

WHITE PAPER

# Email Disclaiming

*Choosing disclaiming software for your enterprise*

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## ▶ **Why price should not be your deciding factor.**

You might think that a piece of software that adds a bit of text to the bottom of outgoing emails is a trivial thing - indeed we thought the same when we started writing our industry leading, award winning package Mail Utilities - but you'd be wrong, as we found out.

This document discusses some of the things you ought to consider before committing to installing a piece of disclaiming software in your environment.

## ▶ **Do you send or receive email in different formats?**

Formats? Surely email is just some text sent between a few of people? Wrong! Email comes in several distinct formats. Plain Text, RTF and HTML. Each of these formats has its own peculiarities.

Obviously plain text cannot contain any fonts or emphasis, but did you know that it might get forced line-breaks inserted in to it, without which your email may not be transportable across all the world's email gateways?

RTF: It's dominant in the Microsoft client space, indeed most of the previous versions of Outlook would send in this format as default. Many people still do. RTF can't have tables, and working out where to insert the disclaimer without breaking the structure is complex to say the least.

What about HTML then? It's the language of the webpage, and its historic looseness permits all kinds of worrying content, ranging from script (now blocked by all email clients) through to images that are transported along with the message too.

And not only that, but Exchange can (and will) convert the message to a different format under circumstances that can be best described as on a need-to-know basis!

Mail Utilities has specific code to deal with each format of message and the billions of emails that we've already processed ensure that we've seen it all - and some!

## ▶ **Do any of your customers NOT use Microsoft Exchange?**

We've seen that the messages come in different formats that affect how end users see the message. Well these messages are transported between your clients email programs, the email servers and the internet in a variety of ways. They are generally moved about using a protocol called SMTP. This is the language spoken by your email server (probably Exchange) and almost all other email servers in the world, whether they are Windows based, Linux based or Mac based.

Within this transport framework, the messages can be structured as RFC822, MIME or TNEF. And each of these formats too has its idiosyncrasies. RFC822 are only plain text messages but can contain attachments encoded using an old UNIX encoding mechanism. MIME messages may contain digital signatures and/or encrypted messages but can't transport RTF messages and TNEF (Microsoft's proprietary format) can contain HTML messages wrapped up in an RTF message in a peculiar (and as it happens, very cool) manner.

We've seen all this too, fixed bugs in it and racked our brains to try to understand what is going on so that you don't have too.

## ▶ **Do you send or receive a large amount of email?**

We take this very seriously. The volume of message flow through your server is crucial to timely delivery and prompt response. Sometimes you just don't know what the future will hold, and having a critical email held up because your disclaiming software is bottlenecking your system is not good. Don't get me wrong, we add an overhead to your system – how could we not? – But we're continually striving to make this faster. We've re-written major parts of our system several times in the quest for performance from making our system an asynchronous processor through to replacing the rule engine and caching information from the AD to increase our performance.

We have an entire rack of high performance multi-processor systems dedicated to our performance and testing teams. We've sent literally millions of messages through them to ensure that they don't leak a small amount of memory and that they can handle large volumes and indeed large messages.

All these things help to ensure that your messages continue to flow smoothly.

## ▶ Do we live in a world where everyone speaks English?

Back in the dim and distant past, email was only available to people who were prepared to communicate in English.

That sounds wrong doesn't it? But it's not. When the internet was embryonic, emails were sent using just the letters A-Z, a-z and the numbers 0-9 with some punctuation. And that was fine. Unless your name was André or JÓse, and when what you wanted to say was "Fancy a beer after work" and not "Как насчет пивка после работы?" These days, email has grown up and it's possible for the world to use email to communicate in its native languages – well nearly – but this too brings its complexity.

We've tested our software in English, French, German, Italian, Dutch, Norwegian and Spanish (and a lot more "Latin" languages). We've tested it in Japanese, Chinese, Arabic, Hebrew (and other glyph based languages) and we're sure that we don't damage any of the carefully crafted information people are trying to communicate with each other.

Can you say the same of our competitors?

