



Email policy must be higher priority

Firms are failing to tackle growing legal and cost issues

Rachel Fielding

BUSINESSES need to take email management far more seriously, according to Gartner.

Bandwidth requirements are doubling every six months and email is a major part of the burden, says the analyst.

'The cost of supporting email, technology infrastructure, IT and so on, has reached a point where chief information officers are under pressure to sort it out,' said Gartner vice president Alexander Drobik.

He believes that too many business people turn a blind eye to the potential problems and fail to allocate resources because they do not understand the risks or obligations.

'Many business people don't realise that they could be breaking the law,' said Drobik. 'Digital content is a fingerprint of a company's activities.'

'Legislators – including the government and the stock exchange – know that the smoking gun is in the network. But most companies don't have anyone who's thinking about the issue,' he added.

Brian Collins, a director of BuyIT, which promotes best practice for purchasers and suppliers



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of IT, and a former IT executive at GCHQ, said: 'What's lacking is a professional approach inside IT departments.'

John Rade, president and chief executive at ecommerce and financial software company AXS-One, says that between 70 per cent and 80 per cent of the information in a typical organisation is carried by email in a totally unstructured way.

'Given the pervasiveness of email, you have to treat it as a system. We need a more systematic approach to email because whether we like it or not, email is a mission-critical system in the modern organisation,' said Rade.

Barrister and author Stephen Mason says that putting proper

- Too many companies underestimate the need for email management
- Failing to control email use may have financial and legal implications

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systems in place would have a self-regulating effect on employees.

'There are technical solutions to allow companies to create an email audit trail,' he said. 'Once you know you're going to get caught for sending something you shouldn't, you'll stop.'
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