

Key Considerations When Selecting an Archiving Platform



Key Considerations for Archiving: A Buyer's Reference Guide

Deploying compliance archiving has been growing fast in the past few years. This is due to changes in e-Discovery, legal proceedings, increased requirements for regulatory and audit needs. There is also a growing acceptance that communication records are the de-facto knowledge base of an organization. So organizations need to not only comply with ongoing obligations for compliance acts like FINRA, FOIA, HIPAA or Sarbanes-Oxley; but they need a system to find a wide variety of communications; even after employees have left.

Initially, archiving was limited to documents. Then when regulations expanded in the early 2000's, email archiving became standard practice. **Now people are doing business over many different communication applications** on a daily basis. When organizations adapted to remote work strategies in 2020, wide scale usage of video conferencing, instant messaging and group chat tools exploded. Email didn't slow down either. **Organizations are faced with the need to retain a much broader set of records.** You may have only archived email in the past, now you need software that will archive many different types of communications from a single management screen.

To help you find the right multi-data archiving solution for your organization, we made a list of key archiving software features to support compliance and e-Discovery needs. More than 90% of all archiving systems are purchased to meet these two challenges; but organizations are also learning to put their archives to good uses in other ways too. In case you need a quick summary, scroll down to the end to access the [free downloadable checklist worksheet](#).

Multi-Data Archiving: Why do you need it?

For **small and medium-sized businesses**, especially those that don't operate in regulated industries, email and communications archiving provides knowledge management. It also saves money on IT resources and licensing. How? An archive **reduces the load and expense** on servers, frees up account limits to a secure location where you can manage and access this data efficiently. The dependency on manually saving PST, EML and recording files is eliminated. Designated personnel can search the archives for specific messages on demand, without IT intervention.

In a larger business, these reasons still apply, but regulatory **compliance** becomes the main driver for archiving. Compliance officers and administrators must have the ability to **access and retrieve communications quickly**, regardless of the application used. They too need to find information without IT intervention.

Whether for a small or large organization, **any meaningful archiving solution must have great e-Discovery capabilities, backed with flexibility and accountable security.** But not all compliance archiving solutions (or even e-Discovery features) are created equal. Here are additional considerations to look for in order to ensure proper archiving.

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e-Discovery Data Search Speed & Ease of Use

A good multi-data archiving software solution delivers **fast search results**. A large percentage of expense related to finding and producing data (broadly called **e-Discovery** regardless of whether or not it is used for litigation purposes) comes from the amount of time it takes to find, review and produce records. The faster the searches, the greater the cost savings. It also has to be **easy to use** with **an intuitive interface**. With a well-designed multi-data archiving solution, your users won't need an instruction manual. Apart from ease of use and user-centered design, your archiving software needs to possess **sophisticated features** that will allow you to **locate and retrieve files easily**.

Powerful Search Features

Your compliance archiving solution needs search features that are **flexible, comprehensive and powerful**. It will give your staff the ability to search for specific messages or conversations, regardless of where it took place: on email, in a Microsoft Teams space, a Zoom meeting or on IM, for example.

A good search functionality will provide **a variety of search filters** and be **able to provide context in the records produced**. Who else was involved? What documents were attached and referenced during the conversation? When did it happen?

Message Search

The screenshot displays a 'Message Search' interface with the following components:

- Find messages...** header
- from** 12/11/2019 **to** 12/11/2019
- Tags:** [input field] **Any** **All**
- People:** [input field]
- Between these people:** [input field]
- Record type:** [input field]
- Keywords:** [input field] **Any** **All** **Exact** **Partial**
- Message Id:** [input field]
- Add filter** button
- Search** button

Figure 1: An example of flexible search parameters provided by Donoma OneVault, a multi-data archiving platform

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- Search refinement is important for those instances when you need to narrow down search results.
- In order for users to manage the archive appropriately, **search should be coupled with secure data production options such as export, email, all controlled by rights and organizational policy.**

e-Discovery and Compliance Support

Your archiving solution needs to guarantee a **tamper-proof archive**. One of the most obvious advantages of archiving is that it prevents your important files from being altered, deleted, misused or moved. This is important because you may be called on to **prove the authenticity and integrity of your records**, should they be used as evidence in a court of law.

You also need to ensure that your intended solution will support the management of data on **Legal holds**. Legal hold is a process to preserve relevant records related to a particular issue when an organization **anticipates litigation, investigation** or an **audit**. This critical archiving feature allows admins and compliance officers to apply legal hold on certain users' accounts and thus **preserve their communications indefinitely, or until the case is resolved**.

