

# Search: Email's Holy Grail or Red Herring?

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**T**hanks to a little thing known as regulatory compliance, the email management industry has made measurable strides in recent years. And while the industry has yet to develop a magic pill to cure the world's email woes, it's clear that vendors and their customers are finally finding success in reeling in the intractable problems inherent in corporate email.

Discussions such as this generally revolve around strategic and process-oriented considerations like email governance, corporate filing structures, archiving and information lifecycle management. Certainly, these are key variables that serve to set an organization's email management agenda. But what's most curious about the dialog surrounding this market is how quickly search and retrieval is dismissed as a vital component to the solution.

To be certain, search is not the entire answer. A simple full-text search, in and of itself, only reduces Mt. Everest to Mt. McKinley. But to ignore the search aspect of email management is akin to producing a textbook without an index or table of contents—the book might be nice and organized, but printed with no means for quickly locating content blocks of varying size. More importantly, this position assumes search hasn't advanced beyond the garden-variety keyword query.

## The Importance of Modern Search

The truth is today's sophisticated search technology offers a higher level of functionality and value that few organizations are tapping to control their ever-growing email stores. Modern search tools not only enable greater precision when the situation calls for reactive, real-time retrieval, but they also provide for the very proactive, process-driven structure that has enterprises so fixated. Consider a global organization with 12 offices, 1,500 employees and King Kong-sized email stores. Where does it even begin?

Logically, the first step is to build structure around repositories. On a broad scale, perhaps this manifests itself in the form of a classification scheme designed according to region, business unit, job function or a combination of all three. Or maybe it's more specific, requiring that email be categorized according to tax-related and non-tax-related information. The bottom line is: it's one thing to derive the structure; it's something entirely different to resolve that scheme in an automated, efficient and comprehensive fashion. And this is where the search portion of email management is often overlooked.

Current-generation enterprise search provides organizations with the ability to automatically categorize their content, while also

giving them the tools required to customize the structure according to their unique needs and business rules. This is done through a variety of means, such as leveraging existing metadata found in emails, injecting custom metadata as required, extracting key entities like social security numbers and credit card numbers, and applying this information back into the structure. In this sense, search does much of the heavy lifting, while also refining the structure.

However, it's important to recognize that the structure is only half of the equation. At the end of the day, government agencies are most concerned with access, not how well you've organized your email: "Give me all finance-related correspondence concerning Smith's comments about the Farnsworth deal from January 2001 to August 2002. Oh, and include attachments."

## Now What?

IT administrators could call upon their taxonomy, but a taxonomy that's so detailed to include such a specific bucket is clearly a taxonomy gone wild. Plus, it presupposes that your classification scheme is comprehensive and 100% accurate. Do you want to bet the farm on a management solution that lacks advanced retrieval capabilities?

In effect, structure and search play complementary roles that leverage each other's strengths. In this scenario, administrators can conduct pre-query refinement by pointing the search engine at a particular node of the taxonomy, and then mine even more specific information using a proximity query filtered by a date range (i.e., search the "Finance Dept" repository for "Smith within a paragraph of Farnsworth" between Jan. 2001 and Aug. 2002).

Although a particular example, this scenario illustrates the value inherent in devising a system that accounts for both organization and retrieval. Quite simply, this approach yields a well-defined structure that is easily refined and mined via advanced search technology that accounts for variables such as key term position, differing date and number expressions, attachments, metadata and more. ■

Established in 1988, ISYS Search Software is a global supplier of enterprise search solutions for business and government. The company's award-winning software suite offers a broad range of products designed for searching desktops, networks, websites and intranets. ISYS has been deployed by thousands of organizations operating in a variety of industries, including government, legal, law enforcement, financial services, healthcare and recruitment.

Headquartered in Sydney, Australia, ISYS also maintains offices in Denver and the UK. The company's customers include the US Department of Homeland Security, Cisco Systems, Boeing, Perkins Coie, Management Recruiters International, the IRS, the US Department of Justice, the Miami Police Department and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona. Additional information can be obtained by phone at 800.992.4797 and via the Web at [www.isys-search.com](http://www.isys-search.com).

## The ISYS Difference

ISYS Search Software's award-winning, seventh-generation technology has been integrated into such well-respected solutions as EMC Legato's EmailXtender and TOWER Software's TRIM Context. Core products such as ISYS:desktop 7, ISYS:web 7 and ISYS:sdk 7 have helped thousands of organizations overcome the manageability and accuracy obstacles of email management via a variety of features, including:

- ◆ **On-the-fly categorization** for the speed and ease of results navigation;
- ◆ **Sophisticated query methods**, such as proximity and Boolean, enable rapid and accurate retrieval of specific content;
- ◆ **Advanced metadata handling**, including the ability to search by, inject and classify according to metadata; and
- ◆ **User-defined synonyms** to account for unique terminology and enable higher levels of efficiency via conceptual search.

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