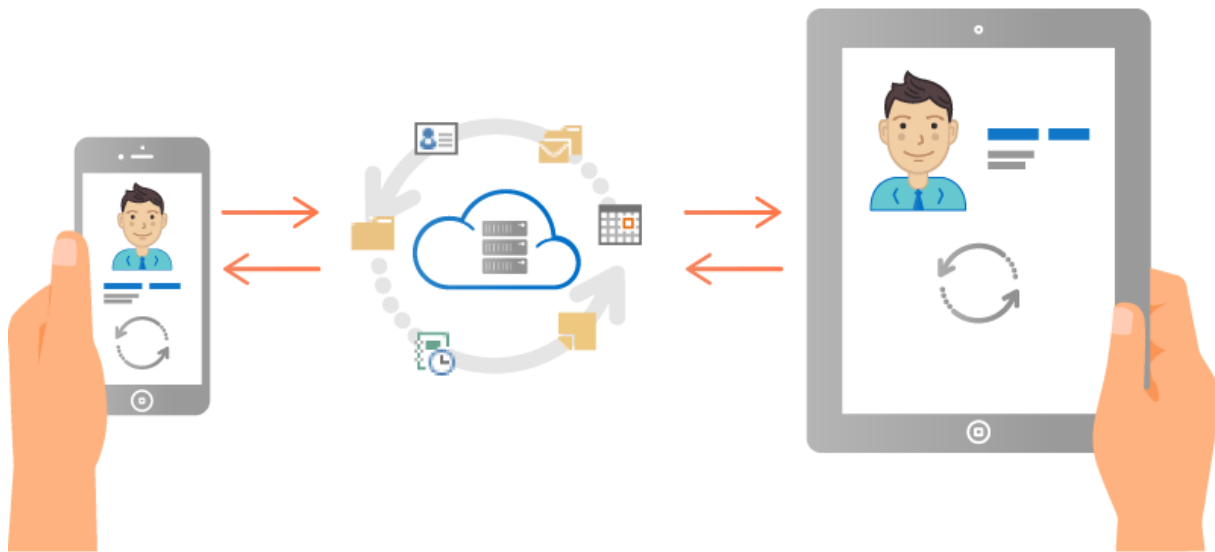


## Solution Brief

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# Syncing Public Folders Contacts to Smartphones



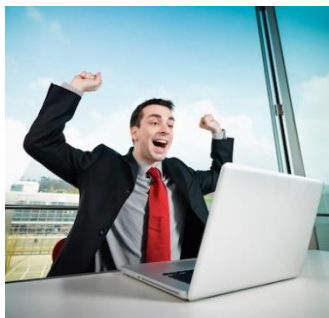
**The Exchange outbound SMTP queue had 98,000 messages in it, so Franco rebooted the server.** For a moment, it looked like the reboot had solved the problem, but that was just wishful thinking. Now the queue contained 99,000 messages. He was doing routine hotfixes on a Sunday night, but suddenly, nothing was routine, nor was anything getting fixed. He noticed an unfamiliar IP address for outbound SMTP routing. Then, he discovered that not only was this relay server bogus, but it was also refusing all connections on port 25. It looked like this email server had been hacked.

Sighing, Franco shut down the server and called his boss. Voicemail. Argh. Who else did he need to contact? The security team, of course. And the Windows domain team. Oh, yeah, and the risk-management department, and the networking team, and...how was he going to do all that? Exchange was down, so he had no access to the Public Folder containing the IT emergency phone list.

**Giselle—a property manager for a large apartment complex—had a problem, too.** She was rushing to pick up her son from daycare when she noticed a broken sprinkler. If it didn't get fixed tonight, 50 parking spots would probably become a small lake by morning.

The complex had a new night maintenance guy, but she didn't have his phone number. Darn! Her company kept the on-call lists in Public Folders, but she had no time to go back to the office and log in to Outlook.

**Missy's plane had broken down and she was stuck in a tiny airport in Wisconsin.** As a field rep for a pharmaceutical company, she traveled often. Missy needed to call the preferred travel agency's after-hours line to book a ticket for a flight that was leaving soon. Then, she remembered that the company had just changed travel agents. Who were they using now? She opened her laptop to get the number from the HR Public Folder. She'd have to log on to the airport wi-fi, get on the VPN, find the number...would she miss the flight?



Franco's, Giselle's, and Missy's problems are hardly unique. Many companies leverage Public Folders to handle shared calendars or contacts. But there's no easy way to sync them to users' mobile phones, dramatically limiting their utility.

## Where do we go from here?

There are several ways to approach these issues. A common solution is for each user to **drag a copy of the Employee Contact Folder into their Outlook contacts**. However, the problem with this delete/recopy strategy is that you have to repeat it every time there's a change to the contact list. It's a burdensome task for hundreds of employees to do this drag-and-drop. It also can orphan hundreds of contacts, since this strategy has no provision to remove obsolete records.

