

# > Mimecast Research Generation Gmail: How businesses can bring them back into the fold



Mimecast has identified a new demographic of email users known as Generation Gmail. These are workers who work around your corporate email infrastructure in an effort to simply get their job done. This whitepaper aims to identify those users, the reasons they exist and to outline what your organization can do about them.



## Executive Summary

As personal email and social networks have become more accessible and ubiquitous, IT managers and CIOs have reported that their corporate infrastructure is becoming more consumerized, helped along the way by the emergence and popularity of the cloud. Users are, in short, bending the corporate rules to get their jobs done.

Mimecast commissioned a work habits report which uncovered some interesting behavior. To help set the scene for this whitepaper, the following summary shows the key results. The full report can be found [here](#).

An emerging type of worker is present in our organizations; we'll call them 'work around workers'. These are the people who use technology to fit the task at hand, and for whom there is a blurring of the line between home and work time and technology. Use of multiple email accounts is not uncommon, particularly when these workers use their 'Gmail' accounts to 'work around' problems or frustrations with their corporate system. Problems are usually caused by out-moded or restrictive policy controls in the workplace and a lack of suitable or out of date technology.

- Our research found 71% of work around workers are aware of the risks posed by their use of personal email, but remain disconnected from those risks or the problems they may cause. This results in their employers struggling to find the balance between employee empowerment and company control.
- A significant 65% of people are happy to overlap home and work based technology.
- 36% of incoming email to work inboxes is not work related.
- 66% of respondents say email is their preferred method of communication at work.
- Our research found that people have on average at least 3 email accounts.
- And a massive 79% of respondents claimed to have sent work emails to or from their personal accounts. Many on a regular basis.
- A little over half of the respondents claimed to have corporate mailbox frustrations in one form or another. Could this be what is driving people to use their more advanced personal email?

## The Workaround Worker

Our research paints a picture of the ‘work around worker’ – someone who uses their access to Internet- based services, such as webmail and social networks, to ‘work around’ problems or frustrations they might have with their corporate IT infrastructure.

Over 50% of our respondents claimed to have regular problems with their corporate email inboxes, and 39% said the most significant issue was the constant struggle to keep their inboxes within its size limits. Although 80% of our respondents claimed not to actually know what that size limit was.

So it’s hardly surprising that when faced with these problems users turn to their personal accounts to get work done, even though they are well educated on the risks involved and the protection that ought to be given to corporate Intellectual Property.

For the work around worker the line that distinguishes where their corporate and personal account starts or finishes is distinctly blurred. Many users forward corporate email from their inbox to a home account, or perhaps forward all their personal email to a central corporate inbox. A ‘collective inbox,’ the concept of a single view for multiple accounts, is something that has been available to many users both on the web, desktop and mobile device for a while.

## Generation Gmail

The boundaries between work and home life have blurred significantly over the last few years, and mobile or remote access to email and flexible working technologies have made it much easier for us to stay in touch with the corporate world when out of the office.

Our research identified a particular demographic for which being a work around worker rings particularly true. The under 25s, also called Millennials and sometimes, the slightly older, Generation X.

Of course we’re all affected by bad policy decisions or restrictive access controls, but the under 25s who have only recently entered the workplace are no strangers to working around their employers rules in order to get things done. Their reliance on social networks as a communication and networking tool are also reflected in this result, but that is not to say our entire user-base follows similar working patterns. Remember our ‘work around workers’ are anybody that uses their personal accounts as a mechanism to free themselves from the confines of corporate policy that hinders their productivity. Generation Gmail was identified as the demographic most happy to do this.

The digital natives we’ll call Generation Gmail are quite happy to use the best or easiest system to get the job done. Of course Generation Gmail understands the risks presented by their actions, probably more than their less digitally savvy colleagues. These are the users for whom phishing, spam, viruses and Internet tricksters have been common place since they first ventured online.

This acceptance of a more open way of working doesn’t only affect email. Our Generation Gmail users are also championing and enjoying the benefits of schemes like BYOC (Bring Your Own Computer) to work, where they choose the make and model of their PC based on an allocated budget rather than use a recycled corporate hand-me-down. Or perhaps the dramatically more flexible ROWE (Results Only Work Environment) where rules are pretty much nonexistent, and provided the jobs get done (which it does) working hours and holiday entitlements are not set in stone.

