

# Conversion to Mail-User Detail

## *Coexistence migrations with Priasoft*

## Mail-User?

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Microsoft Exchange supports several mail-specific object types that are layered on top of standard Active Directory (AD) object types. One of those types is named a “Mail User” or “Mail-Enabled User” (aka MEU). This is not the same thing as a “Mailbox User”. An MEU is defined as an Active Directory User which has been “mail enabled” and which specifically has the following attributes applied:

- mailNickName – this value is also called the alias or mail alias and is a simple text value to uniquely identify it in an addressbook.
- legacyExchangeDN – this value is a forest-wide unique value for any mail enabled object in Microsoft Exchange. This is the primary internal routing address for determining where mail should be delivered. Replies to old messages actually reply to this value as such is what is embedded in the sender and each recipient.
- proxyAddresses – this is a multi-valued string that provides one or more alternate addresses upon which this object can be found as a recipient of mail. This value also includes the Primary SMTP address.
- targetAddress – this is a single text value that determines to where messages are forwarded.

A MEU is a mail object that behaves very much like an Exchange Contact object. It forwards mail to an address defined. However, unlike a Contact, a MEU is a user account that can have a password and be used to authenticate to applications and services. A Contact is not a user principal and cannot have a password.

## Converting to Mail-User

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The Priasoft Mailbox Migration Manager has a coexistence option that can leave a forwarder behind in the source environment so that as new mail originates or arrives in the source, after a mailbox has migrated, it can be forwarded to the new target mailbox. The product offers the ability to handle the forwarder as either an Exchange Contact or an Exchange Mail-User.

***Priasoft does not recommend the use of the Contact option.*** While this option does work for the forwarding of mail, it can create issues in unexpected ways since applications that are also Active Directory integrated, or query AD will likely not know about the contact and will attempt to get address information from the source user. In addition, in an effort to protect user data, Priasoft does not allow for the source mailbox to become disconnected (which would mark the mailbox for deletion) and then causes the source mailbox to remain attached to the user, but with changes to email addresses and such so that it does not conflict with the Contact. This causes issues with AutoDiscover and can cause issues whereby messages delivered to a group, and for which the migrated user is a member, end up delivering to the source mailbox (since it still exists on the user object).

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The recommended coexistence option is to allow the product to convert the source “mailbox user” to a “mail user”. However, in order to provide rollback features and data protection, additional actions must occur beyond just the simple conversion to the attributes listed at the beginning of this document.

If a mailbox user is simply converted to a mail-user, the mailbox would become disconnected from the user account and would be marked for deletion in Exchange. The purging of this mailbox would occur based on the deleted mailbox retention setting of the mailbox database in which it resides, the default being 14 days in most cases.

The product then, in this mode of coexistence, will create a second user account in Active Directory that will hold the original source mailbox. This maintains an attachment of the mailbox to a user account and prevents Exchange from seeing it as a disconnected mailbox. This second user account, called the “backup user”, is created either in the same container as the original user, or in a specific container chosen in the product.

During the migration and when the conversion action is reached, the following actions occur:

1. The backup user account is created.
2. This account has a random, very complex password generated.
3. This account has several custom addresses added to its ‘proxyAddresses’ property. These addresses support rollback procedures and also provide linking info between the backup account and the original account.
4. The account receives the mailbox attributes from the original user such as the msExchMailboxGuid, homeMDB, msExchHomeServerName, etc.
5. The mailbox attributes, after being set on the backup account, are removed from the original user.
6. A new ‘targetAddress’ (forwarding address) is set on the original user.
7. The backup user account is set to be “hidden from address lists” and is also set as “excluded from address policies”.

The backup user account, after these changes, becomes the holder of the source mailbox and will remain so until deleted at some later time, if ever. The backup account must remain at least until backfill migration operations complete for the given mailbox. The backfill feature of the migration tool accesses the source mailbox while it is attached to the backup user. If the backup user is moved or deleted before backfill operations occur, the backfill operation will fail.

The Priasoft migration tool will not delete the backup user account except in the case of a rollback, which will reset the Active Directory changes made and will reattach the mailbox to the original user account. Outside of a rollback, the backup user will remain. This leaves the control over data removal to the environment owners/managers. When it is determined that the source data is no longer needed, a simple delete of the related backup accounts can be done optionally followed by standard data purging actions available in Exchange (if the mailbox retention period is to be bypassed).

If additional questions arise over this pattern, please send email to [support@priasoft.com](mailto:support@priasoft.com) so that we can work to answer the questions.