

5 Reasons Email Migrations Fail and How to Ensure Success



Migrating to the cloud brings significant benefits in terms of accessibility and scalability. Employees expect to be able to catch up on email from anywhere, and [remote work](#) makes the cloud indispensable. But migration can prove more complicated than expected. Explore several key reasons email migrations fail and learn what to do to experience a smooth transition.

1. Lack of Planning

Unsurprisingly, a failure to plan almost guarantees that the migration will experience lengthy downtime, unexpected delays, lost data, and user frustration. On the other hand, successful migrations begin with a clear understanding of the current environment and a detailed plan of action.

Start by gathering information about the old system, including:

- An inventory of items to move to the new system – This includes items such as email accounts, contacts, calendars, distribution lists, shared mailboxes and personal archives.
- A clear picture of the amount of data and number of mailboxes to move – This information is critical to estimating the timeline and cost of the migration.
- A list of settings and permissions – Some of these will transfer over easily to the new system. Others will require more planning or workarounds.

- An understanding of workflows and customizations – Determine what workflows and features must be accommodated in the new system versus where changes can improve efficiency.

With a detailed map of the old system in place, you can map out the target environment and build a migration plan.



2. Neglecting to Clean Up Content Before Migrating

On the surface, simply transferring everything from the old system into the new system seems like the easiest plan. However, as with any moving project, cleaning house first makes for a better outcome. Large mailboxes and large files slow down the process significantly. This can cause delays and add to the cost of the migration.

On the other hand, removing outdated or redundant content first reduces the risk of issues. Identify inactive user accounts, as well as shared mailboxes that have not been used in several months. Then determine whether to delete these accounts or [archive them](#). This not only reduces the amount of data to transfer but also reduces the number of [licenses to purchase](#).

Likewise, encourage end users to review their mailboxes to remove unnecessary items. For instance, they can delete large attachments or archive folders from projects long completed. They can also search for and delete items from specific senders or older than a given date.

3. Insufficient Communication

In a successful migration project, stakeholders are involved from the beginning and end users have the information they need to adapt to the changes. This requires frequent and clear communication throughout the process, addressing items like the following:

- Migration timeline – Early on, communicate an overall migration timeline with key dates, factoring in the likelihood of unexpected issues. This allows users to plan accordingly and complete any tasks assigned to them. Update end users with regular communications throughout the process.
- Impact on users – When users know what to expect, they will accept changes and disruptions more readily. For instance, tell them ahead of time about anticipated downtime. If they will need a new login or need to reconnect their phone to email, give them instructions. This will reduce the number of panicked calls and support tickets.
- Changes to expect in the new system – Moving to a new email system will likely involve significant differences in tasks users perform every day. Make sure they have the training they need to adapt quickly. Emphasizing the benefits of the new platform will help.
- How to report issues – Make sure users know who to call if they have an issue with the new email system.

4. Skipping the Test Run

Many migrations fail when the organization decides to migrate the entire organization all at once, without testing the process first. Even with the best plans, unexpected snags will occur. Take the time to run a pilot migration first.

Choose an average team for the test run and monitor the migration closely. Take detailed notes and adjust the migration steps, timeline, and communications accordingly. If necessary, run several pilot migrations until the process runs smoothly.



5. Inexperienced Team - One of the Top Reasons Email Migrations Fail

Email migrations require a specific set of skills. This skillset includes detailed knowledge of both the current system and the target system. The migration team also needs an understanding of migration tools and extensive experience conducting migrations.

Most organizations do not have that skillset in-house. Consequently, partnering with [email migration experts](#) helps to ensure a smooth transition to the new environment. The migration experts at Messaging Architects have completed hundreds of successful email migrations and bring the tools and expertise you need.