Understanding Email *by Sean D. Conway*

If you have made the decision to change Internet Service Provider's (ISP) then you may want to invest some time in reviewing your current email setup, to ensure it meets your needs after the ISP move. Moving ISP's may put your email at risk.

Over the next four weeks the SouthEast Journal will publish a series of articles that provides our readers with some knowledge about email services. The knowledge will hopefully assist you in understanding your email, so you can prepare yourself for the move to a new ISP.

The author is a retired Security Specialist from a national telecommunication provider. During his career he spent a few years supporting the email services provided by an ISP.

Every attempt has been made to simplify the language for the layperson. It's important to retain some of the technical details, for example terms. If you encounter problems, you may hear the terms when dealing with technical support. Using the non-technical term like whatchamacallit, to describe an issue to technical support can lead to frustrations for you and tech support.

Who controls your email account? ISP's typically provide email services as part of their Internet service offering. You may be using the email services provided by your ISP or you may get your email services from another service provider.

You may be able to keep the email address after the ISP move or you may be forced to create both an email account and email address on another email service provider as a result of the ISP move. How can you tell?

You will have an email account with a service provider that has an associated email address. The email account and email address identifiers may be the same or they may be different.

The email account is the email service provider's record of you. Think of it as your phone bill account number. The email address is used to send and receive your email messages through the Internet. The email address in this analogy would be the phone number. An email account could have multiple email addresses associated with it, the same as a telephone account can have multiple phone numbers.

An email account, has a unique identifier associated with it called an email address like <username>@<domain.something>. An email address can be divided into two parts separated by the "at" symbol (@). In technical terms the first part <username>, of the email address is called the user identifier (userID). The second part <domain.something>, is called the domain name.

If you already know who controls your email account you can skip this next step. If not, examine your email address domain name to see if it gives you a hint of who the email provider is.

The details in the domain name part of the email address may help you determine who controls your email account. The provider may include their brand name in the address details. Take a look at your email address and see if your current ISP controls the domain or do you get your email service from an alternate provider? If your email account is controlled by your current ISP, then you have some work to do before you move ISP's.

If you have determined your email account is not with your current ISP, then you don't have to move your email but, you may want to comparison shop. Your new ISP may offer something with email you don't currently have. It's a good idea to check out what the competition is offering and determine if there is something in it for you. If you like where your email account is right now, then there is nothing more for you to do.

So you have determined your email account is controlled by your current ISP. Your current ISP may let you keep your email account for a charge. Since you have decided not to get Internet service from them, the provider may force you to take your email business elsewhere as well.

If you have determined you need replacement email services, you have two choices . Use the email service of your new ISP, if they offer one, or find an alternate email service provider.

Check with your new ISP to see if they offer email services. Email services are normally part of an ISP Internet package. You pay one fee and the ISP takes care of establishing your email account.

If the new ISP doesn't provide email, then you need to choose an alternate email service provider. You may have seen email addresses with domain names (i.e. the part of the email address after the @ symbol) like hotmail.com, yahoo.com or gmail.com. These are alternate email service providers not bound to a specific ISP.

Email services with an ISP are normally free. The cost is included in the Internet access service you pay for. You can get FREE email services from alternate providers. They want to make money so, don't

be surprised if they push pay services for any bells and whistles you may want.

If you choose to establish an email account with an alternate email service provider, they will provide the appropriate email address you will need to use their service. You might be able to retain the userID from your old email address and just change the domain name or the complete email address may be different.

The email address will be new for you so don't forget to document the details. That means you will need the correct spelling of the email address and the correct password associated with the account. The statement "I think it is right" won't help you going forward if some of the details are wrong.

The earlier you start the process of setting up a new email before leaving your ISP and closing your old email account, the more benefits you gain and less impact the ISP move will have on your email delivery. What are the follow-up steps now that you have started an email move?

The next article in the series will help you determine how you interact with your email provider. The article will also help you understand if you will need to make any changes before moving ISP's.

This is the second installment of four articles developed for users that are changing Internet Service Providers (ISP). The articles are designed to provide knowledge that will hopefully assist you in understanding email, so that you can prepare yourself for the move to a new ISP.

The first article provided the details to determine if you needed to move your email. This article is designed to help you determine if you will need a new email interface.

The sending and receiving of email requires a connection between two end points. One end point is the user email interface and the other end point is the email services computers. You need to have some knowledge of both ends of the connection to get email working.

The email interface is how you interact with email. It's the software on your computer. Email interfaces are as varied as the users themselves. Do you click an icon on your desktop to get your email or do you start a dedicated application or do you use a browser for email? The icon you click may actually call an email application or fire up the browser.

If you use a browser to interact with email, then you will need to change your email interface. If you use an email application, you may be able to retain the way you interact with email and just change the back-end configuration. (i.e. the connection details to the email services computer servers.)

