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### ***Mimosa NearPoint – Unified Protection, Archiving, and Recovery for Microsoft Exchange***

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**Abstract:** [Mimosa Systems](#) is a newcomer to the email management and archiving space. Its first product – NearPoint Server for Microsoft Exchange – combines email archiving, recovery, and storage management into a single, unified solution, which is a clear market differentiator. The company is hoping its message of “unified email data management” will resonate among both enterprise and mid-market customers; betting that the same forces that drove demand for email management and archiving solutions in the financial services industry will trickle down beyond Wall Street and the largest enterprises over the next several years. Despite formidable competition from the likes of established players such as iLumin, EMC, Veritas, and Zantaz, ESG believes Mimosa has the potential to make a name for itself as this market segment continues to expand and gain strategic relevance.

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#### **Mimosa serves up a tasty EMM cocktail**

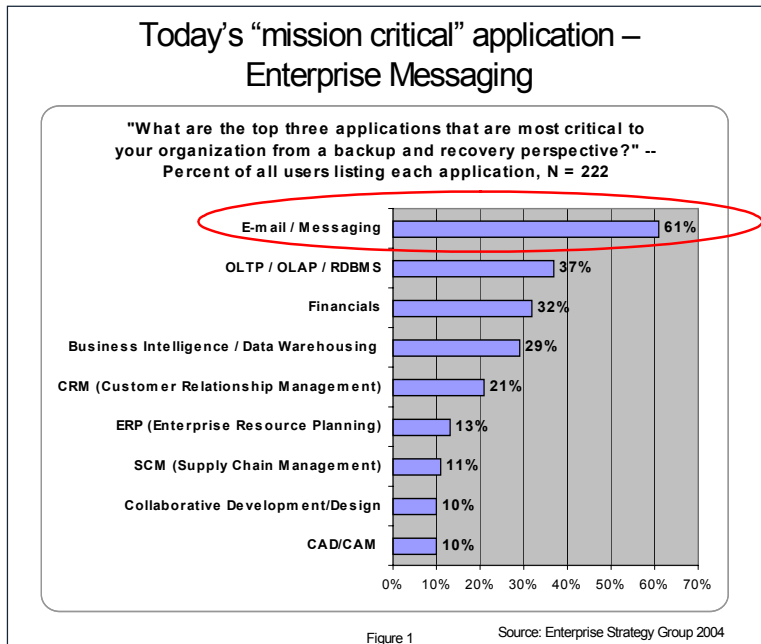
Anyone acquainted with Microsoft Exchange — business users, IT professionals, CxOs, etc. -- is painfully aware of the difficulties the application can present from both a management and storage perspective. It is agonizing to back up, has a voracious appetite for disk capacity, and is downright unwieldy when it comes to finding and, more importantly, recovering individual files, mailboxes, tasks, calendar items, etc. In fact, restoring individual files can often take days, weeks, or more to complete, if it can be done at all using traditional tape-based methods. As email volumes grow over time and the impact of not having near-immediate access to mission-critical email content is more widely felt among organizations due to growing regulatory and other governance concerns, enterprise message management (EMM) will become an increasingly high implementation priority on most IT departments “to-do” lists. These challenges are driving users to evaluate and deploy disk-based data protection solutions to improve the performance of both backup and recovery. Likewise, many of these same users have also deployed separate email management and archiving software solutions to address compliance or operational requirements associated with electronic messaging. By enabling the benefits of both disk-based backup/recovery in addition to many of the requisite features users will need to address compliance or governance mandates, or simply get a handle on the growth of their email and unstructured data, Mimosa’s NearPoint solution strikes an attractive balance.

Already, as a recent Enterprise Strategy Group (ESG) survey reveals, EMM is one of the most unique challenges facing IT and storage professionals today (Figure 1). The challenge before organizations is staying on top of the email problem, else risking potentially significant business (e.g., fines, downtime costs, etc.) and legal consequences.