Another way to go is to **find a smartphone app that will handle the problem for you**. Both the Apple and Android app stores sell third-party applications that sync Public Folders. The downside is that you'll need to purchase the app and configure it for each user (yet another Exchange Server username and

## BUT SHOULD YOU USE PUBLIC FOLDERS AT ALL?

Public Folders aren't problem-free. So, before you try to solve the sync issue, consider the following drawbacks to using Public Folders to manage shared contacts:

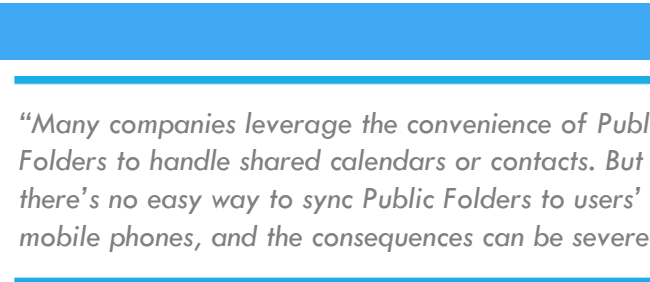
- **They're "pull," not "push."** Your users don't know when they've been updated. You can send email notifications, but people with cluttered inboxes might miss them.
- **It's easy to forget where they are.** Nothing is a bigger time waster than endlessly wading through a massive hierarchy of Public Folders to find vendor contacts or a list of project staff.
- **They require care and feeding.** Without frequent maintenance, Public Folder contacts quickly go stale and lose their usefulness. Then folks stop using them. When people stop using them, the urgency to keep the contact list up to date disappears. It's a vicious cycle.
- **Sometimes, Public Folders are overkill.** Public Folders can be an ideal solution if you want to store private information, such as employee home phone numbers and addresses. But if you don't, the GAL might be just fine. (If this applies to you, check out itrezzo's ["Best Practices to sync the GAL to an iPhone or Android."](#))

password). This probably won't scale if you have to do it for more than a few dozen users.

If you've got the talent in house, you could **write an app** to sync Public Folder contacts to your users' mailboxes. However, this is often more expensive than purchasing an off-the-shelf solution, and could take up time and resources that would be better spent elsewhere.

## Selecting an off-the-shelf solution

If you do decide to purchase software to sync Public Folders to smartphones, here are some important questions to ask potential vendors:

- **Is it automated?** If you're looking to simplify, you don't want to have to push a button every time you want to sync or when a new employee joins the company. Look for a solution that you can "set and forget."
- **How does the product identify the targets?** Flexibility is key when it comes to contact management. In an ideal world, you would use a GAL distribution group to automate onboarding.  


*"Many companies leverage the convenience of Public Folders to handle shared calendars or contacts. But there's no easy way to sync Public Folders to users' mobile phones, and the consequences can be severe."*
- **Can it handle multiple Public Folders?** Unfortunately, this is not a given. Make sure that the solution can accommodate the range of contact lists your company uses.
- **Can it sync deletions?** This is a key point. Without this feature, your users will end up with bloated address books full of outdated contacts.
- **Does it allow you to select the fields that get synced?** You may not want to provide every user with access to every field in your contact record. For example, maybe you have home phone numbers for contacts stored in a Public Folder, but you only want your exec team to see them. It's handy to have the ability to selectively filter out fields.
- **What happens when target smartphones already have some of the contacts you're syncing?** For example, some users may have already entered contact records for their closest colleagues. Would you want to wipe out those contacts completely, or would you prefer to preserve the originals and create duplicates? Remember that duplicates

can cause a lot of uncertainty about which contact is the most up-to-date. This can cause a lot of stress in emergency situations. Make sure the solution you choose can accomplish your goals.

- **Does it sync only to the Outlook default contact folder, or can it sync to subfolders, too?** Not all smartphones can sync subfolders. But for those that do, this is a handy feature to leverage, since users like to segregate their personal contacts from company contact lists.



- **Can it use GAL groups as targets?** This is a great way to boost efficiency and scalability. For example, you could create an “all smartphone users” group, and add each employee to it during onboarding. Target the Public Folder updates to “all smartphone users,” *et voilà!* This can also serve as a good strategy for applying granular controls. For example, you could create a public folder called “IT vendor contacts,” then target the list to the “all IT staff” distribution group.
- **Can it do incremental updates?** Let’s say you have a list of 100 emergency contacts in a Public Folder targeted to 100 smartphone users. What happens when you change one of the emergency contact numbers? Without incremental updates, you’d have to re-sync all 100 contacts to all 100 users, for a total of 10,000 updates. However, with the ability to do incremental updates, you’d only have to sync out the one change to your users—for a total of 100 updates. Incremental updates take less time and reduce the possibility of sync errors. Furthermore, incremental updates can save money. For example, imagine an employee traveling abroad using an expensive international roaming plan. The less data they use, the better.

- **Is it future proof?** Not every contact-sync solution works with Exchange 2013, Exchange 2016, and Office 365, so consider the platform you use today, as well as what you'll be using tomorrow. For example, solutions that use MAPI won't work with Office 365 and Exchange Server 2016.
- **Is the vendor supportive?** Access to tech support can drastically affect the experience of using any product. So, as you shop, make sure to ask about phone and email support, as well as the days and times it's available.
- **Can it clean up a complicated mess?** In general, by the time a company is shopping for a contact-sync solution, they've already got an intimidating jumble of legacy contacts that is rife with duplicates, old phone numbers, and former (maybe even deceased!) employees. Make sure you choose a solution that can do some heavy lifting and help you sort it all out.

One last point to keep in mind is that some vendors tout two-way sync as a selling point. While it might sound appealing, two-way sync can incur a lot of overhead (because you'll need to monitor multiple mailboxes), and can expose your lists to unwanted changes—causing grief to your entire company.

**If you have questions about syncing Public Folders to mobile users, itrezzo can help. Visit our website at [www.itrezzo.com](http://www.itrezzo.com), check out our [blog](#), or call us at 888.448.2211 and ask to speak to a contact-management guru.**