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A Case for Maintaining Both On-Premises and Cloud Storage Platforms

Though a transition to the cloud may seem appealing for organizations looking to enable users with the flexibility that cloud collaboration provides, moving large volumes of mission-critical data is simply impossible for many large enterprises. For these businesses, a hybrid approach of synchronizing their existing on-premises storage with new cloud services is ideal.

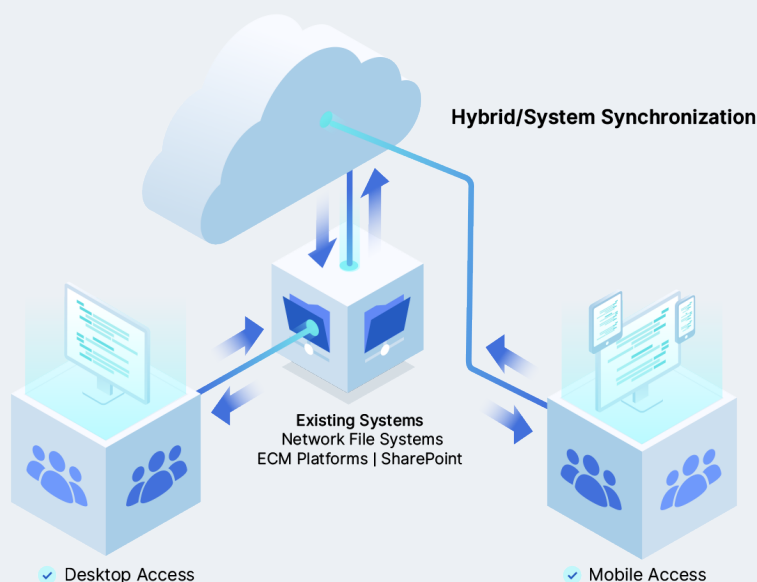www.skysync.com   info@skysync.com   linkedin.com/company/skysync

What is hybrid content synchronization?

Hybrid content synchronization is the practice of implementing both cloud-based and on-premises systems to store, share, and manage enterprise content. The scenario can apply to the synchronization of disparate cloud storage platforms as well.

The state of Enterprise Content Management

Hybrid/System Synchronization

Existing Systems
Network File Systems
ECM Platforms | SharePoint

✓ Desktop Access

✓ Mobile Access

Despite what seems like a mass exodus to new cloud content collaboration services, many enterprises are still housing their content on-premises. Forrester has reported that 47% of enterprises hold between 1 TB and 19 TB of data locally, while 21% stored 100 TB to 999 TB and a further 14% stored over 1,000 TB on-premises.

In its Forrester Wave: ECM Content Platforms Q3 2019 report, the analyst firm noted that enterprises must consider user experience as an essential component to their ECM deployments. "Global full-time information workers spend over 27% of their day creating, finding or reading documents," the report states, imploring enterprises to seek ECM vendors that deliver collaborative content services and enable productivity.

To meet these various needs, many enterprises have deployed several content management platforms, each with different features and functionality. In some cases, users have also taken matters into their own hands by adding their preferred collaboration tools into the mix – often creating information siloes with a lack of data governance and oversight from IT.

Gartner has acknowledged that a single repository for content "remains unreachable" for most enterprises for a host of reasons. The analyst firm has predicted that within coming years, 50% of enterprises will be managing this content chaos using a hybrid model – which can be achieved through hybrid content synchronization.

Why should my organization synchronize storage platforms?

Though a transition to a more cost-effective cloud storage service may seem appealing for CIOs and decision-makers eager to enable users with the flexibility that cloud collaboration provides, moving hundreds or thousands of TBs of mission-critical data is simply impossible for many large enterprises. For these businesses, a hybrid approach of synchronizing their existing on-premises storage with new cloud services is ideal.

Maintaining regulatory compliance

According to recent surveys, more than 59% of enterprises must maintain some of their data on-premises to obtain regulatory compliance. In a hybrid environment, enterprises required to keep sensitive records on-premises in accordance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), the Sarbanes-Oxley Act (SOX), the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and other compliance mandates can do so, while enabling users to securely collaborate with external parties and across multiple devices.

Additionally, content integration and synchronization platforms that enable search and data classification across multiple content repositories enable organizations to locate and manage personal data to maintain compliance with newer privacy regulations, including Europe's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the forthcoming California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) in the US.

Mitigating risk and user adoption challenges

Large migrations across storage platforms have historically posed myriad challenges, especially with regards to the disruption of business operations, data loss, and transitioning users to new processes. Often when files are transferred across systems with traditional migration methods, valuable metadata, user permissions, ownership, and other key file artifacts are lost in the move, along with any deltas that occur as the content is uploaded into the new system.

When systems are synchronized, however, content is automatically populated in the new system – users can adopt at their own pace, and business can continue as usual while the new system is fully integrated into an existing IT infrastructure. Synchronization also enables enterprises to avoid vendor lock-in, which can be critical in the ever-changing landscape of cloud services.