Generation Gmail isn’t someone who’d deliberately trying to subvert the corporate email system, or maliciously bypass controls put in place for compliance or security. They are simply using their personal accounts and seemingly more flexible consumer services as a mechanism to circumvent restrictive policies in the workplace to get their job done.

## How did this happen?

Ever since we introduced information systems into the workplace we've been tweaking, upgrading, fixing and enhancing those systems. Normally this chain of events has happened in response to a problem of the addition of a new piece of functionality or tool to our line of business applications.

Our email environment is the perfect example of this; years ago we merrily plugged our email server into the Internet, then slowly added solutions to protect us from viruses and spam, retain our email, encrypt it, stamp it, file it and eventually delete it. Our users kept up with this progress, generating more and more email for the IT department to deal with, then they began asking for access from home or whilst on the road. Mobile phones all of a sudden became 'smart' and synchronized our email without us having to do anything - the age of push was here.

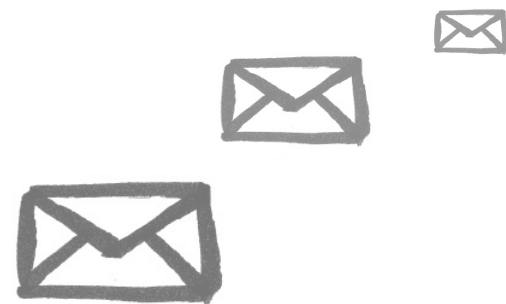
Business has done its best to keep up with this rapidly expanding technology, but at best keeping up has been a struggle. Massively scalable consumer based services like Hotmail, Gmail and Yahoo have given our users the types of access and mailbox facilities they could only dream of at work. Gmail's 7GB mailbox appeared a few years ago and left CIOs telling their users they simply couldn't provision the same amount of storage at work without a similarly scalable IT budget.

Corporate email frustrations can't be pinned down to one single issue; rather, users are feeling the compound effect of many problems that are limiting their productivity. The results of our research showed that the younger Generation Gmail users are more likely to turn to their personal accounts because they offer greater control and flexibility.

**Mailbox size is a key issue.** The amount of time spent managing mailbox size (39%) has always been a problem for users, mostly because of storage limitations associated with the core email server infrastructure. In an attempt to deal with this problem, 3rd party solutions have been added, further adding to the complexity. Forty percent of our respondents indicated that an unlimited (or bottomless) mailbox for their work email account would dissuade them from sending work emails to personal accounts. However even specialist 3rd party point solutions, like on-premise email archiving, have been unable to match these demands as the business is still having to provision the expensive and cumbersome backend processing and storage.

**Easy access to email services plays a key role.** Traditionally email has been one of the many services locked behind the corporate firewall, where users have always had to perform numerous security and authentication functions to gain access. This is the tricky balance between security and usability the business has always had to achieve, and we're certainly not downplaying the importance of that security and authentication. Only recently have we started to talk about the de-perimeterization of the corporate network, driven by the increasing use of mobile or remote devices and cloud services, not only for email but also CRM, ERP, HR, Expense Management and a growing list of other line of business applications. Users access to mobile email should be ubiquitous. The remote wipe capability of mobile devices has alleviated at least some of the CIOs worry that devices left on trains and in taxis will pose any sort of threat. But these devices are key to driving this new de-perimeterization and users' access to cloud based personal services is simple and efficient. Corporate services need to follow suit.

> The cloud is consumerizing corporate email and this situation provides the perfect example. Users bring the cloud into their work inboxes and work flows simply because the cloud model gives them what they are looking for. The cloud represents an on-demand, scalable, elastic and either free or subscription based service that instantly solves their problem. It is here our work around worker is born.



## Some risks to your business worth considering

A small number of these work around workers probably already exist inside your network. There have always been technologically savvy users in the IT or creative departments that use Internet based services as part of the work routine. By contrast the new Generation Gmail worker will exist in any part of the business and within any function.