Mimosa Systems founded in 2003 and based in Santa Clara, CA, hopes to change this picture going forward. Its NearPoint for Microsoft Exchange Server software provides a platform for unified email data management (e.g., email recovery, archiving, and storage optimization). Though limited to Microsoft Exchange Server in its initial release, ESG expects Mimosa to add support for other new, critical unstructured data types in the future, including collaborative applications (e.g., Microsoft Office SharePoint Portal Server), Instant Messaging, voice-over-IP (VoIP), and documents. Mimosa’s decision to tightly adhere to Microsoft Exchange standards yet enable users to implement NearPoint software on any standards-based server running Windows Server 2003, is a good one -keep it simple and let the users choose how they implement the technology.

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ESG believes the Mimosa solution does a good job of consolidating many of the most critical aspects of protecting and preserving email while, at the same time, helping IT departments improve their ability to manage unrelenting email growth and associated consumption of storage, server, and administrative resources.



Further, by incorporating regulatory compliance-enabling features and enabling administrators, auditors, and compliance officers, etc., to do quick recoveries, ESG believes NearPoint should also appeal to legal departments within larger organizations as well as law firms themselves.

Of course, the road before Mimosa is not without obstacles. Mimosa is traveling untested waters, having set its sights on the broad corporate and mid-tier segments, not the enterprise financial services market that has already recognized the value of such solutions. While ESG believes it is a "good bet" that this market will follow the course being set by the high-end enterprise, only time will tell the extent to which they will embrace this type of technology. Additionally, Mimosa faces potentially stiff competition from larger, more established players who are also looking to court the channel with similar products.

### Addressing the technology challenges and business risks of email – with a single solution

When it comes to managing MS Exchange environments, users repeatedly cite individual mailbox recovery, email discovery, mailbox storage optimization, database recovery time, and retention/disposition management issues as key trouble spots. What is great about — and currently unique to — NearPoint is its ability to tackle a variety of IT and business/governance challenges from a single product using a single copy of data. It is able to do so because, unlike some email archiving, backup, or even replication products, it was built from the ground up for EMM and tightly integrated with Exchange's native data management APIs.

Mimosa's NearPoint software runs on a standard Windows server; no agents or filter drivers need to be installed on participating MS Exchange servers or desktops (multiple MS Exchange servers can be managed using the software). The software makes an initial full copy of the MS Exchange database using built-in Exchange backup APIs or third-party replication software; the copy is moved to a local NearPoint server where it is stored on network- or direct-attached disk storage (e.g., SATA disk). It should be noted that Mimosa plans to support content-addressable storage (CAS) systems, such as EMC Centera, Permabit Permeon, or Archivas Arc, among others, in future NearPoint releases.

### Beyond the basic benefits of disk-based protection

Mimosa developed NearPoint as a disk-based solution, but what really sets it apart from traditional tape-based data protection is the combination of disk's performance benefits and Mimosa's proprietary software. Mimosa made the smart choice to leverage Microsoft's own Exchange Extensible Storage Engine (ESE) API for its Application Shadowing feature. Integrating into the ESE API guarantees database consistency as the shadowing process occurs, but strategically should also help Mimosa overcome objections potential customers may have about deploying a solution from a fairly new vendor. Via the ESE Backup API, which enables both full and incremental online backups of the Exchange database, Application Shadowing maintains a full copy of the Exchange database on disk that is always consistent with the production database. As changes are made on the production side, (e.g. a new email is composed, a calendar entry is revised or deleted, etc.) these same changes are applied to the shadow copy.