Preserving legacy storage investments

Businesses have often made extensive capital investments into their on-premises storage platforms, as well as significant customizations to integrate them with their existing line-of-business systems. Rather than abandoning their legacy systems completely, enterprises today are choosing a hybrid approach. Synchronization enables them to extend the benefits of services to their existing platforms while preserving past investments and keeping their IT infrastructure in-tact.

Considerations for hybrid content synchronization

Learn the rules

Before synchronizing two vastly different storage platforms, it's important to learn each system's rules of file management. Many platforms have differences in file name and length requirements, metadata structures, permission models, management of user accounts, and other significant features. These differences have historically made a seamless, bi-directional synchronization of dissimilar platforms impossible.

It's important to not only anticipate but accommodate these differences by choosing a synchronization platform that can manage them flawlessly when creating your hybrid storage environment.

Save costs

Although keeping several systems in place indefinitely can become costly, organizations can usually scale their cloud storage expenses up or down based on usage. A simple way for an enterprise to save costs on their cloud storage deployment is to sync only their most active content, while keeping old data and archived information on-site.

Organizations with multiple on-premises repositories that are looking to trim up their IT expenditures should also consider consolidating into a select few ECM systems and decommissioning aging servers where possible.
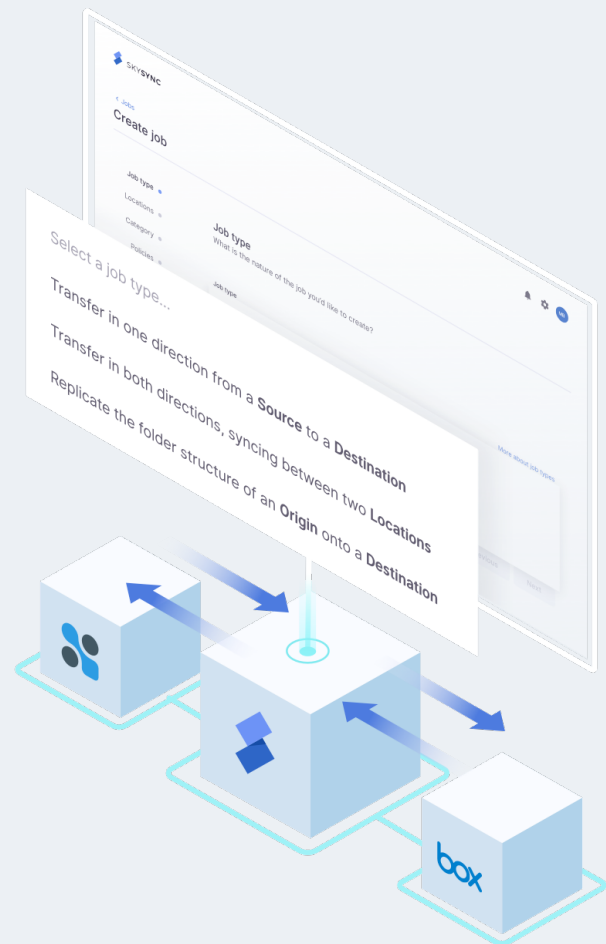
Synchronization in action

Challenges at Intertape Polymer Group

Just because an organization prefers or is required to maintain its legacy on-premises system does not mean they must force users to conform to archaic processes and workflows. Digital transformation with both new and legacy ECM platforms is a reality for many organizations today. Take, for example, an organization like Intertape Polymer Group.

IPG maintains Microsoft SharePoint on-premises as its system-of-record for content management, including the storage of sales literature and technical documentation. These materials are continually updated, with new content being added to the platform by various departments.

This constant updating of content was challenging for IPG's sales representatives who had to ensure they had the latest versions of the documents on their laptops before going on sales calls. To be expected, occasional updates would occur without the salesperson knowing – resulting in customers being given outdated technical specifications or inaccurate pricing information.

Synchronization success

To solve this issue, the IT Manager at IPG sought to synchronize the on-premises SharePoint environment with a cloud content collaboration platform. In this hybrid scenario, IPG could continue to use SharePoint as it's system-of-record, while users could leverage the new cloud platform's device sync capability to access the latest files at any time, from anywhere.

"When we rolled it out, it was like a light switch went on. The documents automatically updated and – BOOM! – our salespeople got access to 700 new files on their laptops. It's scary just how easy it was," said IPG's IT Manager. "Our salespeople no longer have to worry that they don't have the latest versions of any documents. They are automatically pushed out to them, without them doing a single thing."

> "We have gotten more positive feedback from this than anything we've done in a very long time. Our salespeople no longer have to worry that they don't have the latest versions of any documents. That's a big change.

ipg intertape polymer group®

Is hybrid content synchronization right for your organization?

Read more about hybrid content synchronization and see how others have found a way to modernize their workplace without abandoning their legacy systems.

SkySync enables the world's most successful enterprises with total control over and unbounded access to their content, empowering their evolving modern workforce. We connect disparate storage platforms, unite silos of information, and synchronize content spread across the enterprise—at scale. We enable our customers to achieve singular access and unified control over their content so that they can support the evolving needs of a modern workforce.

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