

How to move to Google Apps ©
by Gregory Dover
The GAD Group LLC
<http://www.gadgroup.com>

Every business needs the ability to communicate both internal with staff and externally with patrons, customers, vendors, and prospective customers. There are two tried and true ways of communicating today: via phone and email. Yes, there are other ways including texting, chat, blogs, etc. But phone and email are constant tools that have withstood the test of time.

Today, we will focus on the email aspect of communicating and specifically how to move your business from internal email systems or hosted email platforms to Google Apps.

Why Google Apps? Why not your web company's hosted email solution? After all, its cheap and somewhat reliable.

Google Apps provide some technologies that make their offering more compelling and worthwhile for small, medium and large sized businesses.

Google Apps offering include the following:

Email

- Mailbox is capable of storing 25 gigabytes of storage. Most other hosting solutions cap your mailbox storage at much lower levels.
- Built-in contact list
- Global Address List that allow everyone in the business to share a common address book
- Label technology that allow you to tag emails by category or subject. Think of this as you would a folder.
- Search capability that is second to none. I have a huge mailbox that stores messages back to 2002. I can search and retrieve content from those messages in under 5 seconds!
- Email delegation give busy business professionals the ability to allow their secretary or administrative assistance to monitor and send email to others on behalf of the business manager.

Chat

- Instantly communicate with staff. This is great if staff is working in different geographic locations. This is also a great tool for admins and customer service staff. They'll have the ability to instantly communicate with a manager. Imagine if sales people had the ability to ask managers pricing questions on the fly without picking up the phone. The GAD Group has used Chat to instantly communicate with technicians in the field. We also use the tool to compliment our business processes.
- Create a group chat. This allow smaller groups within larger groups to chat about business issues affecting their team only. We have used group chat to converse about issues pertaining to technical issues.

Calendar

- Google Apps gives every account a personal calendar.
- Shared calendars are available for those who wish to allow other staff to see their agenda.

- Shared calendars can also be created for conference rooms, study rooms, meeting rooms, etc.
- Calendars can be made public for others outside of your business domain to view
- Administrative staff can be granted privileges to modify calendar entries on behalf of managers.

Documents

- A word processor, spreadsheet, forms and presentation module is also part of the Google Apps offering.
- Documents can be created quickly and shared with others with relative ease
- Staff can give other staff permission to certain files while keeping all other files secure and private
- Spreadsheets can be shared and edited by multiple staff members with little effort

Sites

- Need an internal web page to share documents, events and HR forms with staff. Google Apps include a module that allow you to quickly create an "intranet" for staff only.
- Upload documents, training manuals, expense report forms, etc. to your "intranet" and allow staff to easily access information

Blackberry

- Google Apps allow you to sync your email and calendar with your Blackberry or other PDAs

Remote Access

- Because all services are online, you can access all your Google Apps services from anywhere in the world.

As can be seen, Google Apps is a comprehensive collaboration platform that allow your business to communicate effectively for a fixed annual price.

Question: What's the Return on Investment?

Answer: No need to purchase servers or storage. Google manages this for you. Google uses cheap commoditized hardware to manage your collaboration experience. It is much cheaper to allow them to manage it than it is to utilize your IT person for it. Lastly, you can now hire your IT person to perform more meaningful tasks that may add value to your bottom line.

If you are a local government, library or school district, then Return on Investment is measured in terms of Cost Recovery. Consequently, you recover costs relating to time and money spent on managing email, storage, file servers and mail archival. Employee productivity goes up due to the many tools available for collaboration and communications.

Question: What about outages? What happens if my internet connection goes down? What if Google crashes?

Answer: Google promises 99.9% uptime. However, they have had their moments of outages. We encountered an outage recently that lasted about 10 minutes. In these rare instances, you are left to wait for the service to be restored. If your connection to the Internet goes down, you will not have access to the Google Apps services. This will not pose a problem to most businesses due to the reliability of telecom providers like AT&T, Verizon and Comcast. Think of this as you would your other utilities (Electric, Gas, Water). These utilities provide the needed service 99.999% of the time. However, the public has experienced cases where the power grid died, or a gas pipeline burst or was hit by an

unsuspecting construction worker. How about those instances where a water main break caused the whole neighborhood to lose water. The bottom line is that every service has its outages. The most important thing to remember is to contract with a great Service Provider that has 24 x 7 accessibility, a help desk and the ability to quickly respond to problems when they occur.

Question: Who do I call for Help and Support

Answer: Google provides a wealth of information online. But for those that need personal attention and quick access to technical support, we are here to help.

How to move to Google Apps

Moving to Google Apps involves a few steps. They include:

1. Making a list of all your business rules and requirements as it relates to Email, Calendar, Documents, etc.
2. Purchase Google Apps for each staff person. The cost is \$50 per staff person. You pay once a year for each accounts. The GAD Group LLC is a Google Apps reseller.
3. Update your Internet Domain record so that all mail is forwarded to your Google Apps account
4. Configure Google Apps to work based on your company's specific business rules and requirements.
5. Test with a few staff members before going live
6. After you're satisfied with testing, add remaining staff members to Google Apps
7. Start Using Google Apps

Of course, our company can assist you every step of the way with the processes mentioned above. Our company moved to Google Apps over a weekend. There were hiccups along the way, but nothing that was earth shattering. Our old email system was Microsoft Exchange and Outlook. Google supplied us with tools that migrated our emails over to Google Apps with little effort.

For larger companies that have an email system installed already, Google provide a number of tools that will make the transition smooth.

With Google Apps there is no need to purchase expensive servers. The need to add storage goes away also. Lastly, you won't get messages from IT informing you that your mailbox is full!