Osterman Research Analysis for Imanami
Based on an Osterman Research survey conducted for Imanami

BACKGROUND
Imanami commissioned Osterman Research to conduct a survey of organizations that are using Microsoft Exchange as a production email system. In order to qualify for the survey, respondents had to be involved in managing groups and other aspects of Exchange management, and the organizations for which they work had to have at least 1,000 email users. The online survey was completed with 109 respondents drawn from the Osterman Research Survey Panel during the period October 7-17, 2008.

RESPONDENT DETAILS
The mean number of employees and email users at the organizations surveyed were 16,871 and 14,785, respectively; the medians were 4,500 and 3,500, respectively. Organizations from a wide range of industries were surveyed. Respondents are quite experienced: respondents have been in their organizations' IT/MIS department a mean of 8.9 years (median of 8.5 years).

PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED
Among the problems experienced by those responsible for managing Exchange are users having access to systems, information and other resources from when they had previous positions within the company (mentioned by 36% of respondents as a "problem" or "significant problem". Other problems include managing employee churn/turnover in the context of provisioning users, changing groups, managing Active Directory, etc. (31%) and the security of Active Directory groups (27%). Add to this the fact that there is a median of 150 groups in each of the organizations surveyed and that a median of 10% of these groups are no longer active. The survey also found that one in ten users in the organizations surveyed still receives email from groups that used to be relevant to their jobs, but that are no longer relevant; in fact, 44% of the respondents to the survey have received an email sent to a DL of which they were not a member. Further, a median of 12% of employees change departments, groups or otherwise should have their information in Active Directory updated.

What this means is that in an organization of 3,000 users, 360 users need their Active Directory information updated each year, or roughly seven users per week. However, new employees must be added to the mix, requiring a median of two days for their information to be entered into Active Directory, while it takes a median of three days for HR to let IT know that an employee has left the company; a median of 2% of the people in Active Directory are no longer employed by the company, or 60 people in an organization of 3,000 users.

SECURITY ISSUES NEED TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY
The last two points are among the more serious security issues that organizations face. In a 3,000-user company with a turnover of 10% per year, 300 people will leave the company per year. That means that at any given time, at least a few ex-employees will have access to email and other network resources until IT can delete them from Active Directory or otherwise disable their access credentials. Underscoring this is the survey finding that 42% of organizations report that someone has accessed information from Active Directory that they were not authorized to access. Further, 39% of survey respondents reported that having out-of-date information in Active Directory is risky or very risky.

ACTIVE DIRECTORY / GROUP MANAGEMENT IS EXPENSIVE…
The research found that a mean of 5.8 person-hours per 1,000 users is spent during a typical week on updating or otherwise managing groups in Active Directory. If we assume a fully burdened salary of $90,000 for the IT administrator(s) charged with this task, that translates to a cost of $13,050 per year for updating or otherwise managing groups in Active Directory, or $1.09 per user per month. If we assume an organization of 3,000 users could manage their email system for $15 per seat per month, Active Directory management accounts for about 7% of the total cost of email management.

....AND PAINFUL (AND BORING)

The research also found that managing groups in Active Directory is painful or very painful for 25% of respondents – only 6% of respondents reported that managing groups was no problem at all. We also asked about how boring managing Active Directory is relative to a variety of other tasks. We found that 27% of respondents found managing Active Directory to be more boring than managing email servers, 21% found it more boring than filling out expense reports, and 19% found it more boring than taking out the garbage!

HOW GROUPS ARE MANAGED TODAY

Today, 81% of respondent organizations manage groups manually, while 55% use scripts and 34% use some sort of automated solution. Only 7% use a commercially available group management solution.

Overall, respondents are reasonably satisfied with the commercial solutions, scripts and automated solutions they have in place – 56% of respondents indicated that they are satisfied or very satisfied with the solution. However, 36% of respondents also indicated that their solution does more than it needs to do, including features that go beyond group management to perform functions that are either unnecessary or unwanted.

WHAT IT WOULD LIKE TO HAVE

The survey asked respondents a hypothetical question: "Let's say you could purchase a group management solution for Active Directory that would reduce IT time spent managing groups, would keep groups up to date, and would generally make your IT staff's life easier in the context of managing Exchange and Active Directory, etc." We found that 48% of respondents indicated that they would likely or very likely deploy such a solution, clearly indicating that there is demand for improved group management capabilities and practices compared to current capabilities in use. Further, 57% indicated that would most likely or definitely purchase the solution at a price of $5 per user, while 22% would be this likely to purchase the solution at $10 per user.

SUMMARY

Our conclusions from this research:

- Group management is not the most serious problem faced by Exchange managers, but it is a serious one that presents a number of security problems because of out-of-date records, former employees who still have access to sensitive corporate data, etc.

- Group management is expensive, particularly for smaller organizations that run Exchange. However, even at the enterprise level, the labor cost of group management is not inconsequential.

- Many IT departments are looking for a better way to manage groups in Active Directory as evidenced by the fact that nearly one-half of respondents to this survey would be highly likely to deploy a new solution that addressed their concerns.

- The solution should be priced fairly inexpensively given the somewhat elastic nature of pricing for a solution like the one presented to survey respondents. For example, if the price of the solution presented were halved, from $10 per seat to $5 per seat, demand would increase roughly 160%.