Another strong feature of NearPoint, called Log Shipping, can be scheduled to run on a regular periodic basis (e.g. hourly, daily, weekly), or consistently. When scheduled to run on a recurring schedule, the process, known as Periodic Log Shipping, relies upon Exchange's native Incremental Backup API. The real key to enabling near-continuous protection via NearPoint is Dynamic Log Shipping, which constantly monitors the Exchange file system for the creation of new log

entries and copies any new entries to NearPoint upon creation where they are immediately applied to the pre-existing full copy of the Exchange database. This is somewhat akin to a traditional synthetic backup, where multiple incremental backups are merged with the last-known-good full backup to create a new, up-to-date full. Of course in a tape-based world, all full and incremental backups are segregated from each other, sometimes on the same physical tape, but more typically scattered across multiple pieces of media. Clearly the combination of disk-based protection with NearPoint's features is a vast improvement over this more traditional method when recovery speed and granularity are a requirement.

### **It's all about the recovery, stupid!**

Since recoveries are performed directly from the NearPoint server, data does not have to be restored back through the MS Exchange server. In fact, recovery is just a "right-click" away; any authorized user, notably a business manager or individual knowledge worker with the appropriate security permissions, can restore an email, folder, calendar item, etc. In other words, NearPoint enables user self-access to and self-restoration of archived email messages and associated content. The entire process is done off-host, so there is no disruption to the production Exchange environment. The only time-drain is upfront when the initial copy process is done; on average, users should reserve a weekend to complete the initial full copy. Given its tight integration with native MS Exchange and the near-real-time protection NearPoint provides, ESG believes Mimosa's "continuous application shadowing" process can be positioned as an "application-aware" form of continuous data protection (CDP).

Beyond its CDP functionality enabled by Application Shadowing, NearPoint has another capability Mimosa calls "Smart Message Extraction," which clearly differentiates the product from other email archiving solutions available today. Essentially, what this extraction process does is cull information from the mailboxes, messages, folders, tasks, calendar items, etc., in the Exchange database for indexing and archiving purposes. The content is then fully indexed by message subject line, calendar entry date(s), message body, contents, contact details, etc. A "global single-instancing" process ensures that only one copy of data is stored in the repository – again significantly, reducing back-end storage requirements. When used in conjunction with a storage system that offers single-instance-storage (SIS) capabilities natively, Mimosa, like other email archiving solutions, simply disables the SIS feature within NearPoint, allowing the hardware to perform this function – the end result is the same.

By creating this always up-to-date "indexed object repository," as Mimosa calls it, NearPoint doesn't force the user to go through the painful process of doing either a brick-level or full database recovery simply to restore individual user mailboxes or even unique messages and data objects. Unlike brick-level backups, which can take hours to complete and impact the MS Exchange environment, NearPoint does its more granular-type backup of changed blocks quickly and off-host with no disruption to the MS Exchange server.

The IT benefits of this type of approach are clear: Users regain control of their email environments (no more waiting for IT/storage administrators to recover files or, even worse, to say recovery isn't possible because the tapes are bad, missing, or the backup job didn't work), email content is quickly recoverable, and the MS Exchange environment is not disrupted for a time-consuming backup processes. If backup success is measured by recovery success then recovery in email environments is only as good as the searching capability. One of the biggest problems many existing email archiving solutions have today is they have very primitive searching capabilities, allowing users to conduct only broad queries by sender/recipient name, date, or perhaps keyword – in an enterprise-class organization with literally tens-of-thousands of mailboxes supporting daily message volume that can run into the millions, these limitations are serious liabilities and potential threats from a legal / compliance perspective. NearPoint, in contrast, provides users with three restoration/searching options, which are tightly aligned with Exchange's architecture to enable recovery at the server, storage group, database, and mailbox level.

While Mimosa expects Quick Search, a "Google"-like feature to be users' main searching mechanism (users enter whatever they can remember about the email/attachment they are trying to recover and the NearPoint software scans the indexed object repository for matching information); ESG believes NearPoint's "browse view" will also be particularly helpful to organizations, especially in legal/regulatory situations. This browse view allows users to roll back the state of mailboxes to a previous point in time (e.g., two days, two weeks, two months prior, etc.); the mailbox hierarchy appears exactly as it did at that particular point in time, allowing users to easily find messages and attachments, while enabling legal, compliance, or risk management professionals to conduct historically-accurate reviews of messages and mailboxes. A third search option resembles the Microsoft Outlook advanced searching capability, should users choose to use this option.

