

HILL DICKINSON

Seamless Email Continuity Supports Complex Acquisitions and Major IT Projects

Throughout the acquisition of Halliwells and the migration of email from Novell GroupWise to Outlook with Exchange, business continuity, and particularly email availability, was essential at all times.

Context

Hill Dickinson LLP is a leading and award winning commercial law firm with offices in the UK, Greece and Singapore. Hill Dickinson has expanded significantly over recent years with IT Director Keith Feeny and his 26-strong IT team supporting the business through a series of mergers and acquisitions while successfully maintaining and upgrading the firm's IT systems.

At a Glance

Company

- Hill Dickson LLP (www.hilldickinson.com)
- Industry: Legal
- Number of Email Users: 1,490

Objectives

- Seamless transition through acquisition and migration
- Business continuity maintained at all times
- Alignment of email data retention policies
- Integration with existing systems and applications

Benefits

- Email continuity throughout major business and IT projects
- No disruption to users and seamless client service during transitions
- Mimecast cloud-based email accelerates switchover and mitigates risk
- Mimecast cloud-based email management frees up IT team to upgrade the firm's systems and support its ongoing expansion
- Improved management of email within the organisation

“Mimecast provided a straightforward way of dealing with an important element of a complex acquisition, while ensuring email continuity throughout the entire process.”

Keith Feeny - IT Director, Hill Dickinson

Challenge

In 2010, Hill Dickinson acquired Halliwells' Liverpool and Sheffield offices, which presented the challenge of integrating an additional 175 staff into the firm. Additional IT projects to support the firm's growth included migrating its email system from Novell GroupWise to Outlook with Exchange and moving its document management to iManage. It was essential to maintain business continuity, and particularly email availability, throughout these important changes.

Solution

In the immediate aftermath of the acquisition, the IT team had to work fast, transferring 175 email accounts over a single weekend. Even though Halliwells was also using Mimecast, their email data retention policies differed from Hill Dickinson's.

Keith Feeny explains; “As Halliwells retained only six months' worth of mail in Mimecast, rather than the ten-year archive that we use, we then had to import historic email into Mimecast to gain the storage and continuity benefits. Thanks to Mimecast, the fast changeover over one weekend meant that our new joiners were up and running following the acquisition, with no disruption to lawyers or their clients. And even during the transition users from both firms could access their email directly via Mimecast.”

A major complication was that Hill Dickinson was acquiring only certain parts of Halliwells, so it was important to identify the email accounts of the users who were moving and separate them from the rest.

“A key challenge was transferring all the data that related to the part of the business we were acquiring while protecting client confidentiality for other parties,” continues Feeny.

“Having agreed with the relevant parties exactly what data we could transfer, Mimecast redirected only the specific accounts that we were acquiring. Mimecast provided a straightforward way of dealing with an important element of a complex acquisition, while ensuring email continuity throughout the entire process,” he adds.

Mimecast is also supporting Hill Dickinson's transition from GroupWise to Outlook with Exchange. The firm recently experienced some outages with GroupWise, including crashes, transmission delays and disruptions to the BlackBerry interface.

“These incidents could potentially have put the firm at risk of being unable to deal with client communication,” says Feeny. “However, we knew that we wouldn’t be entirely without email as people could use the Mimecast web access. A post-incident review highlighted that had we been using Mimecast’s always-on connection for Outlook, as we are now, the risk would have been further mitigated.”

As Halliwells was already using Exchange, Mimecast assisted with the accelerated implementation of a Microsoft Exchange infrastructure in Hill Dickinson’s Liverpool office following the acquisition.

“Again, without Mimecast this would have been impossible to achieve over one weekend,” comments Feeny.

Mimecast’s cloud-based email solution frees up Hill Dickinson’s IT department, enabling Feeny and his team to concentrate on major projects that support the firm’s strategic objectives.

“We don’t have to monitor the capacity of our disk storage or SANs or worry about creating additional work for our help desk,” he explains, adding that Mimecast facilitates business agility, notably integrating new offices in different locations.