## ▶ Have you just installed your Exchange server?

It's just being installed on an Exchange server right? Wrong again! Which version of Exchange? 2000, 2003 or 2007? Oh, and what version of the AD are you running – native or mixed. Did you know that Exchange has native and mixed modes too? That's four combinations right there! And is your global catalog on the same server as your Exchange box (prevalent in SBS and small environments but actively not recommended by Microsoft in larger environments).

What about the legacy issues? Have you ever had Exchange 4.0 or Exchange 5.5 in your environment, or have any of the people that you are going to send email to? And are all your Exchange settings just as they were when you first installed it, or have you perhaps changed some of the global settings? Created a couple of extra virtual SMTP servers, or do you have a FAX gateway in your infrastructure? Or maybe a BlackBerry Enterprise server?

What about a Domino server? Or perhaps a bunch of Linux boxes between you and the internet? All things to consider and all that might have an impact on how the software behaves.

What about your choice of anti-virus/anti-spam software. Does this affect your choice of disclaiming software? We've worked with all the majors and have them running on our live systems and in our labs.

## ▶ **All your users are on the latest version of Outlook aren't they?**

You thought it was complicated up until now didn't you. Well this is truly horrific. Which versions of Outlook are deployed in your environment? Outlook 2000, 2002, XP, 2003, 2007? Are your clients using the Outlook editor to compose messages? Or are they using Word? Or perhaps they have a Blackberry device. Or maybe they are disconnected from the network and submit messages via SMTP-AUTH from a hotel wireless connection? What format of message do they compose with? RTF, HTML or plain text? What happens when an Outlook XP client replies to an internal message that was composed originally in RTF, when the new message is addressed to an external recipient too?

And what about getting your disclaimer or signature after the most recent reply? Sounds like another easy thing to do doesn't it? Have you considered what happens if the message is in French, or if it is being composed by Outlook Web Access or by a Windows SmartPhone?

## ▶ **Email is only between two people, isn't it?**

This can't be hard. It's only the people you are sending the message to. But what happens when you address the message to a group whose membership is in the thousands? What happens when one of the recipients is external? What is the performance impact on your infrastructure of expanding groups to determine individual membership for each message for each rule on your system? What about nested groups too, or Query based distribution groups?

How does the software handle security groups vs. Distribution groups? What about local, global and universal. Are you sure that all this has been considered?

▶ **Do you ever invite someone to a meeting?**

It's not just email that is sent through your Exchange server either. You've got NDRs, Read-receipts, Out-Of-Office notifications, Appointments, Meeting requests, Tasks too. What happens if you are required by law to add a disclaimer to a meeting invitation? Can you do this too?

▶ **Are you sure you want to trust your mission critical email with us?**

I don't know about your organization, but round here we don't need Microsoft Operations Manager to tell us when our email infrastructure is not working as expected. Our sales team shout and they shout loud! Not only that, they notice faster than our IT team! We're fanatical about ensuring that we maintain 24x7x365 availability for our customers. We have close links with Microsoft and they have symbols of our products so that system dumps can be analysed quickly and efficiently. Many people have never even heard of ADPlus, but if you need to contact Microsoft to diagnose why your Exchange server is not delivering emails, then they will almost certainly request a core dump from this tool. We're adept at looking at these too, and occasionally we find a bug in our software because of it. Then we fix it and release it. More often, we discover infrastructure problems or problems with other pieces of software that are on the system too, and we let you know about those too. It's all covered under our maintenance agreement.

## ▶ What does all this mean?

It means that you want to be sure that you trust your email to a company who understand the systems and problems you might encounter. We've considered and dealt with all the questions posed in this document.

And, we've been doing it for a long time – we started in 2000 and have continued to upgrade and improve our software over this time. We're not going anywhere either. We're self financed to better weather out the current economic climate; we don't have any loans that can be called in, we've got money in the bank – we're not bragging you understand, just being pragmatic.

If you invest in us, you can be sure we'll still be here. No worries about having to replace a mission critical piece of software in 6 months because your supplier went bust and couldn't help you fix a problem.

What this really means however, is that you should absolutely not make your decisions based on the price you have been quoted by one of our competitors. As this document shows, you ought to be asking them how they handle this kind of stuff. I'll bet they haven't even considered most of it.

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