Thinking About an Alternative to Outlook's Public Folders?

By Kevin Baker, CEO Knowledgemill

75% of company data is stored in email.
How do you find and share yours?

Background

The increasing rise in the volume of organisations' email means platforms need to do more than just send and receive. Email usage has defied the analysts' predictions: rather than being replaced by other communications forms - like Instant Messaging, Group Chat and other collaboration tools - it remains the primary messaging option for many businesses.

Over 269 billion emails were sent and received each day in 2017 alone. This figure is expected to increase to over 333 billion daily emails by 2022. Additionally, in 2018 the number of global email users amounted to 3.8 billion and is set to grow to 4.4 billion users in 2023. The abundance of emails being sent and received is putting our inboxes under incredible strain - a strain that can't be maintained.

Simply put, without the correct organisation, processes and systems in place, emails will be a burden on business success. Information will continually be lost in cluttered inboxes and you'll be exposing your business - both financial and reputational.

Currently many companies use Microsoft Public Folders for email collaboration which have been available in Microsoft Exchange since Exchange 2003. Many of those same organisations are finding it difficult to move to 365 because of the Public Folder performance challenges. These enterprise email applications are not always the best option for email collaboration.

Essentially, finding a replacement for Public Folders is not an easy or straightforward job as the wrong decision can delay a move to 'the Cloud' or can seriously impact a company's operational efficiency and customer service. This can create business issues and result in the loss of revenue, customer service, regulatory or legal issues because emails cannot be found.

Microsoft have made changes to Exchange and Outlook, but squeezing collaborative features into these enterprise applications has not been as effective as could be hoped.

This paper focuses on Knowledgemill Mail Manager as an alternative to Outlook Public Folders.

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Over 269 billion emails were sent and received each day in 2017.

Radicati Technology Market Research Firm

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So Let's Start at The Beginning,
What Are Public Folders?

In Microsoft Outlook, a public folder is a folder created to share information with others. The owner of a public folder can set privileges so that only a select group of users have access to the folder, or the folder can be made available to everyone on the network who uses the same mail client. Public folders in Outlook can contain contacts, calendar items, messages, journal entries, or Outlook Forms.

This is similar to a shared folder on a hard drive, except it is emails and associated information being stored. As an example, you might have set up a folder for Exchange Public Folders to share customer communications.

Are Outlook Shared Mailboxes Limited?

Users of Office 365 get access to shared Mailboxes. They are similar to Public Folders although there are no separate owners or administrator. Shared Mailboxes are email inboxes which multiple users can view.

> *While email is arguably the most widely used application in the enterprise, its effects on productivity have been widely reported. In 2012, McKinsey warned that the average interaction worker spends an estimated 28% of their work-week managing email.*
>
> *2012, McKinsey*

Is Public Folders the Right Tool for your Organisation?

Public Folders are one of the most popular enterprise solutions but there are a number of areas that might be considered if planning to use them to improve collaboration in your organisation.

Performance when moving to the cloud (365)

Performance can commonly be a problem when wanting to move from an on premise to cloud solution. This really depends on the amount of information being stored in your Public Folders; as the amount of data grows the user response times can increase.

Not a Complete Record

There is only manual filing available which means the completeness of the data / emails available in your organisations Public Folders is dependent on the filing discipline of the staff.

No Space Saving

There is no de-duplication or compression of emails stored in Public Folders. In addition, emails can be filed by multiple members of staff. One staff member does not know if another staff member has filed an email without looking in the relevant Public Folder.

No Time Saving

Every item filed into your Public Folders is filed manually; there is no automatic filing available. The best that can be achieved is to use some simple Outlook rules.

Weak search capability

Outlook's Public Folders have a limited search capability and no way to search across multiple folders.

Deployment and on-going maintenance isn't very smooth

Exchange and Outlook setups, and ongoing changes, can be quite demanding on your IT team.

Mobile usage isn't convenient

When accessing Public Folders via email on your phone, you'll have to stick to IMAP mail, which can be slow, and is also prone to sync issues.

