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Email for Your Business: Hosted vs. Local

Steve Stryhalaleck

Technology is constantly changing from day to day. Due to these updates there are often changes in pricing and offerings for particular services. One of those services is handling email. There are two options to choose from in most businesses in order to handle email. The first is managing email in-house using software such as Exchange on a Windows server. Then there is the option to use a 3rd party hosted email solution. In the past the pricing for a hosted email solution was not cost effective and did not include several benefits that an in house solution offered. Some things have changed over the past few years to make hosted email a more viable solution. For one the mailbox sizes for the hosted Exchange accounts have increased drastically, mainly due to disk space costs decreasing over time.

Another shift that has indirectly changed things is that Blackberry has fallen out of favor with most companies due to the rise of Androids devices and iPhones. This is dropping the pricing of hosted solutions as support for these newer devices is a bit cheaper than Blackberry devices. The prices do vary, but most hosted providers charge an access fee of $10/month per device for a Blackberry and only charge $3/month for other phones such as the iPhone or Android.

Each solution does have their own pros and cons, so let's take a peek at them.

Local Exchange:
- Pro- No monthly fees for Exchange
- Pro- No cost to receive email on phones
- Pro- No mailbox limits
- Pro– Intra-Office email is faster
- Con- Exchange must be purchased upfront as well as user licenses
- Con- A server is needed to run Exchange
- Con- A third party subscription for spam filtering is needed
- Con- Owner is responsible for maintaining the Exchange server

Hosted Exchange:
- Pro- No need to buy Exchange or licenses
- Pro- Spam filtering service is included
- Pro- No need for a local server for Exchange
- Pro- If local network is down you can still get email outside your office
- Con- Cost ranges from $5-$20/month per user
- Con- Phone access is an extra charge monthly (free to use IMAP or POP though)
- Con- Mailbox limits (although they usually start at 5GB now)
- Con- Downloading large emails takes longer

It is important to mention that not all hosted email providers are the same and one should compare each email provider as they may offer very different services and support. There are email providers out there that will provide email services that are much cheaper but at the sacrifice of features. We typically will recommend going with a provider that uses Microsoft Exchange over an account that just provides IMAP or POP3.

If you have any questions about email solutions for your company or any other IT topic that you may have, please contact us at info@mhconsults.com or 866-964-8324.

How to Improve My Phone's Battery Life

Mobile phones have grown incredibly sophisticated, with a growing number performing many of the functions of a full-size computer, as well as some things a desktop computer can't do, such as navigating with GPS or starting a car. A 2011 Pew Internet Project survey found that 25 percent of smartphone owners do most of their Internet browsing on their phones. The dilemma is that the more you depend on your phone, the faster you're going to drain its battery. While screen, processor and storage technology has advanced significantly, lithium-ion batteries haven't changed much in 15 years. Incremental improvements in battery efficiency have been far outpaced by processing power and screen size and brightness, as well as 3G and 4G radios, Wi-Fi and Bluetooth antennas, HD cameras, GPS and a variety of other hardware, all of which require power. To conserve battery life on your phone, turn off what you don't need, optimize what you do and perform a few tasks manually instead of automating them. You can both increase the time between charges and add to your battery's usable life.
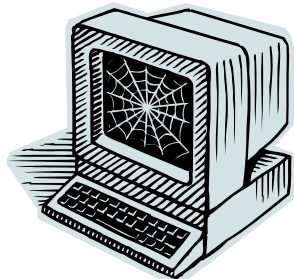
1. Dim your screen to significantly improve your battery's life. Your phone's screen is the largest power draw on the device, and the brighter it is, the more power it draws. Dim it as much as you feel comfortable with. The phone's automatic brightness setting, which dims the screen in low-light conditions, isn't as effective as reducing the brightness manually.

2. Set a short screen timeout interval to black out the screen when you're not using it. If the timeout is very short, you may have to periodically touch the screen to keep it from timing out while you read content. However, if you mostly use the phone for short tasks like checking email or sending SMS messages -- battery-consuming tasks when you do them frequently -- you'll see significant battery savings when you have a shorter timeout interval.

