

## Re: [SLE] Avoiding Microsoft Exchange Server

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- *From:* "John Scott" <[praiserock@xxxxxxxxx](mailto:praiserock@xxxxxxxxx)>
  - *Date:* Mon, 15 May 2006 20:29:18 -0400
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On 5/15/06, Paul Abrahams <[abrahams@xxxxxxx](mailto:abrahams@xxxxxxx)> wrote:

On Monday 15 May 2006 5:33 pm, Hans du Plooy wrote:

- > On Mon, 2006-05-15 at 15:48 -0400, Paul Abrahams wrote:
- >> I'm doing some pro bono computer consulting for my local municipal
- >> offices, and as part of that project I've installed a Linux server that
- >> does automated backup (hurrah for rsync) and also provides a file
- >> repository. However, the town wants to get a Microsoft server because
- >> some of the network application they're getting (municipal taxes,
- >> accounting, etc.) assume that environment.
- >
- > If you tell us which applications they're wanting, we may be able to
- > help. I don't see you mentioning Exchange in the mail, so I can only
- > guess that it's the usual shared calendars&contacts (that work with
- > Outlook) they're after. For that there are a host of groupware
- > solutions that will give you that, ranging from free to more expensive
- > than Exchange itself.

The applications are municipal accounting and tax processing according to the state laws of Massachusetts. Pretty specialized, and people are accustomed to it. Given the situation at the Town Hall, suggesting alternate applications software -- and it probably doesn't even exist -- is not going to get anywhere. These people are generally quite content to use Microsoft stuff, so the only hope is to offer them an alternate system that looks to these applications just like Microsoft. VMware might be a possibility, I suppose, but that still would require buying Microsoft software, wouldn't it? And in that case, given the low price of hardware, is there much of a cost savings by going with the Linux / VMware approach?

- > Software licensing issues aside, I cannot really complain too much about
- > the more recent versions of Exchange. I have it running at a site
- > behind a postfix box, and I've had no hassles so far. Took a while to
- > figure out how to get it to play nicely (some mailboxes are on the Linux
- > box, some on Exchange), but it's been almost a year now.

It may be that the best I can hope for is to have two servers, one for backup / file storage (Linux) and one for these municipal apps (Windows Server). I was able to make the case for the backup server because it does the job very well, the entire cost was under \$500 (hardware and software),

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and no one knew how to do as well with Windows. The backup server automatically collects files from the various computers in the office without any action on the part of the office staff. Except for this server, all the computers are Win machines.

> But let us know what the exact needs are. Chances are someone will have  
> done it :-)

As far as I know, Linux doesn't even have the equivalent of TurboTax -- the open source community is, understandably, disinclined to generate software that requires a major annual update driven by changes in government regulations. And state finances are far more specialized than that.

Paul

Going with Exchange being all you mentioned via the subject. Someone has mentioned Scalix already, so I'll add Open-Xchange and Zimbra to the list. Zimbra is the new comer, but the demo I played with just blew anything Exchange could do away. Remind these people that Exchange might be nice and all, until you need to restore someone's mailbox/datastore, then the headaches begin. Every try to recover an Outlook .pst? Just as bad, if not worse. They might want Exchange, but odds are they don't need it.

John

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