

MANAGED FILE TRANSFER

THE UNSUNG SECURITY AND COMPLIANCE SOLUTION

Managed file transfer (MFT) is a major enhancement over most mass data transfer schemes currently used. One particular reason MFT is noteworthy as a replacement for FTP, e-mail, and other common systems is the relatively seamless security and compliance features available, allowing organizations to enhance both without significant loss in capabilities or productivity. eWEEK's corporate parent Ziff Davis Enterprise recently completed a comprehensive survey of user experiences with MFT, and this report examines those results to determine the security and compliance use-case for MFT in organizations today.

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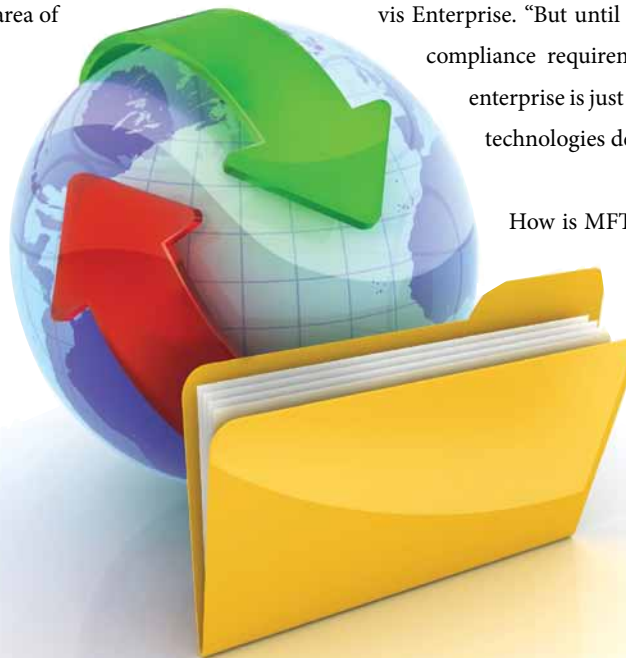
What could be simpler than moving a file from one user to another? We all do it every day, dragging, dropping, copying, and sending megabytes of data across the office or around the world. Unfortunately, as workforces have dispersed, as files have grown exponentially larger, and as business data has become ever more valuable and subject to both security threats and regulation, transferring files the right way has suddenly become an underappreciated area of great potential strategic benefit to IT.

This is where managed file transfer (MFT) comes in. IT organizations are increasingly turning to this technology as businesses become more far-flung, their data volume increases, and their existing infrastructures are pushed to the limit. MFT solutions offer high levels of security, reliability, speed, compliance, and auditability. The best ones address all of these areas

without increasing the burden on the already overburdened IT staff, and without getting in the way of employees' daily work.

"Everyone is talking about the need to collaborate more effectively and put your employees closer to your customers in a real time business environment," says Eric Lundquist, Market Expert at Ziff Davis Enterprise. "But until you can assure the security, privacy, and compliance requirements of data transfer, the collaborative enterprise is just a good idea. MFT is one of those enabling technologies designed to make it a reality."

How is MFT perceived in today's market, and which of its many benefits are most compelling for IT? To find out, Ziff Davis Enterprise fielded a survey during June and July 2010, soliciting opinions from 516 respondents, all of whom are involved in IT or IT decision making. Their responses tell



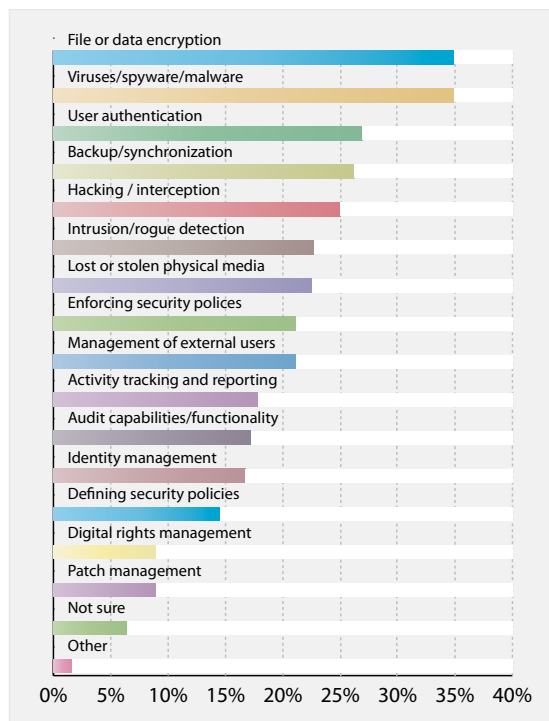
us about the difficult challenges they face in managing file transfers in today's workplace, and indicate how they expect a solution like MFT to make their jobs easier.

