

BUSINESS BASICS

Top 10 E-Mail Features Your Business Needs To Succeed

(NAPSA)—For small and medium-size businesses, e-mail is one of the primary ways to communicate and connect with customers, not to mention an important tool for storing and organizing information. Not all e-mail systems are created equal, though, and compromising on your e-mail system could put essential information at risk.

Here are the top 10 e-mail features your business needs to succeed:

1. **Security**—Viruses and spam can slow down e-mail, steal confidential information and use your computers to attack websites. Ensure that your information is safe with built-in anti-virus and anti-spam filters that are constantly updated.

2. **Reliability**—Growing businesses can't afford downtime. Insist on 99.9 percent uptime with a financially backed guarantee.

3. **Backup**—Losing information due to a power outage or accident can be catastrophic to a business. Make sure your provider routinely backs up data to multiple geographic locations.

4. **Support**—Problems arise with any system. Confirm that you have round-the-clock phone support for your e-mail.

5. **Storage**—For many, e-mail is a default storage system. Look for systems with generous e-mail box sizes in the 20–25 GB range and the ability to send and store large attachments.

6. **Compatibility with mobile devices**—With more and more phones able to connect to e-mail, it's important to ensure they'll work well with your business e-mail system. Make sure your e-mail provider has support for Windows Phone, iPhone, Android and BlackBerry, among others.

7. **Web access from different browsers**—Particularly if you travel, it's important to make sure your e-mail system allows easy access from a PC, phone and a variety of Web browsers including Internet Explorer, Safari, Firefox and Chrome, so you have uninterrupted access.

8. **Offline support**—If you use Microsoft Outlook, make sure your provider has full support for its features, including offline access, so you can continue to be productive even without an Internet connection.

9. **Control**—It's your e-mail, so

E-Mail Facts and Figures

- 107 trillion—The number of e-mails sent on the Internet in 2010.
- 294 billion—Average number of e-mail messages per day.
- 1.88 billion—The number of e-mail users worldwide.
- 480 million—New e-mail users since the year before.
- 89.1%—The share of e-mails that were spam.*
- 262 billion—The number of spam e-mails per day (assuming 89% are spam).*
- 2.9 billion—The number of e-mail accounts worldwide.
- 25%—Share of e-mail accounts that are corporate.

*Spam percentage from MessageLabs.

E-mail user numbers and counts from Radicati Group



even if you don't manage servers in-house, confirm that your e-mail system gives you the ability to manage things like security settings, distribution groups and shared address book information over the Web.

10. **Easy to use**—For a tool you use every day, it has to include features that make your life easier. Look for the latest features, such as:

- Ability to sort e-mail the way you normally work—by date, sender or subject;
- Shared calendaring, so users can see their colleagues' schedules to book meetings;
- The ability to include conference rooms and equipment when scheduling meetings;
- Shared mailboxes that multiple people can access and respond to, such as customer service e-mail accounts.

Free e-mail systems generally don't provide the security and reliability needed for business e-mail, but Microsoft has recently made available new versions of Microsoft Exchange Server and Exchange Online, part of the Microsoft Online Services suite. Exchange Online is their hosted e-mail that offers secure, reliable e-mail for businesses for as little as \$5 a month.

By making sure your e-mail makes the grade in these categories, you can have the confidence of knowing your system is secure and will run smoothly while you get on to the more important work of growing your business.

More information is available at www.microsoft.com/online/exchange-online.aspx.