Some email providers have built browser interfaces for you to interact with their email services. Using an Internet browser link, you are taken to a web page that provides customized email options after you login in with a username and password.

The browser supported email interface enables you to access your email from any device that supports a browser. Every time you login with a browser you get the same display that is customized by the email provider.

You may interface with email through an email application. The application is not provided by the ISP but rather a third party specializing in creating email applications. The application provides the features for you to manage email.

An account created in the application contains not only the email messages but also all the details for the application to make the connection needed to send and receive email.

If you interface with the email services using an application then you will need to make some changes to the application configuration so it can be pointed to the email interface of your new email provider. This usually means creating another account in the email application.

The new email provider will have a list of configuration details that you will need to configure in the new account on the email application, in order to connect to the new email service. Do an internet search using your new email providers name and use search word like Incoming and Outgoing email server to gather such details.

You need to find the specific configuration details for your email provider so your application knows how to connect. Incoming email server name, outgoing email server name, port numbers and email

types are some of the details you will need to complete the configuration.

Most users have little knowledge on how email works. They click an icon to read and respond to emails. The details associated with email interfaces and back end connections are of little concern to them.

You need to determine what interface do you use to interact with your email. Now that you know that, you can determine if it needs to change and/or you want to make a change. Maybe you want to move away from an application and use a browser?

Your new email provider may have their own browser link to get email. The email provider will also make available configuration details needed to configure the email application so it can access their services.

You now have knowledge to determine the changes to your email interface. The next article will provide knowledge to establish a transition configuration between the two email systems. The transition configuration will give you an email setup you can monitor to determine if your email is working the way you desire before kicking your old ISP to the curb.

This is the third installment of four articles developed for users changing Internet Service Providers (ISP). The articles are designed to provide knowledge that will hopefully assist you in understanding email, so that you can prepare yourself for the move to a new ISP.

The first article provided the details to determine if you needed to move your email. The second looked at changes to your email interface. This article provides the details to establish a transition configuration for email services. You are going to have two email services running at the same time and link them. In order to accomplish this goal you will need access to your old email system and have established access to your replacement email service.

The details provided in this article are generic. The goal is to provide knowledge and not instructions for a given interface. You will need to look to your own interface and figure out how to apply the knowledge.

Let's start the process by determining if the email account with your old ISP is a parent account? A parent account enables you to create additional email accounts (child accounts) under the parent account. To avoid the ISP having to do the work, the ISP provides parent accounts so users can create child accounts for themselves.

The parent account is associated with the very first email address you received from the ISP. The parent account has the ability to create the child accounts. Child accounts are the individual email addresses you created for each member of the household. Maybe mom, dad and the kids all have their own email accounts?

It is important to note, when parent accounts are deleted, all child accounts are also deleted. Just think of the frustration if you did all the work to move your email account but forgot to take care of the other accounts?

If you used the parent account to establish child accounts, then you will need to perform the next steps for both parent and child accounts. That may include creating separate new email addresses corresponding to each child account.

Let's start preparing for the new ISP move by doing some housekeeping chores on all the email accounts with the old ISP. Remember this includes the parent and child accounts if they exist. If you didn't use the parent account feature to create child accounts you will have less housekeeping work.

Clean-up all the emails you don't require. That means deleting emails. Clean-up the emails in folders you may have created and clean-up the folders you won't be needing.

Clean-up the emails in your sent folder. Ensure that the trash folder is empty. The clean-up on the sent folder and trash folders should be done last. These folders are used often by the email system and may get email from the other clean-up activities or through normal email activity.

Finish your housekeeping by exporting a list of email addresses you wish to retain. The export is usually done to a file. The file with the list of email address contacts may be able to be used to import the email address list into the new email system.

This housekeeping task is trying to preserve your email contacts. If email address exporting is not available you may need to manually create a list of email addresses you wish to keep.

At the conclusion of the first article, you were left with the task of establishing new email accounts. The new email accounts will have new email addresses needed for the next tasks.

On your email interface (the way you use to interact with email), import the email address list from the file that you exported from the old system. If you are not familiar with the interface, do an Internet search for importing email addresses list. If you have difficultly exporting the file, do a search for that.

While preparing these articles, the author did Internet searches for the details. Some ISP's provide the details in their technical support pages. What ensured success was using the appropriate search terms. Searching for "moving email" is far less effective than searching for "exporting/importing email contacts".

Can't import email addresses? Then you may have to manually enter the email addresses. You could wait until email is flowing to your new email account and save the email addresses that are received in the contact list. Either way, you will need email addresses on the new email system if you wish to send your contacts an email message notifying them of your new email address.

