

Why an Atomic Mail Managed Solution? A CIO's Perspective.

Overview

The Atomic Mail Managed Solution offers organizations a practical and cost-effective solution to their email marketing and mass email communication needs. Following the Application Service Provider model, the Atomic Mail Managed Solution allows organizations to inexpensively outsource the complex task of managing high-volume email distribution.

Typically organizations facing this challenge explore several options. Some choose to use their existing email infrastructure to distribute email to thousands or hundreds of thousands of customers. Others experiment with low-cost desktop solutions that claim the ability to send large volumes of email. But these solutions come with significant limitations.

This document explores the limitations of these low-cost solutions and then explains how the Atomic Mail Managed Solution offers a simple and effective alternative that meets organizational needs for a tool that is simple to use and support, scalable to meet enterprise needs, secure in protecting an organization's data and easy to integrate into existing business models.

Alternatives to the Atomic Mail Solution

As mentioned above, many organizations faced with email distribution begin by experimenting the use of their internal email system. But systems like Microsoft Exchange, and Lotus Notes are not optimized for this task. They have several fundamental limitations:

- 1) Attempting to use these systems to send large volumes of email often brings the system to its knees, making daily email communication, both internal external, unreliable or inoperable.
- 2) These systems are not designed to handle mailing lists of more than a few thousand individuals.
- 3) They do not offer effective solutions for importing and managing mailing lists. If an organization imports its customer database into a standard email system there is no effective way to automate fundamental transactions such as users opting out or changing their email preferences.
- 4) There are no effective mechanisms to integrate these systems with web-based opt-in/opt-out forms.
- 5) They do not offer effective solutions for personalizing email messages.

- 6) They do not incorporate effective mechanisms to allow recipients to choose between text and html email formats.
- 7) There is no automated mechanism to allow tracking of user response to the messages, identifying recipients who have opened the email, or clicked through on individual links, etc.

Organizations recognizing the limitations of their internal mail systems as solutions for high-volume email communication often turn to a range of desktop software products as the next alternative. Since they typically draw names and email addresses from a database, they are not dependent on an internal systems address book. They do not typically affect the performance of the internal email system. But these tools suffer from a similar set of limitations.

- 1) They do not include mechanisms for handling undeliverable messages and updating the database to prevent ongoing mailings to invalid addresses
- 2) They can still affect the performance of an organization's Internet connection by driving large volumes of email through a limited bandwidth connection
- 3) They do not offer effective tools for importing and managing mailing lists. There is nothing in these systems that allows the email-marketing manager to change an individual user's opt-in status, for example.
- 4) They have no mechanism to restart jobs that fail midstream, whether due to software or system failures.
- 5) They have no mechanism to schedule mailings for specific dates or times and no mechanism for event-based messaging (sending a mailing 30 days after a purchase or on a birthday)
- 6) They do not support enhanced if/then logic allowing content to be modified during the send to reflect the characteristics of each individual recipient.
- 7) They typically support a limited and pre-defined data model, forcing an organization to fit its data into a foreign structure.
- 8) Like internal email systems, they do not natively support both html and text email formats. Separate messages must be sent to each group.
- 9) They have no embedded mechanisms to track recipient activity at the level of the individual link.
- 10) They offer no tools to track "conversions," the actual purchase of a product as a result of an email offer.

Email marketing and communication without effective recipient tracking and performance metrics undercuts the very benefits an organization hopes to realize through its email program.

Atomic Mail: The Complete Solution

As an Application Service Provider (ASP) offering, The Atomic Mail Managed Solution offers organizations the significant benefits shared by all ASP offerings, reducing the technology demands on an organization.

