



SmarterMail 10.x and Microsoft Exchange: An End User Comparison

Help Documentation

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Who Should Use This Document

This document provides a comparison of SmarterTools' SmarterMail Enterprise mail server software and Microsoft's Exchange 2010 Enterprise mail server. The comparison is from the end user's point of view.

It is equally important to review the system and server administration experience for both products as well. Therefore, please review the white paper SmarterMail and Microsoft Exchange 2010: An Administrative Comparison for a more complete comparison of both products from the administrative point of view.

For the purpose of any comparisons in this document the following criteria were used:

- Based on a small to medium business (SMB) utilizing multiple domains, potentially for multiple brands.
- Up to 250 mailboxes populating the mail server.
- Accommodations for organizations wanting both webmail access and standard desktop email clients.
- Mobility using multiple "smart phones" (e.g., Apple iPhone, Samsung Galaxy SIII / Note 2, LG Optimus 9, Nokia N-900) and other mobile devices (e.g., Apple iPad, Android tablets).
- Complete synchronization across a variety of mobile and desktop environments.

Overview

Email is the cornerstone of modern communication. In fact, even after the growth in various forms of social media like Twitter and Facebook, email is still considered THE "Killer App." As such, it is of vital importance that email communication is as secure, stable, powerful and versatile as possible.

With SmarterMail, you get tools to not only make your email experience more enjoyable, but safer and more secure as well.

In addition to protecting users, SmarterMail offers a flexible and versatile set of tools for users to access email. These tools include an advanced webmail interface that can be used with most popular Web browsers, synchronization protocols such as CalDAV, CardDAV, Microsoft Exchange ActiveSync and Exchange Web Services for mobile devices like the Galaxy S4 and Apple's iPad, and integration with desktop clients such as Microsoft Outlook, Microsoft Outlook for Mac, Apple Mail and Mozilla Thunderbird.

Of course, there are other products that do the same; Microsoft's Exchange is one example. However, once you start comparing the two products it is evident that SmarterMail Enterprise far surpasses Exchange Server 2010 in many areas:

- Collaboration — This means the ability to share things like your daily calendar, your contacts, and even your tasks. From a calendar standpoint, equally important is the ability to set up meetings and check the availability of your friends and colleagues.
- SmarterMail contains virtually identical collaboration tools as Microsoft Exchange and adds a few extra, such as file storage and file sharing.
- Security and Antivirus — Computer/infrastructure security from online threats is a big concern, so this section discusses included options as well as third-party integration.
- SmarterMail offers powerful antivirus measures without the need to purchase third-party add-ons (although you can, if desired).
- Antispam — According to Symantec's MessageLabs, spam is responsible for over 88% of all email. Options to combat these numbers, both included as well as third-party integration, are discussed in this section.
- SmarterMail offers industry-standard antispam measures upon install without the need to purchase third-party add-ons (although you can integrate third-party solutions, if desired), with over 97% of spam blocked with a default installation.
- Synchronization and Mobility — According to a Pew Internet study 1, 26% of adults own an e-reader, whereas 31% own a tablet computer. In addition, 55% access the Internet on a mobile phone. With that kind of growth and reach into everyday life, what are the options in Exchange and SmarterMail?
- SmarterMail offers a number of ways to sync with your mobile devices and actually beats Exchange in some cases by supporting multiple synchronization options.
- Access to Information and Email Migration — Having access to information is crucial in today's fast-paced environment. You need to know what's going on in the world, you need to keep track of contacts and your interaction with them, and you need to know your own status within your organization: your usage stats, your available space, both for your email as well as for your files, and much more.
- SmarterMail offers a number of "push" type technologies that give you the ability to subscribe and manage RSS feeds, reporting options of virtually all of your email usage, detailed contact information, and a quick and easy way to migrate your files, contacts, calendars and emails into SmarterMail—all within the robust webmail interface, giving you access to this information anytime, anywhere.

Collaboration

Collaboration is simply the ability to share information with friends and co-workers, from your calendar to your contacts. Additional features include the ability to schedule appointments with people, check their free-busy availability, reserve conference rooms, modify shared tasks, share contacts and “virtual cards” (vCards) and more.