The ubiquity of Generation Gmail means they present some key risks to your business, but we should also note these users are not maliciously trying to circumvent your corporate defenses. Consider the following when thinking about Generation Gmail:

**eDiscovery:** Allowing users to send and receive key business documents or messages through external and uncontrolled infrastructure means you won't have any eDiscovery insight into those solutions. You may not even have the legal right to access this communication.

**Corporate IP:** Email contains the majority of your corporate IP. Keeping tabs on IP is quite hard even within the confines of your own network. Allowing employees to send sensitive information using their personal accounts means you can no longer give the business assurances around the security of that information.

**Data loss:** Mobile devices left in cabs, laptops left on trains, tablets left in coffee shops. Employees often don't secure the devices like a corporate entity, so if these devices are outside of your control, you can't guarantee the security of corporate information on them, and loss incidents must be treated very carefully.

**Data leakage:** The malicious leakage of information is normally a major concern within businesses, but equally concerning is the accidental leakage of information.

**Security of 3rd party solutions:** When corporate IP sits outside the network, for example in users' personal inboxes, the security and retention policies applied to that IP inside the network no longer applies.

## How do you mitigate these risks?

Employee email behavior should always be influenced by a policy and culture, but at the same time the business wants to give their users the flexibility to work in the most productive environment possible. Our research clearly shows that CIOs or IT Managers who put in place highly restrictive email policies designed to control end user behavior are potentially causing a significant risk, and one over which, ironically, they have little or no control.

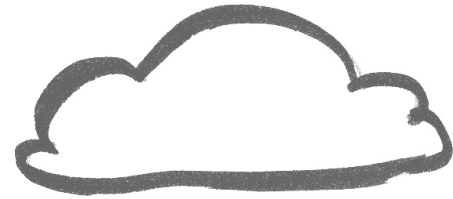
A user friendly email policy, or any business service for that matter, should reflect the high levels of user sophistication and the changing communications landscape. The most progressive policies will support the needs of both the business and the users.

Luckily there are simple fixes that can be applied to your existing policy if it is found lacking, or if a total re-write is in order. A degree of thought needs to be given to the infrastructure too. The users are best placed to help work out where functionality can be improved. Ask them and examine their work habits. Two key areas for early attention should be access and storage. Everything else should fall into place from there.

## Ten Top Tips

Here are ten things to consider when trying to keep your users motivated and working with the tools you supply rather than their own.

1. Look for clever ways to keep your users inside the corporate email environment. Consider motivating them in the right direction in innovative ways like delivering daily enticements directly to users' inboxes.
2. Keep your business email up and running. One way or another, this is getting cheaper and easier to do. The technology exists to keep your email up 100% of the time so why not use it?
3. Educate your users. Explain what you mean by appropriate use and what's generally bad, but also explain the benefits of the business system. Use policy violation notices to educate users, rather than to punish them. This process should be automated to minimize IT resource burden.
4. In the same conversation, don't just tell your employees not to use external or personal email systems for work. Explain to them the real-world risk, use a few demonstrations and make this a story that resonates, rather than another plain old policy update. Also take the time to explain the penalties.
5. Make mobile access work. If you support one type of mobile device, consider what users of the other device will do. How can you securely enable support of more platforms? The platform ecosystem is getting more fragmented, not less.
6. Make remote access easy. Implement security protocols that are well understood and simple to execute.
7. Make your corporate email system the preferred solution for your users. Give them the tools they need; remote access, threaded messages, powerful search. The list of tools available is endless.
8. Importantly don't limit email storage. See number 7. This is something the IT department has had to do in the past because of the limitations built into core email platforms, but those problems are slowly disappearing and the cloud is a great way to offer a bottomless mailbox. This includes finding a solution that allows you to eliminate PSTs too.
9. Keep your communications platforms fresh by reviewing them on an annual basis.
10. Above all; listen to your users. They vote with their mouse and keyboard. Corporate email security and availability is paramount. Through a mix of education and the provision of easy to use, reliable services users should want to use the corporate system.