EXISTING METHODS ARE OUTMODED

It's clear that what IT needs is a system that can monitor, control, and secure the movement of data between points A and B, and that's what MFT is designed to do. It's increasingly in demand because as we take a look at the existing legacy options for file transfer, we see they're woefully inadequate for today's fast, worldwide, regulated business environments.

You may ask, isn't file transfer supposed to be the job of FTP utilities? Yes—if we were still living in the 1970s. FTP came of age before today's Internet was even imagined and before security became a top priority. FTP is cheap and ubiquitous, but it doesn't have strong security features, can't handle most failed data transfers, doesn't offer a good automated interface, doesn't compress data, and can't be used for the kinds of auditing and compliance rules in effect today. Nevertheless, 67 percent of survey respondents say they use FTP as a method of mass data transfer—a stunning finding.

FIGURE 1
Biggest Security Concerns about Current File Transfer System



Share of firms citing item as a top concern.
Source: Ziff Davis Enterprise Managed File Transfer Study, September 2010

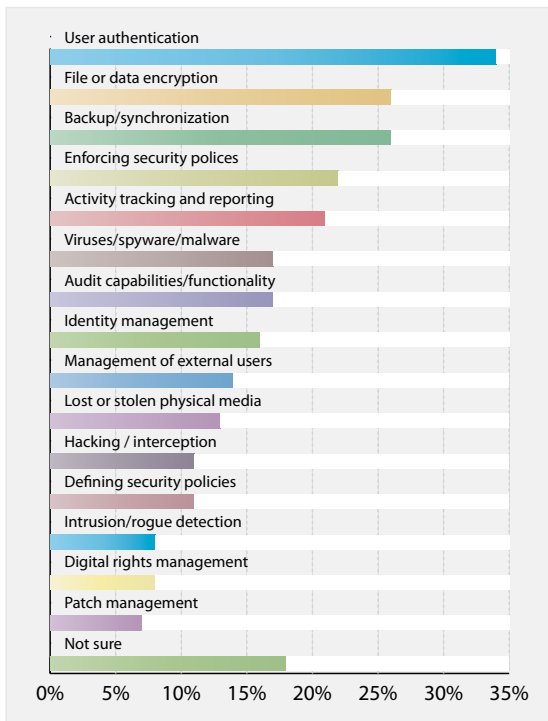
What about e-mail? We all send attachments, but in a typical messaging setup, there should be file size limits. Further, attachments not only affect network performance, but also eat up significant storage space on servers. IT also worries that e-mail attachments are used in an *ad hoc* manner and can't be adequately monitored and controlled. In other words, they're accidents waiting to happen. Still, 71 percent of survey respondents say they use e-mail as a data transfer method. If that's not troubling enough, 58 percent say they use physical media to transfer large files. That's right: good old SneakerNet is still alive and kicking.

"Of equal concern is the fact that executives are going outside the corporate network and using file transfer programs that put corporate data at risk without the knowledge of the IT staff or upper management," Lundquist states.

SECURITY, SPEED, AND COMPLIANCE

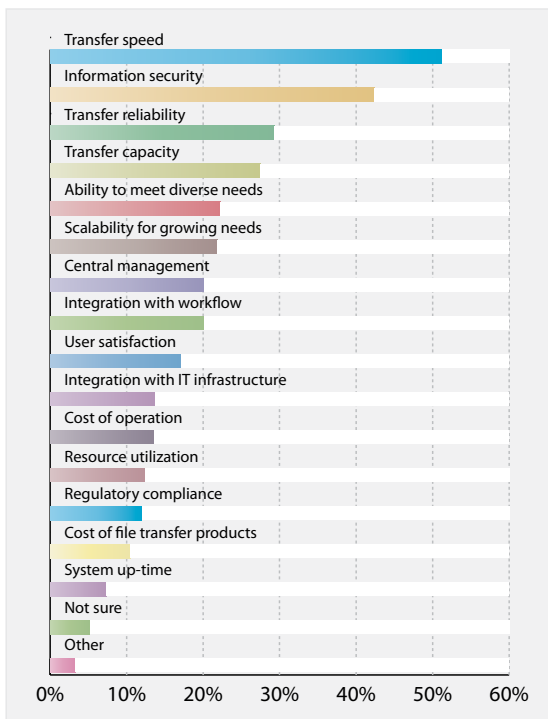
Any discussion of file transfer ends up including a discussion of data security. Almost 30 percent of survey respondents think the threat to security caused by unsupervised data transfer in their firms is "very high" or "high." They also feel that security is one of the aspects of file transfer in most