Shared Calendars, Contacts, Tasks and Notes

- Exchange 2010 — One of the more notable and powerful features the Microsoft introduced with Exchange is the ability to share calendars, contacts, notes and tasks with other people in an organization.
- SmarterMail — SmarterMail also offers sharing of calendars, contacts, tasks and notes. However, SmarterMail offers a way to store documents and other files and link to those in emails and tasks so others can access them as well. As an aside, while you can share links to the files, you don't have to, making SmarterMail's file storage feature even more versatile.

Security and Antivirus

Everyone wants their email to be secure—secure from virus infection, free from phishing attempts, and free from malware and dangerous attachments. Additionally, no one wants their mail servers used for spamming or for attacking others as that can lead to untold hours of downtime once unwanted activity is detected and dealt with—both internally and by those affected.

Antivirus

- Exchange 2010 — Does NOT contain any antivirus protection out of the box. That means that it must be added after the fact and can end up costing more money. At the very least, the Enterprise Client Access Licenses (CALs) are needed in order to use Microsoft's Forefront Security Suite.
- SmarterMail — Each installation of SmarterMail contains industry standard antivirus protection through Clam AV. This is at NO EXTRA COST to users. SmarterMail also offers the ability to add in a number of other antivirus applications and services, including Commtouch Zero-hour Antivirus.

Other Security Features

- Exchange 2010 — Exchange offers the ability to send/receive email using Secure Socket Layers (SSL), offers active directory authentication (actually, active directory is required for Exchange), and SMTP authentication by domain. This latter option means that a user must provide an authenticated username and password in order to send email from the server.
- SmarterMail — SmarterMail includes all of the features listed above, but also takes things

further by offering email administrators a large number of whitelisting/blacklisting features, brute force detection, automatic denial of service (DoS) prevention, automatic harvest attack prevention and more. This is an added layer of security that protects users from unwanted events hampering communication.

Antispam

Spam is, without a doubt, the scourge of the internet. In 2012, researchers at Microsoft and Google estimated that spam costs society up to \$20 billion, a figure comparable to the GDP of Bolivia. 4 . Factor in the time and money spent by people during their off hours, and that number can grow significantly.

Available Antispam

- Exchange 2010 — Just as with antivirus, Exchange does not offer any antispam protection out of the box for a user's inbox. It requires a third-party solution or Enterprise CAL. That's not to say Exchange doesn't offer antispam measures for the server and for sending email (things like domain keys and DKIM, trusted senders, SPF records, etc.).
- SmarterMail — Similar to its antivirus protection, SmarterMail offers industry-standard spam measures on a variety of fronts. For example, SmarterMail supports more than 24 separate industry black lists as well as SPF, DomainKeys, and DKIM. In addition, SmarterMail offers further protection through a proprietary pattern matching engine built upon the SpamAssassin technology and support for remote SpamAssassin servers at no additional cost to end users. SmarterMail also supports Commtouch Premium Antispam, which can be included for a minimal yearly license fee.

Mobility and Synchronization

With more and more of today's workforce occupying home offices or finding themselves on the go, having an email system that can not only accommodate mobile devices—beyond simply smartphones and including iPads and Android tablets—is essential. In addition, people no longer just text or email each other, they share photos and documents as well.

Mobility and Synchronization

- Exchange 2010 — Exchange ActiveSync (EAS) is a Microsoft technology that is built into Exchange, giving users on the domain the ability to share contacts, calendars, notes and tasks. In addition, Exchange email can be accessed from a variety of email clients like Outlook, Outlook Express, Entourage and more.
- SmarterMail — SmarterMail also supports Exchange ActiveSync as an optional add-on. However, SmarterMail also supports a variety of open source synchronization technologies like SyncML and specific contact and calendar protocols like CardDav and CalDav (for most Apple

products, as well as third-party support for Android and upcoming support on Windows Phone). Therefore, while SmarterMail supports EAS as a best-in-breed paid add-on, it may not be required in some situations. SmarterMail also syncs with a variety of email clients such as Outlook, Entourage and Thunderbird. In addition, SmarterMail's webmail client is extremely robust and offers a fully functional email interface for mobile and remote users that is accessible from anywhere there is an Internet connection.

Access to Information and Email Migration

In addition to email, users expect a single interface for a variety of other communications mechanisms. In addition, transitioning from one mail system to another and the movement of email and contacts can be difficult at best. Both the gathering of information—whether in the form of news feeds or contact information—and the migration of your email communication should be as seamless and pain-free as possible.

