

# Get the message — delete that email at your peril

**T**HINK again before you delete that email. Your good electronic house-keeping could cost your employer a mint.

Many Australian organisations are inadvertently exposing themselves to risk by failing to maintain accurate records of electronic information — particularly emails — warns Melbourne lawyer Maureen Duffy. The legal technology support group manager at law firm Clayton Utz says growth in the volume of business conducted via technologies

such as email leaves some companies without adequate records. That could be costly if a business needed the information to fend off litigation.

“When you had a hard-copy system and you really had a question about something, you could go to the cupboard, pull up the file and read it,” Ms Duffy says. “Now, more of it’s done electronically, not as much is printed, some of it gets wiped when people leave, and IT hasn’t captured all of that information.”

Ms Duffy, who spoke at an

email management conference in Melbourne this month, says international studies show that up to 90 per cent of electronic information held by businesses is not converted to hard copy. And much of that is email.

Ms Duffy says all organisations, no matter what size, should have an information management system that captures electronic communications such as emails.

Even those people who are good at keeping emails often fail to catch and store those they send in any systematic

way, she says. “The scary part in a litigation scenario is when you don’t have it but someone else does,” Ms Duffy says.

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**◀ The scary part in a litigation scenario is when you don’t have it (email) but someone else does. ▶**

**MAUREEN DUFFY**

People who work out of so-called mobile offices should also think about capturing information sent to notebooks, mobile phones and PDAs.

A recent US case underscored the problem. Financial firm J. P. Morgan was fined \$US2.1 million (\$A2.7 million) for discarding emails sought in investigations by US regulators.

James Turner, industry analyst for security at business consultancy Frost & Sullivan, says many organisations are rethinking workers’ use of email from a cost perspective.

New Zealand Telecom’s recently introduced “no email Fridays” is “just the beginning”, he says. “Companies realise the costs around emails

in terms of storage capacity and bandwidth and so on,” Mr Turner says. “Those are infrastructure costs but you’ve also got costs in terms of productivity.”

Mr Turner says many organisations have policies to streamline email use.

He says that as with a car or money, email should be a tool: “Are we managing email or is email managing us?”

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#### **LINKS**

[www.claytonutz.com/people/controller.asp?pid=368](http://www.claytonutz.com/people/controller.asp?pid=368)