

Priasoft <-> Microsoft Native Tools?

Key benefits of Priasoft

Microsoft has tools?

Of course Microsoft has tools for migration. They even try to promote them as “world class”, but the truth is that their tools are quite inferior. Consider first Microsoft’s position from a monetary standpoint. Microsoft Exchange is Microsoft’s 3rd largest revenue stream, following Microsoft Office and Microsoft Windows. As such, the development teams at Microsoft focus first (and rightly so) on the core infrastructure and execution of the Exchange platform. Only after they reach stability with the platform will they even think about tools to transition to it. Additionally, their approach is from engineers and developers that have little experience with the nuances and pains of migration in a real-world corporate setting. As such, the ergonomics, performance, and philosophy of their tools are not really built for you, but for themselves. This is why most of the MS tools are command line text applications or very simple (yet confusing) wizards.

Contrast the above with Priasoft’s solution. Priasoft was founded from an initial pain in 1999 that there were NO TOOLS! Our founders were faced with a real-world blending of 2 production environments. The company at which the founders were employed was acquired by a much larger company (1500+ users into a company of over 30k). The task of migrating mailboxes into the new company was daunting, but within a few months a simplistic version of a migration tool was developed. As such, the design and philosophy of the tools were driven by one of the most complex types of migrations – acquisition. Since that time, our team has been focused on solving problems in ways that are simple, elegant, and MAKE SENSE to those who would use the tools – that is, YOU, the Exchange admin/director/CIO. Our team understands the impact that Change Control Processes and complex deployments have on execution – and we avoid both of them as much as possible.

Priasoft Benefits

When you read over the following list of benefits of the Priasoft solution, remember that this comes from over 12 years of DIRECT experience. We encourage you to mentally compare the benefits against how you might would achieve the same with Microsoft’s tools, whether it be using PST export/import or PowerShell commands.

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It is often easy to claim that the MS tools are “free” and to use that as leverage to avoid 3rd party tools, but consider that there is often much more RISK with free tools (from a support perspective if nothing else) and unmanaged, unidentified RISK will cost money – often much more than the cost of our solution.

- Planning Support
 - Our motto is: **Good tools do not make a bad plan better!**
 - You have the option to engage us to help with the migration plan/process development.
 - We understand both the technical issues as well as the BUSINESS ISSUES that can, and do, impact a migration.
 - We understand that you will have to support the new environment afterwards. We want that post migration environment to be one that you are comfortable managing – meaning that Priasoft is not going to create long term headaches (the MS tools commonly leave you with little issues that “pop up” weeks and months later).
 - We believe that no matter how well the technology performs, if end users and the business as a whole have a negative perception (not reality!) of the transition then the project is not a success.
 - You will not get this level of support or information from Microsoft, except by way of Microsoft Consulting which is MANY TIMES more costly than Priasoft’s tools and services, and frankly is NO GUARANTEE of success since you will have little control over the quality of the consultants that Microsoft would provide to you.
- Outlook Profile Updates
 - Our solution handles ALL outlook profiles for a given user: MS handles only the default profile
 - Our solution handles secondary mailboxes in a profile (aka Shared Mailboxes; no MS support here)
 - Our solution updates an existing profile which preserves all non-exchange settings (like PST files): The MS tool creates a new profile
 - Our solution can handle Outlook Anywhere settings and cached mode settings
 - Our solution will update Outlook 97 and above (including Outlook 2010; OL2013 is in testing): The MS tool will work on OL2003 (with some limits) and above
- Speed
 - Our solution can be tuned for maximum performance. Many customers migrate 20-30 mailboxes concurrently: The MS solution has limits on concurrency and typically runs on the CAS which causes the CAS to have double duty processing that further limit performance.
 - Our solution provides the ability to migrate in 2 passes: the first pass with a subset of the data, perhaps the last 15 or 30 days of current mail, the second pass for the rest of the data – while the user is using their new mailbox
 - A recent customer migrated over 5.5 million items in less than 9 hours across 4200 mailboxes. Additionally, they had only 30 help desk tickets on Monday morning after the migration. That is a post migration issue rate of 0.66% (2/3rds of 1%). Microsoft’s issue rate is MUCH higher.