FIGURE 2
Aspects of Security Where MFT Is Superior to Other Systems



Share of firms currently using MFT citing item as a top area of superiority. Source: Ziff Davis Enterprise Managed File Transfer Study, September 2010

FIGURE 3
Aspects of Current File Transfer Systems Most Needing Improvement



Share of firms citing item as a top area needing improvement. Source: Ziff Davis Enterprise Managed File Transfer Study, September 2010

need of improvement, with more than 40 percent of the respondents voicing this need. Regardless of the size of the organization, the security of its data and intellectual property is fundamental.

The survey shows that the top five security concerns about file or mass data transfer systems and methods that IT currently uses are file/data encryption, malware, user authentication, backup and synchronization, and hacking/intercepted transmissions (see Figure 1). Perceiving such threats, IT spends lavishly on a plethora of tools—including antivirus and antispyware software, and hardware and software firewalls—to lock down the network. But those solutions can easily overlook simple file transfers and e-mail attachments, especially when those files are moving among co-workers and colleagues who are naturally deemed to be “safe.” Networks make businesses run faster, but they add risk. The role of IT is to stay out of the way of users doing what they need to do, even as it controls and monitors the movements of their files.

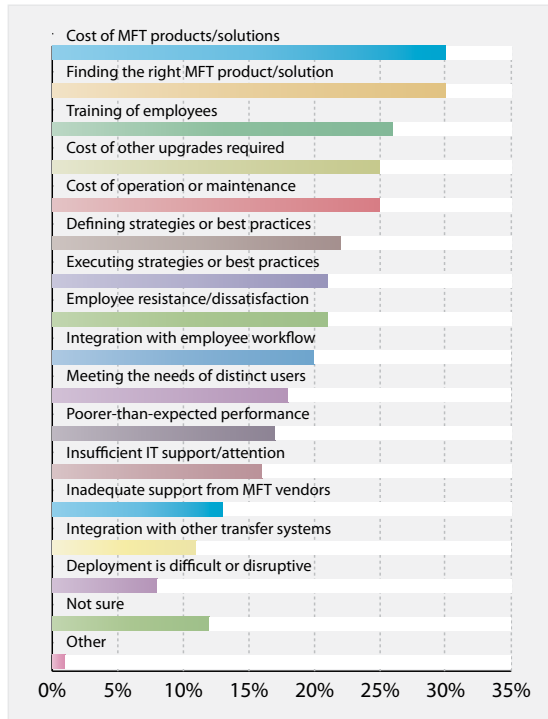
The role of MFT is exactly the same. Survey respondents who currently use MFT solutions say that MFT is superior to other tools when it comes to user authentication, file/data encryption, backup and synchronization, enforcing security policies, and activity tracking, among other security features (see Figure 2).

Of course, when it comes to moving huge amounts of data, speed is as important as security. In fact, according to survey respondents, it’s the number-one aspect of current transfer systems and methods that needs improvement. More than half of respondents say they need more speed (see Figure 3).

As for compliance, the alphabet soup of regulatory and auditing measures in effect today (HIPAA, GLBA, PCI DSS, Sarbanes-Oxley, and more) makes it one of the biggest IT challenges of all, and it is destined to get more complex rather than less in the future. When the entire business process must be monitored and documented, finding a way to get the job done without keeping the entire enterprise under complete lockdown can be tough. 38 percent of survey respondents say that their organizations’ regulatory environments affect decisions about the file transfer systems they use to a “high” or “very high” degree. MFT offers solutions here, and among users, 24 percent say it has had a notable beneficial impact when it comes to auditing or compliance management.

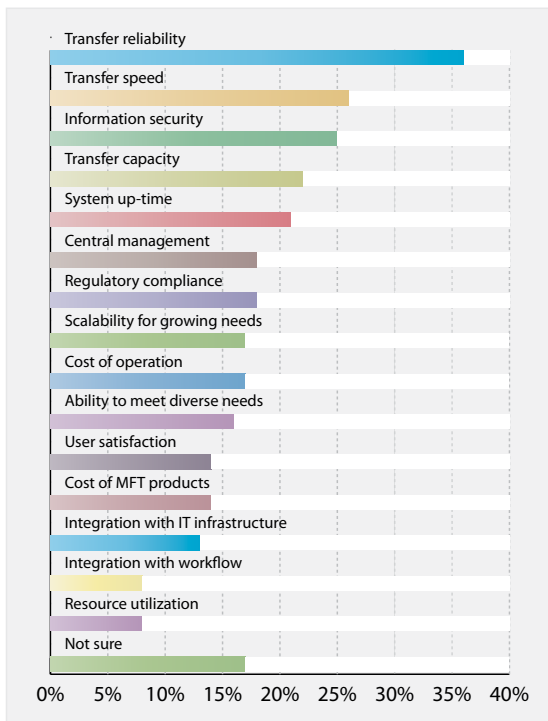
“Compliance isn’t going to go away,” Lundquist asserts. “In fact, I’d expect

