

Email Tips for SOX Compliance

As the importance of email has grown, its legal status has changed—with far-reaching consequences. In the last few years, a variety of laws and regulations have been extended to email communications in both public and private sectors. SOX reaches beyond email; the following “Tips” are suggested quick starts to a successful compliance plan.

Why should you care about Sarbanes-Oxley?

Among other provisions, SOX requires companies to maintain “all audit or review work papers” for at least five years. For registered public accounting firms, the period is at least seven years. Penalties for noncompliance include severe fines and even imprisonment, and intentionally altering or destroying records can bring even more serious consequences.

With appropriate policies, procedures and training in place, is there still a danger of noncompliance?

Yes! Consider that most “work papers” and “records” are created as emails and may never exist in physical form. An email can be deleted in violation of SOX at the click of a mouse. Key considerations for ensuring your company meets SOX record-keeping requirements include:

- Can your employees reliably distinguish ordinary emails from SOX-protected email records? Can you be certain they’re storing the protected emails for the required time period, with no mistakes?
- Do you have a process for storing physical copies of every protected email? How do you manage the cost and space requirements?
- Can you be certain that no one is hacking into your email system and maliciously changing records?
- If you’re not sure of the answers, can you afford to pay the price?

So what can you do to reliably identify, secure and archive protected records in email form?

- Implement gateway controls to significantly reduce the amount of unwanted email entering your network, making it easier to identify and archive SOX-protected email while preserving system performance. **Sendmail offers both software-based and appliance approaches for gateway control. Both are fully configurable within an easy-to-use graphical console.**
- Implement policy-based filtering to reliably sort protected email from personal and other non-protected email, both incoming and outgoing. **Sendmail provides both software and appliances for powerful enforcement of your business policies.**
- Implement a quarantine and secure storage to ensure full compliance. **Sendmail provides a framework to scan, capture and quarantine non-compliant and suspect messages. Once in quarantine, Sendmail enables role-based privileges for review and action.**

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