Another key requirement of both compliance regulators and legal teams is that ***all data must be preserved in its original state***. You can't make image files or snapshots of the data, for example.

When retaining records for compliance purposes, it is also critical that your archiving solution **make retention easy and automatic**. To ensure no data is overlooked, it is important that the solution automatically provision new employee accounts with appropriate archiving support. To make this more streamlined, inquire about integration with Active Directory and how fast the archiving platform can accommodate additional accounts.

Adequate Indexing of Archived Data

When an email or other communication record reaches the archiving system, it is read against a list of defined criteria. The system then creates a list of terms (called an index) that can be used as search criteria later. A good archiving solution will be able to search not only based on common criteria such as message subject, sender and recipient, but also **search and refine based on keywords, tags, data type, find conversations between specific individuals**.

Flexible search options are vital as it **facilitates your search** and ultimately **improves your e-Discovery response** by enabling a **quick extraction of the right records** to support legal requests and in-house requests for data.

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Customizable Retention Policies

Your retention policies are often driven by regulatory requirements, and these can differ significantly by governing body and geography. Compliance officers and legal teams are responsible for staying abreast of relevant laws and updating archiving policy requirements. In some cases, that can mean many different policies may need to be applied across an organization. This is not something where manual management is scalable or advisable.

A multi-data archiving solution with good policy management will not only allow you to **set and automate** policies, but also **eliminate the possibility of human error** and **prevent tampering with archived data**.

After the retention period expires, the data must be automatically deleted from your system, so it does not create unnecessary liability on top of resource consumption and management.

Access Archived Data for Knowledge Management

A multi-data archive solution also allows an organization to use their archive as a **knowledge repository**. This way, authorized users can find and extract messages and supporting information involving the actions, commitments and knowledge of past and present employees. Designated staff can quickly search and produce records that document prior discussions and understandings. By allowing direct access by designated personnel, not only is access faster, but confidentiality is maintained. When IT is asked to perform searches, often they are given access that would otherwise be inappropriate for them to see. Keywords, tagging and automation of each can be tremendously helpful for historical/context searches.

Security & Audit Features

To ensure proper chain of custody on your searches, and prevent destruction or spoliation of evidence, you should be looking for a solution that's **secure, encrypted** and **tamperproof**.

A good multi-data archiving solution also comes with **configurable user roles for data access**. You define access levels yourself to **control permissions and access to the archive**. End users will typically have access only to their data. Managers and compliance officers can search across a wider data set. Even better is if you can find a solution where the IT administration features are completely separate from the e-Discovery capabilities and vice-versa. In most cases, IT should not have access to see employee communications or other electronic records; and those who need that information should not have access to system configuration settings.

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Another important requirement is the **audit trail feature** that allows responsible staff members to monitor and record users' activities. This is crucial to prevent any attempts at deleting or altering information.

Cloud-Powered Business Continuity Support

Your archive solution should also be viewed as an important **part of your business continuity strategy**. We strongly advocate the benefit of a **cloud-based archiving** solution to give you **greater cost control, security and agility** in the event of a data-breach or outage at your organization.

On premise archiving solutions are consistently under-managed and over-looked. It is not unusual for organizations discover that an archival server became disconnected during network changes and/or personnel turnover. By using a cloud-based archiving solution you not only enjoy the benefit application performance supervision, but **your data archive is both encrypted and unreachable by cybercriminals who constantly target and breach on-premises systems**.

If needed, during the interim period before IT can restart operations after an outage, **selected users can be granted secure access to their own records**. This is completely separate from the restoration of a data backup which is not selective. We have seen it take days or weeks for email and communications to come back online when there are insurance companies, HR issues or possible legal action involved. A cloud-based archive provides continual data access to your team, even when on-premise systems are temporarily offline for any reason.

Multi-Data Compliance Archiving Recommended Features Checklist

Now that you have more insight into the importance and context of key archiving solution features, here's a quick checklist of essential features your archiving solution needs to have to meet requirements for this year and beyond.

[Free Download: Archiving Buyers Guide Checklist \(PDF Format\)](#)

About Donoma Software

Donoma Software has been providing compliance archiving solutions for over 10 years. If you'd like to learn how your organization can meet compliance requirements, reduce costs and risk, we'd like the opportunity to introduce you to our OneVault multi-data archiving platform. Just visit us at www.donomasoftware.com to **contact us** or schedule a no obligation solution tour. We're happy to discuss your needs and show you OneVault's multi-data archiving capabilities.