FIGURE 4
Biggest Challenges Encountered When Deploying or Using MFT



Share of firms currently using MFT citing item as a top challenge.
Source: Ziff Davis Enterprise Managed File Transfer Study, September 2010

FIGURE 5
Areas Where MFT Is Superior to Other Systems Used



Share of firms currently using MFT saying item is superior.
Source: Ziff Davis Enterprise Managed File Transfer Study, September 2010

more compliance legislation as the economy becomes more mobile and digital. IT needs to attack the problem associated with data compliance and file transfer now.”

TOUGH CHALLENGES, GREAT OPPORTUNITIES

Survey respondents who have used MFT say that there are challenges to getting up and running. Finding the right product and getting it at the right price are the two biggest concerns. Training employees and upgrading related software and hardware are also high on the list (see Figure 4). Those concerns are fair, especially when we consider all that MFT is expected to do. A full-featured solution should include:

- a single control point
- complete security and encryption features
- total auditability
- delivery guarantees
- automation from start to finish
- easy integration with other business processes
- compliance with regulatory rules
- enough flexibility so organizations can scale up and down as their needs dictate.

It’s a tall order to fill without adding too many layers of complexity.

But it’s clear that well-implemented MFT is a necessity for businesses that run on information—and today, that’s all of them. The need is obvious: as processes must be controlled and monitored, it is highly beneficial for IT to regain control of how data flows within the organization, as well as into and out of it. That’s what MFT is designed to do—and respondents who use it say that’s what it does. Thirty-five percent of respondents report that it improves transfer reliability, while 26 percent say it improves transfer speed. A total of 25 percent note better security, while 23 percent report better transfer capacity (see Figure 5).

THE BUSINESS CASE

In the end, the most compelling argument for any new technology is that the organization will run better or more efficiently because of it. So, which business processes benefit most from MFT? Remote-office set-up or communications (28 percent), collaboration with business partners (28 percent), auditing or compliance management (24 percent), and customer/account service (24 percent) lead the list (see Figure 6). Note how these improvements address the bottom line for an organization directly by improving efficiency, security, and customer outreach all at the same time.

FIGURE 6
Business Processes Benefiting Most from MFT



Share of firms currently using MFT saying it has had a notable beneficial impact on given process.
Source: Ziff Davis Enterprise Managed File Transfer Study, September 2010

Among firms that use MFT, 43 percent of total transfer volume, on average, is sent via MFT. That's why transfer reliability is so crucial. It's ultimately what the whole MFT discussion is about. Are MFT users satisfied overall? Generally yes, with 57 percent saying they have high levels of satisfaction with MFT, and 55 percent saying that the business case for MFT is "very strong" or "strong."

IT knows that today's file transfer demands are destined to continue to increase exponentially, just as they have for decades. Letting all that essential business data travel around the Internet unchecked is more than unwise. In cases where regulatory compliance is required, it's actually illegal. An advanced MFT solution can solve multiple data transfer challenges at once, addressing security, speed, and compliance issues all while letting the business day proceed uninterrupted. Expect to hear much more about MFT as businesses everywhere create, consume, and share more data than ever before.

For more information and resources regarding managed file transfer, see our resource page at www.eweek.com/MFT.

About Our Sponsor



Accellion, Inc. provides enterprise-class managed file transfer solutions for security and data leak prevention that meet today's business requirements for digital information transfer. The world's leading corporations and government agencies rely on Accellion managed file transfer to secure their intellectual property and ensure compliance. Designed with unparalleled flexibility and scalability, Accellion provides organizations with flexible deployment options that can grow from a single office to global distributed deployment

integrating virtual, public and private cloud installations.

With Accellion Secure File Transfer, organizations can protect the transfer of intellectual property, reduce security exposure, ensure compliance, improve email performance, replace non-secure FTP and reduce IT support, all while providing business users with a file transfer solution that works for them.

Accellion has a global customer base spanning multiple industries including

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