

AOK



Leading German Statutory Health Insurer Archives Email with Symantec Enterprise Vault

Like other large enterprises, Germany's biggest health insurer, AOK, has seen a major increase in its digital correspondence and was consequently on the lookout for a solution to move its emails to secondary storage. Three AOK companies opted for the Symantec Enterprise Vault™ archiving solution. Software rollout was handled by IT provider IT|S|Care with support from Symantec Platinum Partner PMCS, and the solution meets the insurer's expectations: a central vault offers sufficient storage, a special search function simplifies data retrieval, and ultimately, PST files will be completely eradicated.

ORGANIZATION PROFILE

AOK has operated in the German healthcare sector for more than 100 years. Over six million people are insured with AOK companies in Baden-Württemberg, Hessen, Saarland, and Rhineland-Palatinate alone.

INDUSTRY

Insurance

SOLUTION

Archiving

Central Repository for All Emails

AOK insurees in Rhineland-Palatinate wait a maximum of 24 hours for answers to questions they submit via an email form. That's AOK's promise, and it has enjoyed great resonance: an ever growing number of insurees choose to correspond with the company digitally. This is a trend that Germany's largest health insurer, with more than 25 million insured persons, has observed throughout the country. The same is true at AOK offices in the federal states of Hessen, and Saarland. "We have registered an increasing volume of email at the offices we serve," says Dirk Müller, the project manager responsible at IT|S|Care, AOK's IT provider in these federal states.

In the past, this resulted in a shortage of mailbox space and a huge volume of PST files. As many as 12,000 files with a total volume of two terabytes had accumulated at AOK branches in the three states. Since efficient archiving principles, such as single instancing and compression, cannot be applied when archiving PSTs, the digital folders were taking up more and more space on the file servers. This had a massive impact on backups, particularly since a complete file backup is required even if a PST file has merely been opened or an employee has read only one email message in the entire file. This inefficiency was gradually taking its toll, with the volume of PST files growing by five percent each month.

Systematic Archiving of Important Email

All this was reason enough to search for a solution that would address the challenges within the Exchange environment. "Our goal was to store new mail in a central archive and eradicate the vast number of personal folders by migrating them to the repository," Dirk Müller explains. Last but not least, the strategy was to create a basis for compliant data archiving over the long term.

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Dirk Müller

Email Archiving Project
Manager
IT|S|Care

Regional AOK insurers archive email with Enterprise Vault. They benefit especially from the solution's multiclient capability and search engine.

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Dirk Müller

Email Archiving Project Manager
IT|S|Care

During the product evaluation process, AOK ultimately chose Enterprise Vault. “The Symantec solution eradicates and migrates existing PST files to a central archiving repository. It also offers multiclient capability, which makes it possible to store data separately for individual clients. Additionally, it has a very powerful search engine.”

A little over one year ago, the solution rollout took place for approximately 8,000 employees in the federal states of Hesse, Rhineland-Palatinate, and Saarland. The archive for each state is kept separately. At the same time, however, Enterprise Vault's multi-client capability makes it possible to manage all archives from a central point of administration, an advantage that greatly reduces administrative work.

Thanks to support from Symantec Platinum partner PMCS, rollout for the three AOK companies was handled quickly and without any problems. “PMCS assisted from the test installation to the rollout,” commented Gerd Peter, head of the Server unit at IT|S|Care. “The costs and project duration actually remained below the estimate.” It took PMCS and the IT|S|Care project team around fifteen days to get the servers up and running and to perform basic configuration and test migration, including PST transfer.

Afterward, it took another three weeks until all 8,000 employees had access to the Symantec solution. “But it was not the IT coordinator who played the main role there,” Dirk Müller recalls. “The processors were responsible for most of the work. The Enterprise Vault servers ran at virtually 100 percent capacity the whole time.”

Migrating Unpopular PST Files

The focus at AOK is now on eliminating and migrating the PST files to the central archiving repository. The project team is handling this unit by unit: the PST files belonging to a group of twenty to thirty users are identified and then transferred to the archive with the Migration Wizard. Twenty percent of the existing PST files have already been migrated. If everything

SOLUTION AT A GLANCE

Business Drivers

- Centralize archiving and achieve swift retrieval of electronic mail
- Transfer PST files to the new, central archive

Technical Challenges

- Enhance the resilience of Microsoft Exchange
- Ensure multi-client capability—dividing the email archive by business units within the same system

Solution

Rollout of a central archiving repository and migration of email from existing PST files.

Symantec Products

- Symantec Enterprise Vault™

IT Environment

- Applications: Microsoft® Exchange, Microsoft Outlook®
- Server: 80 Exchange servers at 65 sites; three archive servers: FSC RX 300 S 2
- PCs: approximately 7,200 fixed PCs, 800 notebooks
- Email: 8,000 mailboxes

System Consultants

- PMCS GmbH & Co. KG

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Email Archiving Project Manager
IT|S|Care

BUSINESS VALUE AND TECHNICAL BENEFITS

Efficiency

- Fast retrieval of email information
- High resilience of email application

Cost Savings

- Reduced hardware needs
- Minimized administration
- Relieved workload on Exchange Server
- Reduced backup
- Eradicated PST files and the problems associated with them

goes according to schedule, migration will be complete within a month. “We just need to plan enough time for this,” says Exchange expert Dirk Müller, summarizing his experiences.

Initial successes are already perceptible: the introduction of Enterprise Vault has resulted in reduced resource usage. “Large companies in particular stand to gain from the single-instancing principle used in archiving with Enterprise Vault. For example, major capacity can be saved if a circular letter to the entire workforce is stored just once instead of 8,000 times.” Enterprise Vault takes care of this automatically, storing each file in the archive only once, no matter how many employees receive it. Another advantage is that Enterprise Vault “cleans up” and ensures a better overview by storing AOK’s email centrally, rather than in PST files spread over 65 sites. This not only simplifies administration, but makes searching for email much faster. What used to require users to search through several PST now takes one mouse click in the Alta Vista search engine, which is integrated in Enterprise Vault.

“We want to find data, not just run searches,” explains IT expert Dirk Müller. “And that’s precisely what the new solution enables us to do.” A metadata tag appended to each email message ensures that data can be found systematically and quickly with the search function. The function can also be linked to the Windows Desktop Search. This means that users who need to retrieve a specific file must launch only one search through their active and archived data.

In every other respect, the reorganization of the archiving process will barely be noticeable to users. Their email displays will only change slightly, since individual messages are still viewable in the Outlook mailbox, even when they are already stored in the central archive. Users still simply click to read them. The only difference is that email that has been archived is marked with an icon.