3. Reduce the frequency of application updates and syncs. For example, set your social-media applications to update manually instead of automatically, so they aren't constantly running in the background, or while you're not using your phone at all.

4. Eliminate unnecessary widgets and animations. On many phones, the bells and whistles on the home screen may use significant resources, especially if they're updating news or weather frequently, or using animations where a static image would suffice.

5. Disable Bluetooth, Wi-Fi and GPS when you don't use them. Each receiver or transmitter on your phone uses juice even when it isn't connecting, and both Bluetooth and Wi-Fi periodically search for devices in the background, using up even more battery charge. Some smartphones include a widget that allows you to enable or disable these antennas when they're not needed. When you're in an area without 3G or 4G service, consider disabling them as well, to spare your phone the batter-hungry effort of searching for service that isn't there.

6. Use the Battery Saver or Power Saver mode if your phone's operating system has one. These features help you to control the functions that sap your battery's power, including background apps, widgets, animations and screen brightness. Third-party apps like JuiceDefender or Battery Saver for Android may help you conserve even more power.

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Web Browsers: The Who's Who of our Web-Surfing World   Rob Demers

Most people know that to view information on the internet, you need to use a web browser; but which one? There are 3 main players in this arena: Internet Explorer, Firefox, and Chrome. While they will all allow us to surf the web, there are definitely some pros and cons for each one.

Internet Explorer (IE) is considered the industry standard business-oriented web browser. This means that all business-oriented websites, such as those used by e-commerce websites, CRM interfaces, etc. have all been tested and approved to work with IE. Most websites will work with other browsers as well, since those browsers will adhere to the standards used when developing websites, however there can be display formatting issues since there are so many different sets of standards. It also comes pre-installed with most PC computers and updates as part of Windows Update, which can help in making sure it has the latest security updates. On the negative side, it is slightly slower than Firefox and Chrome, lacking in many of the optional add-in modules the other two offer, and has no sync option for backing up and keeping in sync with other computers (such as your laptop and desktop,

or office and home office).

Firefox is number two of the Big Three in terms of performance, and has gained support and compatibility with more complex and powerful websites (such as online databases and financial portals) since it has risen in popularity over the years. One feature shared with Chrome is synchronization – this is an incredibly useful tool and potentially a huge timesaver. Many people have lots of different websites that they refer to on a daily basis, and if those bookmarks were to be lost, they would definitely feel the impact. With this feature, you sign up for an account and it then can keep your bookmarks, saved website passwords, your preferences and options, history, and installed add-ons out in the 'cloud'. It can even do this for smartphones. If they are lost due to a computer crash or some other circumstance, they are easily recoverable. Firefox also has a plethora of add-ons for customizing the browser and is able to be re-skinned to customize its appearance. One rather large drawback is the way it handles tabs – they are all considered one 'process' – meaning that if something goes wrong in one, it goes wrong in all of them. This is not the case with IE or Chrome. It is good about recovering the other open tabs but this is not always going to work – if there are 5 tabs open and a video crashes in one, there is the potential that the other 4 crash and can't be recovered, which can range from a minor inconvenience to a severe drop

in productivity.

The new kid on the block is Chrome. Initially considered the browser of choice for the younger generation and tech-savvy, it is quickly taking market share from its two competitors – mainly due to its reported performance. In testing done it does tend to rank the fastest of the Big Three, being generally 1.5-2x faster than IE and beating out Firefox by less of a margin. It shares Firefox's ability to sync and while it does not have as many add-ons as Firefox, it certainly has its fair share – and that share is growing quite rapidly. However, part of being the new kid is that not everyone knows who you are – in this case, it has the least amount of support from business oriented websites (and by least amount I mean that if 100% of all websites worked in IE, 95% work in Firefox and 85% work in Chrome).

There are certainly other browsers out there, but they do not have nearly the amount of use as the three listed above. We recommend using IE or Firefox at work since they are the most widely supported, and kept up to date during most maintenance cycles. Chrome and Firefox are certainly options to use at home, as they provide much more customizability but are not quite so widely supported.

If you have any questions what browser is right for you contact us at info@mhconsults.com or call us at 866-964-8324.