No web access to Public Folders

Public Folders cannot be accessed from a web browser, Public Folders are accessed from your email client.

No way to include associated documents

Public Folders are for email only, documents cannot be included with emails. As an example, including documents can be useful if an organisation wants to maintain a complete customer or supplier file.

Performance degrades the larger the number of users

If there are a large number of staff who need to have access to Public Folders, performance can degrade.

Lets Talk About The Alternatives?

There are plenty of different types of email management software available today. At Knowledgemill, we offer an AI-powered email management solution specifically for Outlook users which solves all of the Public Folder drawbacks described before while also providing a complete email management solution.

The key Knowledgemill Mail Manager features are as follows:

1. Reduced time processing email

Knowledgemill Mail Manager is a simple but smart Outlook plugin that works by filing up to 80% of your emails and attachments automatically inside folders, located in the location of the customer's choice (both-on-premise or to a cloud storage system). It also indexes all filed emails and attacments. If not auto-filed then the user is given suggested locations based on previous filing behaviour.

2. Improved collaboration and reduced time processing email

Emails filed by one person are then shown to be filed for all other recipients (i.e. only requires one person to file for multiple recipients).

3. Your Data

All data filed by Knowledgemill Mail Manager is still owned by you. We do not 'own' your data – it continues to be filed to your existing setup so you retain control of your most critical asset.

4. Keep more online

Streamlines data storage as it de-duplicates (only stores one copy) and compresses emails – Typically a 15:1 compression rate allowing more customer / supplier information to be kept online.

5. User friendly, easy to use

Simple Outlook plug-in makes Knowledge Mail Manager extremely user friendly. Training is available from our dedicated experts if needed.

6. Business focused

Organised according to your business requirements (e.g. projects, jobs, clients, matters, etc.).

7. Reduced risk

Has a mandatory filing option to give confidence 100% of correspondence is captured.

8. Reduced risk

Security settings ensure only the right staff have access to the right emails. This can be set to an individual level if required.

9. Saves time

Powerful search for single or multiple workspaces. Multiple ways all designed to find results, fast:

• Multiple Filter options to hone in on the results fast – Quick Filter against email header, Just My Emails, Attachment View, type of attachment, Date, email domains and/or specific email address).

• Advanced Search capability – search by sender, recipient, subject, full text including attachment content (not images or PDF) in a single workspace, set of workspaces or the entire database.

• Advanced Search followed by Filtering – searching alone quite often still produces multiple results. With KM you can filter the search results, enabling you to get to the results even faster.

10. No disruption to current business processes

The same powerful search when integrated with a third party solution - If Knowledgemill Mail Manager is integrated with a third party Doc Management solution (e.g. SharePoint) or native Knowledgemill Document Manager, the Advanced Search function will search all documents as well as emails.

11. Easy to access 'on the go'

Mobile apps (iOS and Android) allow you to file and retrieve emails anytime, anywhere and enjoy standardised (set and controlled by you) email filing on all projects.

12. Email history included on 'day one'

Easy to migrate historic emails using Folder Sync (set-up a sync between Outlook folders and KM workspaces), conversation filer and public folder migration too.

13. Easy deployment

Knowledgemill Mail Manager is a light application that doesn't require changes or disruption to your existing IT setup or a complicated install process or downtime and can be deployed in the Cloud or on premise as required.

14. Value for money

Pays for itself on 'day one'.

"Never lose another email with Knowledgemill and automate up to 80% of your email filing."

Finally

In summary, Outlook Public Folders are an outdated and underpowered tool for today's fast-paced world.

Knowledgemill Mail Manager is the alternative to Public Folders that gives you the power, features, and usability you need for smooth collaboration and email management.

Knowledgemill Mail Manager automates the complex process of filing and simplifies searching for emails, attachments and documents across your entire organisation by securely storing all data into one central database. Relax in the knowledge that you will never lose an email or document again, saving valuable time with instant access to all important and relevant data at the click of a button anywhere and at any time.

✳ knowledgemill

For more information

To learn more about Knowledgemill solutions to help you protect, govern and know your data, contact your Knowledgemill representative or visit:

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