- The Atomic Mail Managed Solution eliminates the challenges associated with training or hiring staff in a new technology area. Understanding the ins and outs of SMTP messaging, how to handle AOL email, when to choose text vs. html email, etc. is not part of your organization's core business
- The Atomic Mail Managed Solution provides the infrastructure to support your messaging requirements at its facility. You will not need to invest in acquiring and supporting new messaging servers and related systems.
- An Atomic Mail Managed Solution relieves your organization of the costs associated with enhancing infrastructure to support the intermittent sending of large volumes of email. Sending large volumes of email in-house significantly affects the performance of an organization's Internet connection, Domain Name Server environment and associated databases.

But beyond these general benefits of the ASP model, Atomic Mail Managed Solution offers many specific advantages, eliminating the weaknesses of the alternatives described previously. The designers of Atomic Mail are IT professionals with substantial experience in enterprise computing environments. That experience has helped them to structure the Atomic Mail Managed Solution to satisfy an organization's business requirements for functionality, ease of implementation, ease of support, ease of use, and data security.

The Atomic Mail Managed Solution meets an organization's full range of functional requirements:

- 1) It is capable of sending massive volumes of email, more than 10 million messages per day.
- 2) Using the Application Service Provider model, it can deliver these messages with no impact on your organization's internal systems or Internet connectivity.
- 3) Atomic Mail offers a completely flexible data model, allowing your email marketing team to create sub-lists using familiar field names and values.
- 4) Tools for managing mailing lists are fully integrated.
- 5) Atomic Mail incorporates embedded solutions for tracking user requests including opt-in/opt-out requests and email preference requests (text/html).
- 6) Atomic Mail messages can be completely personalized, incorporating both merge fields and conditional logic controlling message content based things such as personal attributes, known preferences or past behavior.

- 7) Messages can be scheduled to run on a specified date/time or to recur daily for processes like birthday mailings based on a date based query.
- 8) Atomic Mail incorporates a full reporting model, tracking message opens and recipient click through actions at both the aggregate and the individual level.
- 9) Atomic Mail incorporates automated mechanisms for tracking undeliverable messages and eventual deactivation of invalid addresses.
- 10) Atomic Mail offers several mechanisms for automated or manual tracking of conversions. E-commerce systems can inform Atomic Mail of a conversion either by calling a web service function or by sending a simple formatted email message to the Atomic Mail server. Unique among its competitors, Atomic Mail can also track in-store retail conversions by personalizing messages such as coupons, stamping each with a personalized barcode.

But the designers of the Atomic Mail Managed Solution recognized that these features, while important, were not enough. To meet the needs of a business seeking to outsource its volume messaging effort, an email solution must also be:

- 1) Easily integrated into an organization's existing business model.
- 2) Scalable to meet an organization's evolving and growing demands.
- 3) Simple to support, so as to increase user satisfaction and minimize IT support costs.
- 4) Secure so as to meet an organization's data privacy and security requirements.

In the following sections we will explore these factors in greater detail. They tell a compelling story of Atomic Mail Managed solution as the optimal solution for enterprise email marketing.

Ease of Integration

The designers of Atomic Mail recognized from the beginning that it would be unreasonable to expect businesses to flex business processes and applications for a tool facilitating email marketing. Thus Atomic Mail has been designed from the ground up facilitate enterprise email communication requirements while minimizing impact on core business systems.

- Atomic Mail assumes your organization will have many data sources including HR systems, CRM systems and Internet opt-in databases. Atomic Mail Managed solution allows you to tap the information you need and transfer it to the Atomic Mail servers through simple processes that can be automated to minimize ongoing support.
- Atomic Mail is designed to use existing data structures regardless of data types, field naming conventions, etc.

Flexibility has been the watchword in the Atomic Managed Solution's design and with each release; our product has become more flexible. Unlike competing products that

require an organization to restructure data to a predefined data format, Atomic Mail allows you to transfer and tap data in the format and structure familiar to you. Atomic Mail places no restrictions on field names and types.

Scalability

In real-world production a single Atomic Mail sending server can deliver messages at a pace exceeding 10 million messages per day. Extending that capability, Atomic Mail's highly modular architecture allows us to spread load across multiple sending servers communicating with multiple SMTP servers. Atomic Mail can scale effectively to meet your organization's evolving requirements.