# What Mimecast can do to help!

**Mailbox management:** Luckily Mimecast can take the burden of mailbox management away from the users. No longer do they need to worry about keeping their mailbox within its storage limits. Mimecast can automatically apply and manage mailbox size policies, directly on your Exchange Server. Policies can be applied at a specific mailbox size limit or age of message in days. Users who no longer hit size limits are much happier.

**Bottomless mailboxes:** When combined with our automated mailbox management technologies, a bottomless archive mailbox allows your users to keep an unlimited amount of email. You may consider applying a mailbox management policy to keep Exchange free of the reams of email that users like to store – but at the same time use our seamless access tools to allow them to access their data in the archive, directly from Outlook. The concept of a bottomless mailbox then becomes simple – forget having to store all that email data on Exchange, and let Mimecast take the weight.

**Data leak prevention (DLP):** Malicious disclosure of corporate IP is always a worry, and thankfully rare. Unfortunately the accidental disclosure of sensitive information is far more common. Mimecast's DLP tools allow you to scan inbound (and outbound) email for specific content, such as Personally Identifiable Information (PII). As an example, our DLP policies could be created to scan outgoing messages for Social Security/National Insurance Numbers, Zipcodes or Postcodes and even credit card numbers – then take appropriate action on that message. If your users are still forwarding email to their personal accounts, and accidentally send sensitive data, Mimecast will catch it; from here it's up to you whether you alert them, block the message, encrypt the message or notify the email administrator.

**Email continuity:** Mimecast's always on email allows you to reduce the Recovery Point Objective and Recovery Time Objective for email to virtually zero. Even if you're having a catastrophic failure of Exchange, your users will be protected by Mimecast. Our email continuity service allows them to keep working during the outage, sending and receiving email as normal, but automatically through Mimecast in the cloud and whilst Exchange is offline. Mimecast becomes your primary mail server during the outage. Users are less likely to use their personal accounts during the crisis if they have access to their corporate email.

**Rich attachment controls:** Large attachments can quickly fill up a user's inbox, as well as slow down the delivery of email for other users. As attachment sizes get bigger and bigger, businesses are looking for clever ways to allow their users to keep those attachments relevant to an email conversation – and without having them jump out to a 3rd party service. Mimecast provides policies that handle large attachments in a much more efficient way. Our strip and link technology removes the large attachment from a message, but allows the recipient to download it from the Mimecast secure cloud platform.

**Future-proof:** Mimecast enables your business to future-proof its email management infrastructure. As the volume of user email grows, Mimecast's dynamically scalable platform will grow with them, providing enhancements and improvements to your environment with predictable costs. The management of onsite applications and services is simplified as a result, allowing your IT department to concentrate on core email servers and those projects they've been putting off for so long. Keeping up to date, and allowing your users the flexibility they need will be a big step towards keeping them inside your network.

Mimecast's essential cloud services for Exchange provides clever ways to keep your users in the fold and stop them from straying out to their personal webmail services. This functionality extends the capability of your core email server while at the same time allowing you to apply controls that will enhance the level of protection applied to your users and their corporate resources.



## > Conclusion

We know email is vital. We also know email is the preferred choice of communication within businesses, and we now know that just as we suspected users are finding clever ways around restrictive or outmoded email policies. In short, they are working around the systems put in place by their employer.

Mimecast has identified the Generation Gmail worker as someone who is using the flexibility and ubiquitous access of their personal email systems in order to simply get their job done. Their work systems are hampering their productivity so they turn to Gmail or the like to sidestep the problems and frustrations they find at work.

Getting your employees into a position where they feel empowered and trusted means giving them the tools they really need to get their job done in an efficient autonomous way. Sticking with the status quo or ignoring the problems just makes people frustrated and leads them to work around those frustrations.

Don't let your Generation Gmail think they can get a better service on the outside, using the right services you can compete to keep them on your network in a secure environment.

Mimecast is a leading provider of essential cloud services for Microsoft Exchange. Mimecast delivers enterprise email management services that include security, continuity and archiving. This suite of services provides total end-to-end control of business email, while minimizing risk and reducing both cost and complexity. Founded in 2003, Mimecast serves thousands of customers worldwide and has offices in Europe, North America, and Africa.