Next, establish email forwarding on the old email system. An Internet search using terms such as "enable email forwarding from <insert your old ISP here>" may be helpful. This function enables email

received at your old email address to be forwarded to your new email address.

You may also wish to configure an auto-response message. This function will automatically send a message to any incoming email. You can tailor the message to tell people, "Hey My Email Address is different."

Maybe you don't want some people to know that your email address has changed? If you don't want to establish auto-response, you can manually respond to those forwarded email addresses that you wish to retain and ignore others.

Monitor both systems to confirm that forwarding is working as desired. This completes the transition configuration. Your old and new email services should be working together.

With both services running you have reached a point that allows you to monitor your email to see that everything is working. While in transition you will have access to both email systems to make any changes. Monitor your email and correct any issues you identify.

Give yourself some time before canceling the service from the old ISP in order to let this transition configuration SOAK. SOAK is a technical term meaning both systems are in operation, while being monitored so corrections can be implemented as needed.

When do you abandon your old email address? When you notify the ISP you no longer want their service, you will lose access to the old email system, email will not be forwarded and people sending

emails to your old email address will get failure to deliver notices. There is a pretty good chance the old provider is going to delete all of the contents in your email account.

The next article in the series will provide the details to assist in moving old email messages to the new email system. This option works ideally if the transition configuration is still in SOAK.

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This is the forth and last installment of articles designed to provide our readers with some knowledge about email services. The knowledge was designed to assist you in understanding email, so you can prepare yourself for the move to a new Internet Service Provider (ISP).

This article assumes the transition configuration for your two email systems described in the third article are still in place and have been SOAKing. In order to accomplish the task in this article, you will need access to your old email system and your replacement email system.

If you wish to preserve email messages from the old email system and make them available on your new email system, you have some work to do before you tell the ISP you don't want their service.

To start this process you need to answer the question, where are your email messages stored? Email messages may be stored on your personal computers (PC) hard drive. This means the email program on your PC pulls email messages from the email provider's server and stores the email messages locally.

Your email may be stored on the email providers computer server and you are using an application to manage them. You can read them, move them into folders or delete them but the email messages are not stored locally but rather stored with the email provider.

You may have a configuration that includes both options. After the last few technical gobbledygook paragraphs, you might be curling your lip thinking, how the holy deity would I know where my email messages are stored? Let's discover the answer together.

If you open your email from a number of devices and/or computers, in all likelihood the email messages are being stored on the email providers servers. This keeps all the email messages in one place and you are just accessing them from different places.

Some providers provide a branded email interface that is accessed through the Internet browser on your device or computer. This was discussed in detail in article two. The email messages are stored in the ISP's cloud (on their servers) and the user accesses them using different devices with a browser.

If you have a dedicated computer and an application on that computer, you might be pulling email from the email provider and storing them locally.

You may have a mix of both. One device stores them locally and another is used to look at emails that have just arrived. That is why it is difficult for most users to explain to technical support their email setup. They just know it works for them.

If the email is stored on the email provider's server you may have the option to have the new email service check-in to the old email server and pull old email messages it finds. This option may allow you to retain the directory structure of folders from the old system.

In order to accomplish this task you need the specific details for each email service. This enables the two systems to make a connection and transfer emails. Incoming email server name, outgoing email server name, port numbers and email types are some of the details you will need to complete the configuration.

Pulling large quantities of email messages from one server to another can take considerable time. The third installment of these articles described some housekeeping chores to clean-up your old email account so as to avoid unnecessary email being transferred.

If your email messages are stored locally, you will need to either export the email in a format that can be imported on the new email system or use the send feature to send all the emails to your new email address. Search the name of your email application with the words exporting and importing to find the details for that application.

But wait, what if my email is stored in the cloud but I can't enable the two mail servers to talk to each other and exchange email? Like mail stored locally, you may have the option of exporting email messages to a file that can be imported into the new email system.

Try to avoid getting frustrated if things are not going smoothly . The task of moving email between two email platforms can be very complex. Email servers use protocols like POP, POP3, IMAP and SMTP to communicate. You need to have these details in order to connect multiple systems.

The other consideration is if both email system have to support for what you are trying to accomplish. One system may allow the connection but the other email system doesn't permit export and import. Not all email systems offer the same features.

Some email providers do provide step-by-step instruction to "migrate" or move your email from one

specific provider to their service. A search through your new provider's online instructions may provide some help with this.

Don't be surprised if your old email provider is reluctant to provide assistance. You are taking your business elsewhere. It is not their concern that it's not easy to move between email systems.

You will hear the expression changing email addresses is easy. Changing email addresses is as easy as driving a motorcycle. Telling a person who has never driven a motorcycle it's easy, you just turn the handle to go, usually winds up with the person being dragged behind the bike or flipping the bike in front of them.