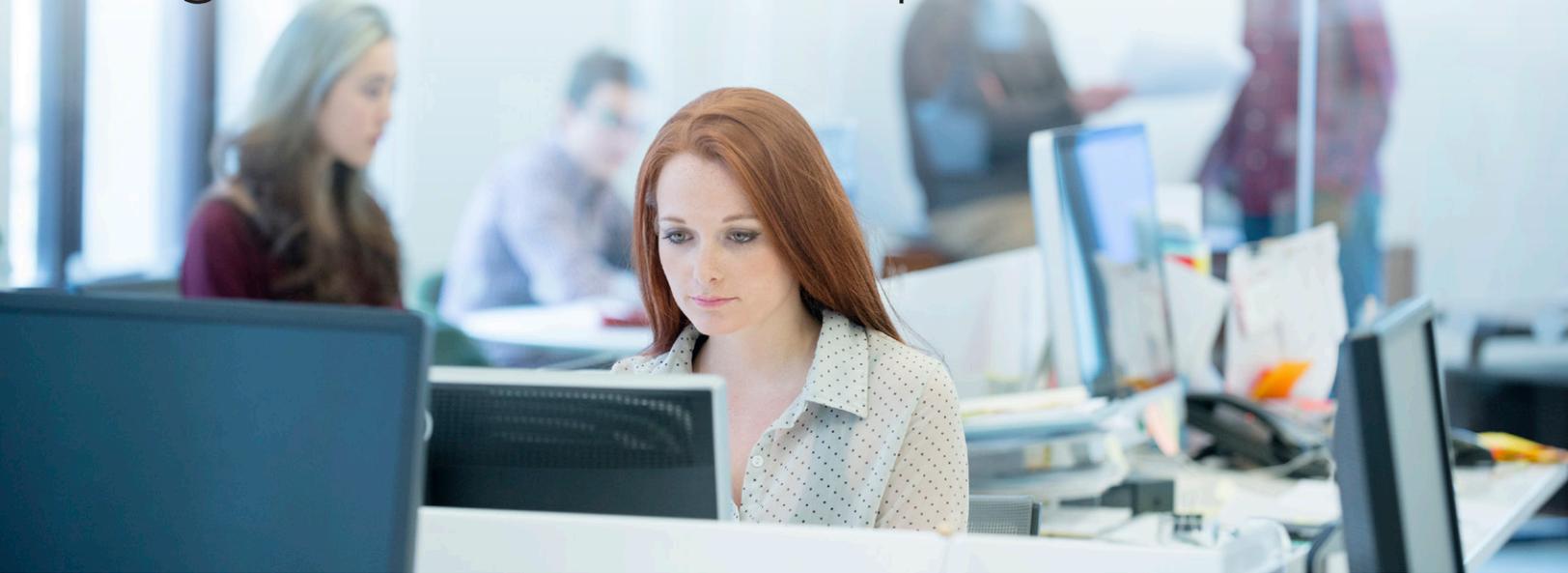


Zones streamlines Microsoft® Exchange migration for 24/7 companies



The Challenge

Due to the 24/7 nature of business, the Zones clients referred to in this case study could incur no downtime or data loss during their email migrations. With more than a thousand mailboxes, migrating users would need to be conducted over the course of several weeks, with no loss in features or service during that time.

The Solution

Ideally, normal business operations should continue during an Exchange migration. So after a thorough investigation of the clients' networks to prepare for the migration, Zones system engineers determined the best course of action was to design and deploy Exchange 2013 in parallel with the existing Exchange environment. This created two fully functional messaging platforms running side-by-side, making a phased migration of users possible without business disruption.

Installing and configuring the new Exchange 2013 environment enabled the Zones team to fully test the new platform, resulting in successful database replication, client access, and message transport before even upgrading users to Exchange 2013. Users were then moved over to Exchange 2013 as conservatively or aggressively as the client preferred.

Challenges:

Healthcare:

A large hospital in Montana needs to undergo an on-premises email migration from Exchange 2007 to Exchange 2013, leveraging their significant investment in a virtual infrastructure.

Finance:

A bank in Ohio needs to replicate mailbox databases to their disaster recovery site for fault tolerance.

Legal:

A law firm in Oregon with remote locations all over the country needs to consolidate remote Exchange servers to the national data center.

Results:

- Performance increases, even at national locations
- Scalability for projected business growth
- Fault tolerance for 24/7 operations
- Savings on software licensing
- Consolidation and leveraging of existing systems
- Streamlined management

The Solution *cont.*

Generally, clients want to know what happens when a user moves over to Exchange 2013? Can they still communicate with users who are still on Exchange 2003? Absolutely. In fact, during a migration users are not even aware they have been moved to Exchange 2013 – that is how seamless and successful migrations are for Zones clients.

