another requirement: implement a process to provide IT and management visibility into email use and operation. Exchange and Microsoft Operations Manager (MOM) provide basic health and availability statistics, yet do not provide the tools necessary to understand who is using Exchange, how they are using it, and what performance Exchange is delivering. Such insight is vital in maintaining Exchange service levels and eliminating undesirable user behavior that taxes and slows email for all. Lastly, UHS needed to support a proliferating variety of mobile email devices used by the medical staff.

PRE-MIGRATION CLEANUP SAVES OVER 80 PERCENT OF STORAGE

In March 2006 UHS' IT staff evaluated products and chose ECX (Email CONTROL! For Exchange). Using ECX, UHS was able to accelerate their platform migration. ECX helped UHS achieve major cost, time, and email resource savings.

Using ECX in its pre-migration cleanup task, UHS removed 25% of the mailboxes and over 80% of the storage that would otherwise have had to be migrated. This allowed the entire migration to Exchange 2003 take place at least a month sooner than planned. The now smaller Exchange 2003 storage requirements have lowered ongoing email administration costs and improved potential disaster recovery time.

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In its first use of ECX, UHS saved over 130 hours of IT time – nearly a month of a full-time administrator – by using the product to identify and automate the clean-up of its Exchange network prior to migration. Without CONTROL! software, UHS IT staff would have needed to write extensive scripts that would only have partially cleaned up old mailboxes.

ECX gave me tools that simply don't exist in Exchange. It saved me an immense amount of time helping me clean up my network. The product paid for itself in just over four months based only on the immediately realized cost savings. We now use ECX to help in our ongoing Exchange operations so we can solve operational issues faster, and hopefully even prevent issues from occurring the in first place."

BETTER UNDERSTAND NETWORK TOPOLOGY

The software also provided critical information so UHS could architect its Exchange network topology for best performance.

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For example, ECX's analysis highlights usage and message traffic patterns that guided the placement of users on servers for optimal performance. After the migration, Hook continued to refine user message store placement to minimize Exchange and network loads. When ECX showed a user sending 90% of their email to the ER, Hook knew to move that user's email account to the ER Exchange message store.

The software's reports let UHS quickly trouble-shoot email issues: "When users call to ask about lost email, I now have the tool to readily validate, isolate and identify the issue as being within the Exchange server, the network, the desktop or not an issue at all," Hook said.

FUTURE-PROOF THE EXCHANGE EMAIL NETWORK

ECX provides an important window on email growth. While UHS employment levels have remained steady, email traffic increased 20% in the three months following the migration, Hook said. ECX let him quantify that as a legitimate increase in business use. For instance, Hook was able to show that this increase came from nursing staff, who now had a easier email access through the newly deployed Outlook Web Access (OWA) feature and from newly integrated mobile email devices. Without ECX, UHS could not have quantified and confirmed that this increase was for business, not personal use.

"Now that our migration is complete, ECX continues to let us understand email use so we can concentrate our resources and budget on providing new services, such as mobile email support and expanded casual user systems, instead of just maintaining the status quo," Hook said.

"As Exchange upgrades and migrations loom on the horizon, and as email volumes continue to grow, IT administrators must work smarter – with insight, not guesswork," said Hook. "ECX helped us turn a potential time-sink – the Exchange migration – into a major advance for email system performance."

"UNIVERSITY HEALTH SYSTEMS' USE OF ECX IS THE KIND OF PROACTIVE EMAIL MANAGEMENT WE EXPECT TO SEE MORE OF IN THE COMING MONTHS, AS ORGANIZATIONS REALIZE THEY CAN READILY LOWER THE COST AND COMPLEXITY OF MANAGING EXCHANGE."

MICHAEL OSTERMAN,
PRINCIPAL, OSTERMAN RESEARCH



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