Ease of Support

Ongoing support is consistently the most expensive aspect of any software acquisition. Recognizing this reality, Atomic Mail Managed solution has been designed to minimize support requirements wherever possible. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Atomic Mail interface, which uses advanced web technologies to provide a seamless web application that is exceptionally easy to understand and operate. Queries can be built using a simple but flexible query builder. A new message can be created in a matter of minutes. We encourage all potential customers to explore the Atomic Mail interface to appreciate its simple elegance.

But ease of support is not simply a matter of producing a simple interface. It requires a clear understanding of the likely population of users and their capabilities. Atomic Mail's designers, for example, recognized that few individuals managing email campaigns are likely to be expert in relational database architecture. Atomic Mail is designed to present these users with a simple view of their data. While the use of views as a means to simplify data presentation is hardly revolutionary, their prevalence in Atomic Mail reflects our awareness of user and organization requirements. Rather than asking them to work directly with the native tables, Atomic Mail works with views that contain pre-defined joins. These views also limit data so that email can only be sent to appropriate populations. If a pre-defined view excludes individuals who have opted out of the database, nothing the Atomic Mail campaign manager can do, will allow them to send messages to those individuals.

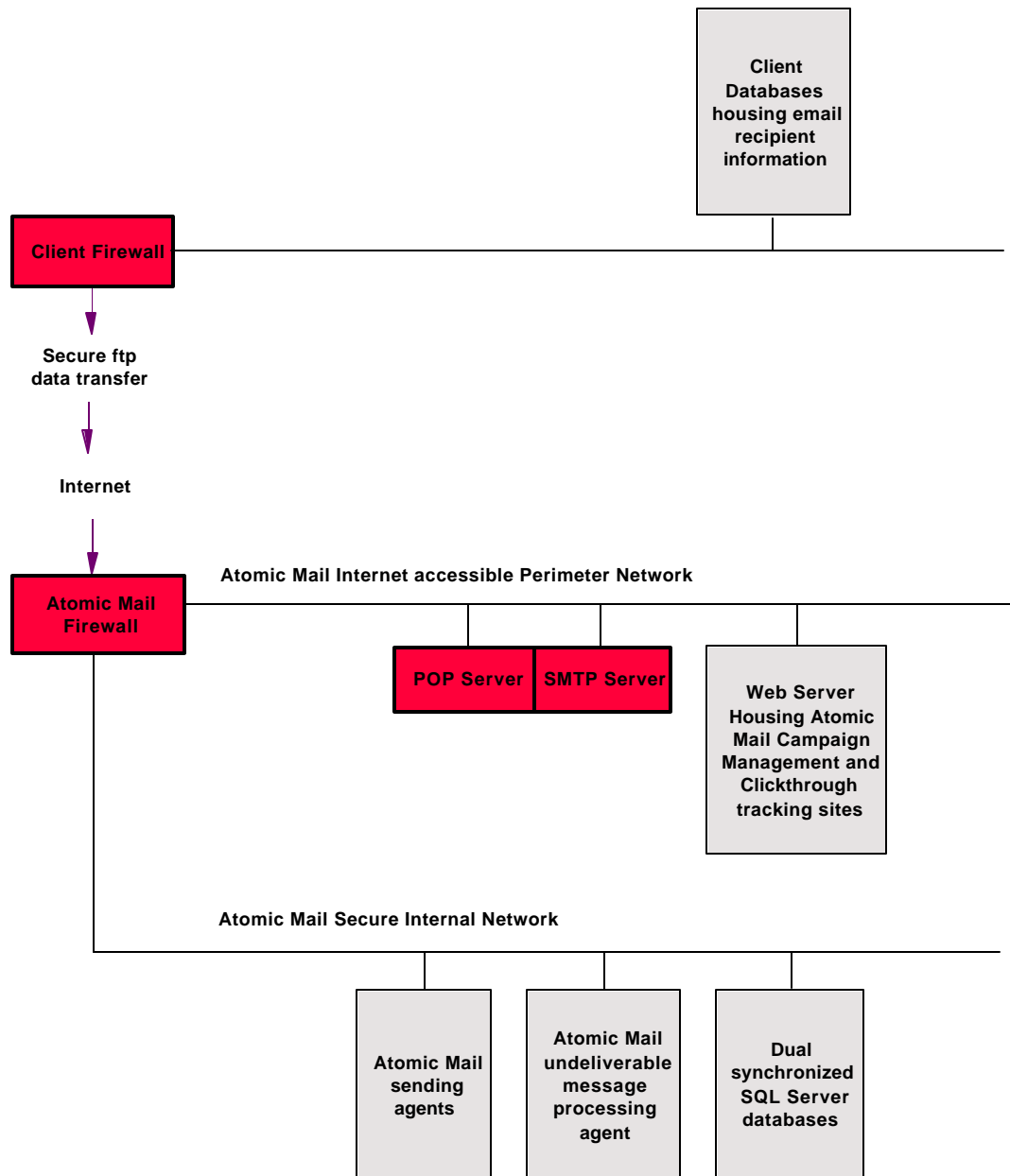
Reflecting user's varied levels of expertise, Atomic Mail Managed solution also incorporates various levels of permission in the Atomic Mail interface. General users can create queries and campaigns using the standard tools but Advanced users are allowed to edit the SQL of their query, for example.

