



eFolder White Paper: 5 Ways Business-Grade File Sync Makes Offices More Productive

April 2015

Introduction

A recent Forrester survey found that 50% of IT decision-makers at US enterprises felt that file sync and share makes employees more efficient in all aspects of their daily work.¹ While this trend is certainly encouraging, it is unlikely that employees are taking advantage of all that file sync has to offer — particularly the features that true business-grade products provide.

Many consumer-grade file sync services work well for basic file sharing, but offer little else in the way of advanced features. Business-grade file sync, on the other hand, can transform the way people collaborate and do business. This white paper outlines five ways companies can use business-grade file sync to boost productivity and collaboration inside and outside of their organizations.

1. Enable mobile access to the file server

For years, many organizations have stored most or all of their data on an on-premises file server, which has enabled fast file access for employees who work on a network. Though keeping data on a file server certainly has its benefits, remote employees looking to access this data on a mobile device have traditionally had to use cumbersome FTP or VPN protocols. Some business owners believe moving all their data to the cloud is the only way to provide mobile users easy access to data, but many companies have shied away from shifting away from their file server due to its local and secure nature.

So how can businesses reconcile the advantages of fast, local storage with the need for mobile workers to access this data on their laptops, tablets, and phones? The answer is cloud-enabling the file server: syncing the local file server with the cloud so that employees have remote access to its contents on any device. Cloud-enabling the file server is as simple as installing a sync agent onto the server, which maps the file server directory to a folder that automatically sync with users' devices. All additions, edits, and deletions are synced between users' devices and the server.

Cloud-enabling the file server provides benefits beyond data mobility. By cloud-enabling the file server, business unlock a host of collaborative features. For example, teams within an organization can collaborate on a common set of files with the most up-to-date versions being continuously synced to the cloud. In addition, users can easily and securely share files from the file server with internal and external parties. Moreover, since data is constantly synced between the cloud and the server, the cloud can act as a second site backup for the server. Finally, by cloud-enabling the file server, administrators always have full visibility into the files that users access, modify, and share.

2. Securely share documents with internal and external parties

The Internet was built for sharing, and over the last decade, it has definitively become the preferred method for sharing documents and other files. But given the multitude of ways to share files over the Internet and the security risks involved with many of these methods, companies need to carefully consider how employees are sharing important data.

Unlike email or basic file sharing services that are not designed for professional use, business-grade file sync gives companies with security requirements peace of mind. Companies can ensure proper sharing of files by leveraging a host of security features. For example, business-grade file sync lets users set shared files to expire on a specific date, limit the number of times a file is downloaded, and receive notifications whenever a file is downloaded. Users can also force recipients to log in with a company or guest account, which easily allows for a shared file to be tracked and monitored. These options are available any time a user chooses to share files through the web or via an Outlook plug-in.

Finally, business-grade file sync empowers administrators with advanced control over data and devices. A complete audit trail grants administrators full visibility into when files are accessed, added, deleted, or modified. Moreover, if a device is ever lost or stolen, administrators can use remote wipes to quickly and easily wipe sensitive data from specific devices before it falls into the wrong hands. Additional administrative features that business-grade file sync offers include Active Directory integration, file type exclusion, and two-factor authentication. All of these security features provide administrators with the assurance that shared corporate data is retained and protected.

3. Simplify collaboration and the file sharing workflow

Many businesses use free, consumer-grade file sync services to collaborate between colleagues and outside the organization. Some continue to use email to transfer files back and forth. Still others use cumbersome, difficult-to-use platforms such as Microsoft SharePoint to collaborate internally and externally. Unfortunately, these methods often force employees into an unnecessarily long workflow involving file attachments, multiple downloads, and no inherent versioning capabilities. Even more concerning is the lack of security involved in consumer-grade file sync and email. Neither of these methods provides employers with oversight into what employees are sharing and modifying inside and outside of the organization.

Business-grade file sync provides a simpler approach to internal collaboration. Team shares make it easy for organizations and subgroups within organizations to collaborate. Team shares are folders that multiple people can access and save files to — so, for example, a marketing organization could ensure all marketing collateral is in one place and can keep this information hidden from other sub organizations within the company. With team shares, everyone is kept in the loop with the information they need, right when they need it.

Business-grade file sync also presents the best way for companies to share files externally: an easy-to-use, custom-branded portal. Customers and third parties who use the portal to upload files are assured their data is being sent to the right source, while businesses on the receiving end of these files enjoy easy file organization and a simple, logical workflow, since the files are stored right within a synced folder in Windows Explorer or Finder on a Mac.

4. Keep important data backed up

Though most people only think of file sync as a convenient way to sync files between different people and different devices, business-grade file sync actually provides another important benefit: backup. While every business knows that they should back up their data, not all of them do — and the price of lost data can be tremendous.

Fortunately, for businesses unwilling or unable to invest in a dedicated backup system, cloud file sync can actually serve as a convenient solution. With business-grade file sync, the productivity files that employees local and remote use the most — spreadsheets, documents, images, and more — are backed up to the cloud. Additionally, unlike consumer-grade products, business-grade file sync also allows users to specify certain folders to back up to the cloud, even if these folders do not reside within a user's synced folder. This way, employees have the peace of mind that their most important files are backed up and can easily be viewed on and restored to any device from the cloud if necessary.

5. Reduce overhead and increase output

There is no shortage of platforms that promise to improve collaboration and productivity in the workplace. Though these products are widely used, they may simply be overkill for most small- and medium-sized businesses and introduce unnecessary complexity. SharePoint is notorious for requiring outside consultation for proper implementation and is not an out-of-the-box solution. In fact, in a recent Forrester survey, 40% of respondents claimed that Microsoft SharePoint did not contribute value to their business.²

Business-grade file sync offers many of the productivity advantages desired by businesses who adopt services like SharePoint, but in a substantially simpler manner. Employees enjoy easy sharing and collaboration across their laptops, desktops, and mobile devices, while administrators can rest assured knowing that important data is always securely stored and protected. In short, with business-grade file sync, organizations can unlock secure, team-friendly collaboration, without the hassles and costs associated with more complex solutions.

Conclusion

The Internet has the potential to be a powerful platform for collaboration, but boosting productivity requires using the right tools. Businesses need a flexible solution to securely share and collaborate, back up their data, and simplify productivity. That solution is business-grade file sync.

With business-grade file sync, organizations can significantly boost the capabilities of existing hardware by cloud-enabling the file server and ensuring that mobile users have access to all the files they need. Secure internal and external file sharing and data backup are additional useful features that business-grade file sync provides. Compared to other services, which can be overcomplicated or lack important security and collaboration features, business-grade file sync provides businesses with the perfect combination of power and ease-of-use.

Business-grade file sync is the ideal way for business owners to unlock productivity for their employees. The security and productivity advances that business-grade file sync enable let businesses focus on what's most important: working as efficiently as possible.

¹A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Code42, July 2014

²Koplowitz, Rob, John R. Rymer, Jeffrey S. Hammond, and Vivian Brown. SharePoint Enters Its Awkward Teenage Years. Study. Forrester Research, 6 Feb. 2013. Web. 26 Mar. 2015.



Corporate Headquarters

2340 Perimeter Park Drive, Suite 100, Atlanta, GA 30341 ■ 678-888-0700 ■ www.efolder.net