## **A look inside: Business/governance benefits**

Disaster-recovery benefits aside, ESG believes that NearPoint also has potentially significant implications for business/governance going forward. Not only can users leverage NearPoint's granular searching capabilities to expedite electronic discovery in litigious situations, but they can also use the software to set archiving policies according to regulatory requirements or other governance (e.g., Sarbanes-Oxley, HIPAA, etc.) mandates. For example, users can set policies that dictate how long email content is saved (e.g., executives may be required to keep data for seven years, while other employees may only need to keep the data on hand for a year) and who has access to it (e.g., a HR director may be given access to an employee's personal mailbox in a sexual harassment suit, etc.) Another benefit of NearPoint to legal, risk, or compliance professionals comes by virtue of the Application Shadowing and Smart Message Extraction features which don't simply retain the latest email, calendar entry, or memo, but keep a complete running tally of all record operations (e.g., creation, edits, forwards, deletions, etc.) as they occur within the Exchange database. Such a process is equivalent to preserving an electronic "chain of custody" that provides an accurate, time-stamped account, of all the activities that occur, enabling recovery of an individual mailbox, for instance, to any specific point in time. The value here is that NearPoint is a single platform that makes it easy for users (IT, business, or legal, perhaps) to search for, locate, monitor, protect, and recover email and other Exchange-resident content in a historically accurate format, which is critical to complying with various regulations and governance mandates. Additionally, NearPoint enables administrators to grant "auditor" access which allows search and retrieval operations to be performed across multiple individual mailboxes; providing point-in-time views as they existed for calendar, contacts, journals, tasks, and of course, all folders within the mailbox itself. ESG believes that this type of comprehensive governance capabilities will become increasingly important to organizations as they become more familiar with the ins and outs, as well as the dos and don'ts, of regulatory compliance and information governance.

## **What's Next?**

The company just introduced its Disaster Recovery Option this month. The DRO is a many to one, or one to many, replication/disaster recovery option for the NearPoint Server. Users can combine the NearPoint continuous application protection of Exchange data with third party replication products that replicate the NearPoint archive for a total disaster recovery solution that includes the application data and all archived data. Mimosa has teamed with NSI in supporting their DoubleTake replication product as a solution to replicate the NearPoint server. This disaster recovery solution, as always, requires no agents or software (zero-footprint) on the Exchange Server and the entire solution supports Microsoft's Messaging Dial Tone recovery method, ensuring the fastest way back up from a disaster.

You can also expect to see a regulatory compliance edition of the product in short order, to take advantage of all the email capture issues.

## **The Bottom Line**

There's no question that Mimosa has a clear vision and refined value proposition for NearPoint – it's aimed at making management, preservation, and recovery of data easier in Exchange environments. Mimosa's approach is unique as well – providing backup, recovery, archiving, local disaster recovery, and some electronic data discovery (EDD) features in a single unified package. The question, therefore, isn't whether NearPoint is any good but whether the company has the muscle and enough differentiation to compete against incumbent email-archiving-focused ISVs, storage systems vendors (e.g., EMC/Legato), and storage management players (e.g., Veritas/KVS). That said, many of these competitors have focused on low-hanging fruit; tactical opportunities in financial services, healthcare, and other heavily regulated industries, so Mimosa's strategy to address other market segments and the broader commercial market opportunity may pay off in the long run. If the last three years are any indication as to the impact that compliance, governance, and data privacy requirements will have across the broad mainstream market in the future, Mimosa may not have long to wait before these users wake up to the reality that they need this type of capability just like their brethren in enterprise-class organizations and financial services companies do.

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