Email Archiving vs. Backups
The Critical Differences

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How do you secure your critical email data?

Do you use a backup system or rely on an email archiving solution?

Here we explain the differences between backups and email archiving when it comes to securing email data and why it makes more sense to use email archiving in this context.

Email Archiving vs. Backups: Objectives and Application

First and foremost, the objective of any email archiving solution is to store copies of all emails including their file attachments for many years in a form that is faithful to the original, quick to find, and permanently available. Even if the email server is temporarily unavailable, the archived emails are still accessible.

By contrast, the purpose of a backup is to save data (e.g. emails) and systems (e.g. the email server) regularly in the short and medium term, thus providing a snapshot of the saved data. This concept allows copies of entire data sets to be made so that they can be swapped out to external storage or to a cloud environment. Should an incident occur (e.g. data are lost due to system failure or as a consequence of a ransomware attack), the temporary, backed up data sets can be copied back from external storage. Thus, a backup is primarily a means of disaster recovery.

It is important to note that the email archives themselves should also be backed up. As a result, both backups for disaster recovery and email archiving are key elements in the IT strategy of any security-conscious organization and should ideally complement each other.

The following table shows which objectives can be achieved via which solution:

Objectives	Email Backups	Email Archiving
Eliminate mailbox quotas	○ (Doesn't apply)	● (Fully applies)
Eliminate PST files	◖ (Partially applies)	● (Fully applies)
Reduce storage requirements through de-duplication and compression	◔ (Applies to a lesser extent)	● (Fully applies)
Reduce the workload of email servers and simplify backup and restore processes	○ (Doesn't apply)	● (Fully applies)
Provide complete, tamper-proof and long-term email retention	◖ (Partially applies)	● (Fully applies)
Helps to meet compliance requirements	◖ (Partially applies)	● (Fully applies)
Assistance with eDiscovery scenarios	◔ (Applies to a lesser extent)	● (Fully applies)
Full-text indexing of emails for fast searches	◖ (Partially applies)	● (Fully applies)
End users: restore lost emails quickly and easily	◖ (Partially applies)	● (Fully applies)

● Fully applies　◕ Applies　◖ Partially applies
◔ Applies to a lesser extent　○ Doesn't apply

9 Benefits of an Email Archiving Solution

Archiving emails is an important component in terms of fully exploiting all the crucial information contained in emails, and one which, depending on the archiving method used, can deliver many benefits.

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1. Preventing mailbox quotas from being exhausted

Emails can be backed up in the long term and, once archived, deleted from the email server's mailboxes, ensuring that overflowing mailboxes become a thing of the past.

Vs.

The email server's data are only secured temporarily at regular intervals, without any full, permanent backup. The deletion of email data to relieve the pressure on mailboxes would entail the loss of data.

2. Eliminating PST files

Reducing the email load on the mailboxes eliminates the need to use error-prone PST files to offload mailboxes operating at full capacity. Existing, generally locally distributed PST files are transferred to the central archive.

Vs.

PST files can also be covered by a backup. In this case, however, the error-prone file format still has to be used in order to prevent mailbox quotas from being reached, as the email load on the mailboxes cannot be reduced permanently by means of a backup.

3. Reducing storage requirements

The ability to de-duplicate and compress archived emails means that the archive uses less storage space. Moreover, archived emails can be deleted from the email server, thereby reducing storage requirements.

Vs.

Data can be compressed and de-duplicated where applicable. However, since backups are only temporary in nature with no provision for a full email archive, emails cannot be deleted from the email server, so storage requirements cannot be reduced.

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4. Simplifying backup and restore processes

An email server's backup and restore processes can be accelerated if the volume of data held on the email server is reduced by means of an email archiving solution.

VS.

A backup solution cannot reduce the load on the email server upfront, meaning that backup and restore processes cannot be accelerated.

5. Tamper-proof retention of emails

Thanks to journaling and encryption technologies, email data can be archived in a complete, tamper-proof and long-term manner.

VS.

Only the current status of the email server is backed up at regular intervals. Data can be lost or manipulated in the interval between two backups.

6. Help with legal compliance

Retention obligations can be satisfied thanks to the archiving of business-critical email data in a complete, tamper-proof and long-term manner.

VS.

Temporary backups that are regularly overwritten or completely deleted after a period of time mean that business-critical email data will not be secured in a complete, tamper-proof and long-term manner.

9 Benefits of an Email Archiving Solution

Email-Archiving	VS.	Backup

7. Help with eDiscovery scenarios

eDiscovery scenarios in which electronically stored information is localized, procured, reviewed, and exchanged can be achieved without any great effort. Even emails in PST files pose no problem.

VS.

Localizing, reviewing, procuring and exchanging information saved electronically in a backup may involve a great deal of extra work.

8. Full-text indexing & self-service for rapid searches

The contents and metadata of archived emails and their attachments are recorded for a full-text index, enabling end users to search for particular emails quickly and simply via an Outlook add-in, for example. An IT administrator is not required.

VS.

Search functions are generally reserved for the IT administrator. They are restricted to specific contents and metadata. End users have no self-service options at their disposal.

9. Restoring lost emails easily via self-service

End users are able to search for emails using the search function and recover them independently, without enlisting the support of an IT administrator.

VS.

The IT administrator must comb through backups manually to find and recover the emails requested by the end user.