- Exchange 2010 — The use of Outlook with Exchange means you have a single source for your RSS reader (for reading subscriptions to blogs and news outlets). The feeds you subscribe to from within Outlook translate to your Web App access as well. However, you can't subscribe to RSS feeds from Outlook Web App—those feeds can only be managed from with the Outlook client. In addition, using Outlook gives you the ability to see a variety of information about your contacts. Again, however, that information is only available from within the Outlook client. Also, what if you wanted to know about your email usage patterns? What about the amount of disk space you used compared to the amount you have available? These reports are not available, either from Outlook Web or from the Outlook client. And what if you wanted to be notified if a particular contact sent you an email? What if you wanted to know when your mailbox reached a certain disk limit? None of that information is available from Exchange. Yes, you can create rules in Exchange and Outlook, but those are for email management, not email notification. Finally, while Exchange itself offers the ability to migrate email accounts from one system to another, this isn't possible for end users and must be accomplished by an administrator.
- SmarterMail — SmarterMail brings power to the webmail interface with the ability to subscribe and manage your RSS feeds right from a browser window. In addition, if you want to know your usage stats, that information is at your fingertips plus information on your traffic stats, POP/IMAP usage, any errors you've received—all of this across any date range that you can manage and set. As for contact info, SmarterMail gives you access to a number of related items when you view your contacts: recent emails plus the total number of emails you've received from that contact, any appointments, and a list of all the attachments you received. As for events, SmarterMail has them: you can set up events on collaboration features, email or even your disk usage. Events let you know when something occurs, so you have the information you

want when you need it. Finally there are the migration tools. Once your account is set up in SmarterMail, you have the ability to manage the migration of email to that new account, regardless of whether it is from Gmail, Hotmail or any other POP/IMAP account. The tools are yours to use at your convenience. And don't forget: all of this is available from an access anywhere, at any time browser-based interface. You're not restricted to a single email client that resides on a computer you may, or may not, have access to.

Summary

When you look at all of the differences between Exchange 2010 and SmarterMail a few things really stand out:

- The collaboration features match on practically a one-to-one basis. Therefore, it amounts to the branding issue—just like people buy Nike shoes over Adidas. The sneakers are practically identical, but people just recognize the Nike brand since it's associated with so many sports figures.
- SmarterMail offers antispam and antivirus at no additional cost upon installation. While you can use add-on services and applications (like the wonderful products from Commtouch), there's no need.
- Mobility and synchronization are the future, and SmarterMail is there.
- The information is right there, at your fingertips—from anywhere, at any time. Whether it's information on who has sent you what, or if you need to find that spreadsheet that the CMO sent; whether you want to know when you reach 75% of your disk space capacity or need access to your RSS feeds, SmarterMail offers it all right from your Web browser.

Trust and Availability

There's no doubt Microsoft has the name. They've been around a long time, and have a long history of building quality software and being on the leading edge of technology, especially when it comes to providing a robust and feature-rich email solution. However, becoming one of the largest, if not the largest, software and services company doesn't come without some sacrifice. These sacrifices tend towards giving users access to support and customer service - at least affordable access to these critical needs.

That's where SmarterTools comes in.

Over the last eight years, SmarterTools has grown to over 15 million users, but still sees each user as important. They have grown through investment in products and development versus in advertising and marketing, building SmarterMail into one of the most popular and respected mail servers on the market. They realize how safe, secure and reliable communication is vital to each and every user of their product. That's why SmarterTools offers services that cater directly to their customer base:

- Access to LIVE tech support, 24/7/365
- Upgrade and installation services
- A popular, free public community to interact with support and fellow users
- Responsiveness to customers that often leads to product enhancements

While it may be true SmarterTools doesn't have the name recognition as Microsoft, what is certainly not up for debate is SmarterTools' commitment to their customers, to their products, and to their desire to create the most reliable and secure mail server solution on the market.

Taking all of this into consideration, it may not be a question of "why move to SmarterMail from Exchange," or "why choose SmarterMail over Exchange," but more a question of a "why not?"

1 <http://pewinternet.org/Commentary/2012/February/Pew-Internet-Mobile.aspx>

2 <http://www.message-labs.com/intelligence.aspx>

3 <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Mobile-Access-2010.aspx>

4 The Economics of Spam, Justin M. Rao and David H. Reiley