- Dry-Run
 - Our solution is the ONLY solution to provide a Dry-Run option.
 - A Dry-Run gives you these 5 points of value
 - Functional Testing – “Can I migrate?”
 - Performance Tuning – “How much and how fast can I go?”
 - Fidelity Checking – “Will I have issues with this environment or with individual mailboxes?”
 - Duration and Metrics – “How long will it take and what are the details?”
 - Target Environment Vetting – “Will my target environment accept this new data without issue?”
 - A Dry-Run lets you experience the migration without modifying the behavior of your existing environment. This is not a simulated migration but is a sandboxed migration and as such provides the opportunity to experience the migration prior to a production execution. Any issues found during a Dry-Run are issues you would have experienced during a production run. It is MUCH easier to manage and rectify issues found during a Dry-Run since users are not impacted.
- Completeness
 - We handle all mail data, especially calendar items of which we reset the organizer so that the calendar items can be updated after migration.
 - We migrate both server-side and client-only rules
 - We migrate Out-of-Office settings
 - We migrate RSS feed information (this was introduced with Outlook 2007)
 - We have ZERO language issues. We’ve had customers migrate from Greek servers to Dutch servers with no issue in character formatting
 - We migrate folder permissions (delegates) and Send-on-Behalf-of settings.
 - We can, optionally, migrate Full-Access permissions (necessary for shared mailboxes)
 - We have tools for Public Folders, Contacts, Distribution Lists, Outlook Clients, Mailboxes, and directory sync (if needed).
- Longevity
 - We’ve been doing this one thing since 1999, before MS had tools (and before any other 3rd party had tools). You’ll find no better experts on this topic.
 - We support ALL versions of exchange, Ex5.5 thru Ex2013. All migrations are direct and do not require an intermediate server (example: Ex2003 to Ex2013 is direct with us. MS requires a double migration, Ex2003 to Ex2010 first, then Ex2010 to Ex2013). This may not be important today, but if your company acquires another, it can become immediately important.
 - Longevity = Experience. It is unlikely, and extremely rare that a customer has a business or technical challenge that we have not experienced before AND know what to offer to work thru that challenge.
 - We’ve seen and worked thru challenges such as:
 - Archiving (esp. those with ‘shortcuts’)
 - Virus Scanners
 - SAN storage architecture
 - VPNs and WAN accelerators
 - Multi-Org consolidations

- Very large databases (3 and 4 terabyte and larger)
 - Very large organizations (100,000 mailboxes and more)
 - Custom attributes on user accounts
 - Power outages and recovery
 - Network load balancers
 - And many other challenges.
- We'd love to talk about your challenges and what other customers have done in similar situations.
- Safety
 - Full rollback support: no source data is delete or modified. You can access the source mailbox content at any time after the migration, if needed.
 - Data is copied direct from source to target. No copy of mail data is stored on the migration host which means increased security.
 - Priasoft tracks copies so as to prevent data duplication. If you need to migrate a mailbox again for some reason, only the differences would be migrated. MS cannot do this.
- Reporting
 - Our reporting is exhaustive and yet simple to work with. Each mailbox receives its own log in a rich HTML format that is easy to read.
 - Our reporting provides multiple levels of detail from overall summary to item counts per folder per mailbox.
 - Our solution also provides simple SMTP notification during Dry-Run and/or Production migrations
 - Microsoft's tools provide little reporting and is extremely cumbersome to work with. If you need additional information, you must develop that via scripting on your own.
- Support
 - You will have access to the Priasoft support team which have many years of experience in exchange and prior administrators and also understand the solution.
 - Dry-run lets you leverage support during normal business hours vs. expensive '24hour on-call' support during the migration event. (You can still do that, it's just not necessary).
 - Priasoft has hand written all of the code and support has close ties with development. You won't experience a case of "we have to wait for development to tell us what is happening".
- Flexibility
 - Although the user interfaces provide many options, sometimes it's not enough for special situations. Priasoft also has many overrides and changeable settings to handle even the most difficult of environments. We rarely have a case of "sorry, that's just the way it is."
 - If a feature is truly lacking, we will engage development and attempt to extend the product. This is not the fastest route, but it is available. This is also rarely engaged due to the fact that most of the feature extensions have already been done over the past 12 years.

Conclusions

Microsoft provides tools, Priasoft provides a solution and the support to make it successful. Consider carefully the difference in cost of a supported solution to the cost of lost productivity, negative perception, or missed SLAs for core services. The cost of a proven solution is very often far less than attempting to “roll your own” with the MS tools.

Also consider who is going to support you when unexpected things occur with the MS tools? What will you say to management if you run into an issue for which the answer from Microsoft is to wait for a service pack (no joke here...this has happened many times)? You are not only risking the health of the business but your employment.

We look forward to talking to you soon!