The Exchange Project

As with every migration, the Zones team assessed and documented the existing environment, performed diagnostics, tested replication, adhered to best practices, and followed a systematic and time-tested approach.

Zones engineers not only installed and configured Exchange 2013, they demonstrated the differences the upgrade will make in the clients' unique environments (healthcare, finance, and legal).

To ensure favorable results, Zones systems engineers are skillfully trained and industry certified with extensive experience at performing Exchange migrations. In fact, onsite Exchange migrations are a Zones speciality.

Zones engineers share information, work together on the projects, and leverage each other's area of expertise to coordinate and conduct all phases of an Exchange migration. Rarely are Zones engineers surprised by any facet of a migration, because they have no doubt seen it before. If they haven't, clients can depend on them to use due diligence in the test lab and in investigating the issue to administer a viable solution.

The Results

Each of the clients helped by Zones engineers experienced a successful Exchange migration.

Performance improvements

Initially, a client admitted they were a little apprehensive that a user mailbox located in a data center a thousand miles away could yield the same performance as it did with an Exchange 2003 server at their main location.

After migration, all of the clients have been impressed by the amazing results. Performance improvements in Exchange 2010/2013's input/output operations means users are able to ride through disturbances that normally would disrupt access or disconnect users completely.

Modular design

Some of the clients required more Client Access Servers, and some required more back-end mailbox database horsepower. There is no cookie-cutter solution, and that's why our engineers really examined the environments and listened to the needs of the clients. We designed and scaled Exchange to their environments based on user demand and projected growth.

The customization and modular design of Exchange 2013 also sets it apart from Exchange 2003. With the various messaging roles Exchange 2013 offers, such as the Client Access Server role and Mailbox role, Zones engineers are able to design a solution that provides fault tolerance across all roles, but also fits the existing IT environment.

Business continuity

The piece of mind our clients gained from non-stop operations alone is worth their Exchange migrations. In the past, Zones engineers have seen databases failover in the middle of the day – to a data center a thousand miles away – and the users were none the wiser. A failure of this sort could render Exchange 2003 down for hours.

The fault-tolerance of Exchange 2013 – more specifically, the replication of mailboxes databases known as Database Availability Groups (DAG) – is nothing short of amazing. No one wants to be frantically scanning and repairing databases in a production environment in the middle of the business day, all while users are without email access. When you're not communicating, you're missing opportunities and losing money, and that is unacceptable.

Imagine knowing that you could pull the power plug on one of your Exchange 2013 servers and know that you'll continue operating as usual, without interruption, due to a successful migration completed by the Zones services team.

Reducing costs

While Zones engineers designed and deployed the most stable messaging platform possible, they are cognizant of the savings incurred for our customers.

After an Exchange 2003 to 2010 migration for the largest law firm in Oregon, whose environment included multiple sites across the country, they went from over a dozen servers down to five. Not only did they save money on licenses for the base operating system and Exchange server, they leveraged their existing virtualized

The Results *cont.*

infrastructure, which means less physical hardware in their data center and therefore a smaller footprint for power and cooling.

What is easier to manage: a dozen servers located all over the country, or a handful at the national data center? Not only easier to manage, but easier and faster to backup and archive, as the messaging servers are located on the same high-speed backbone as the backup and archiving servers.

Zones Engineers Viewpoint

The popularity of the Exchange 2003/2007 to 2013 migration is a testament to the stability and reliability of the Microsoft Exchange 2003 and 2007 messaging platforms.

After nearly ten years of solid performance, when a Zones client is looking to upgrade, they expect nothing less than significant improvements in the performance, reliability, and usability of a modern messaging platform, and Exchange 2013 delivers.

Zones system engineers have been designing, deploying, and managing Exchange 2003/2007 platforms for years, and they anxiously awaited the release of Exchange 2013. It exceeded expectations in every regard.

Continually Improving

When designing Exchange 2013, Microsoft really understood what administrators and engineers – those who use the product every day – want out of the latest iteration of Exchange server:

- > Increased reliability
- > Fault tolerance
- > High-availability
- > Virtualization support
- > Consolidation
- > Larger mailbox support

After designing a highly-available replication solution to servers in the cluster – including those in remote data centers – and watching how Exchange 2013 continues perform through network and system disturbances, systems engineers and businesses can't help but appreciate how good this messaging platform really is.