Information Security

All organizations are appropriately sensitive to the security of their data. Atomic Mail's Managed solution is configured to allow an organization to realize the value of its email marketing efforts without compromising information security.

Atomic Mail's hosted environment places data on a secure network, inaccessible from the Internet. Similarly, the Atomic Mail sending agents and undeliverable message processing agents are situated on the secure internal network, making them inaccessible from the Internet. These servers communicate to the SMTP and POP servers on a

“perimeter network.” A firewall is configured to assure that Internet access to these systems is limited to the protocols and functions required for email distribution and user activity tracking.



The Atomic Mail Managed solution also facilitates information security in the transfer of data to and from the Atomic Mail services. When automated data transfer is implemented, the firewall is configured to allow only the sending server at your organization to access our ftp server. Access to this system from any other Internet system is disabled at the firewall. Furthermore, clients desiring the highest levels of security are encouraged to encrypt their data files prior to sending them. PGP encryption tools allow exceptionally strong security.

Integrated API

Increasingly organizations use email as a means of communicating with a distributed workforce or an extensive pre-defined customer base. Such organizations might need to notify employees of various specific events. As specific products go in and out of stock, for example, an organization might need to notify its distributed sales force. But most internal systems are not well suited to sending messages to hundreds or thousands of distributed employees. An inventory system is designed to track inventory, not communicate via email.

As an added value/added cost option, Atomic Mail Managed solution can provide your systems with access to the Atomic Mail services using a standard web services API. Using this API an organization can schedule and send messages. To send an email notifying the distributed sales force of a new product's availability, the system would need to execute 3 simple web service functions:

- Login() which controls and secures access to the service
- AddMessage() which stores the new message content and associates it with a predefined query to select members of the sales force.
- SetSchedule() to schedule the send of this message at the preferred time and date.

This web services interface is accessible from most modern development environments and across multiple platforms. Whether the underlying application is written in Java/EJB, C++ or Visual Basic, the Web Services API is easily accessible.

Conclusion

IT organizations exist in IT reality, a world of critical security concerns, distributed workforces, limited staffing and budget, and constantly shifting business requirements. The Atomic Mail Managed solution is designed to function in this reality. Rather than expecting an organization to shift dramatically to implement a volume messaging solution, Atomic Mail is designed to flex to your organization's requirements.