

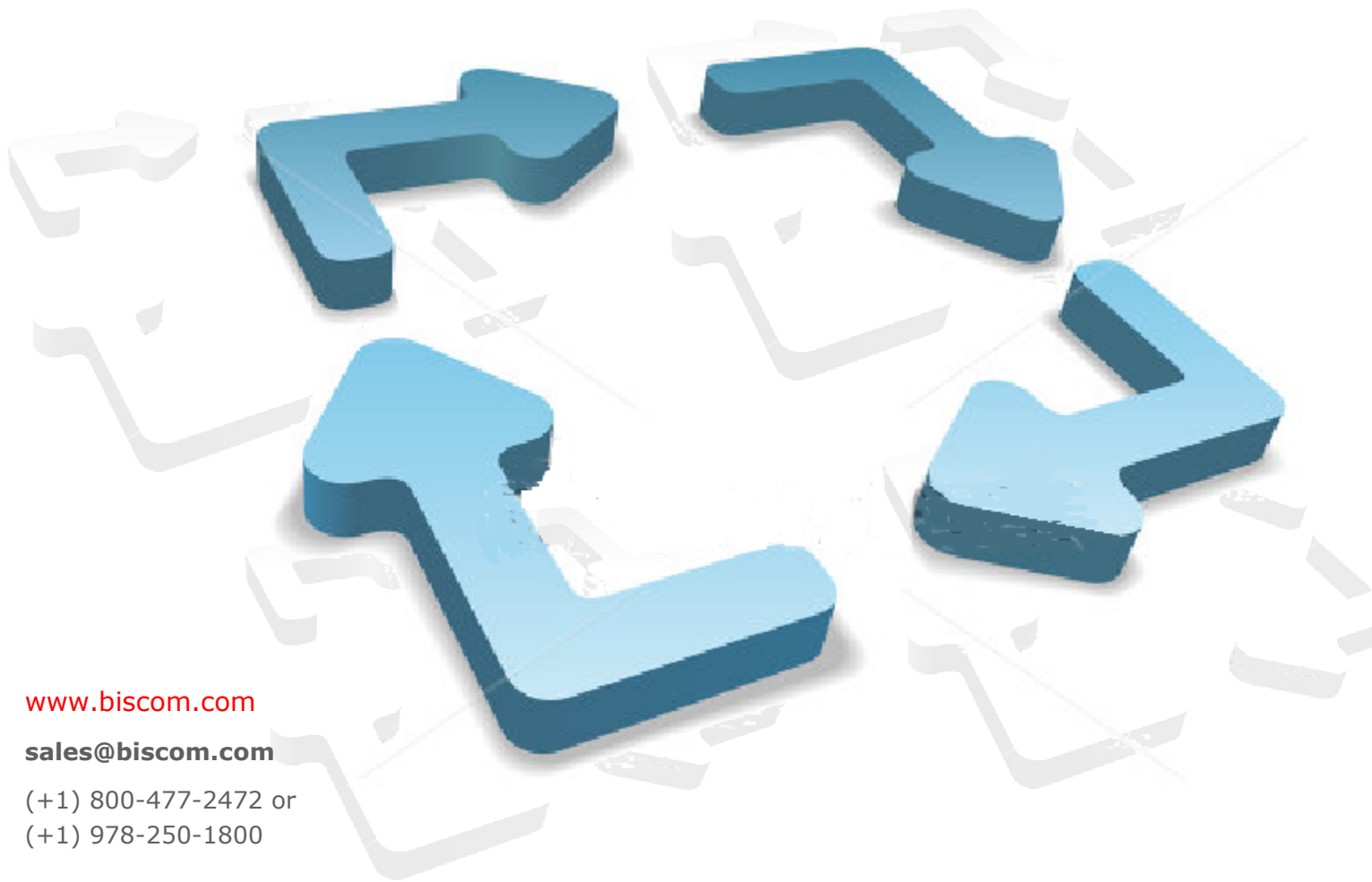


The Leader in Secure Enterprise Document Delivery

## Top 7 Tips for Better Business Continuity

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With Hosted Fax



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## Summary

Fax has become an essential part of business communications and is potentially subject to the same risks as any other electronic process. There is, however, an existing business continuity solution that not only reduces but can eliminate the risks of a communications disruption: hosted, or cloud-based, fax service. This document describes seven tips for using hosted fax service as a key component of any organization's business continuity solution.

## Terminology

What exactly do we mean when we refer to a hosted fax service? How does it differ from a fax server? The following is a brief definition of each term used in this White Paper.

### Business Continuity

Business continuity refers to the ability of an organization to provide mission-critical business functions for its customers, suppliers, and business partners at all times and without interruption.

### Fax Server

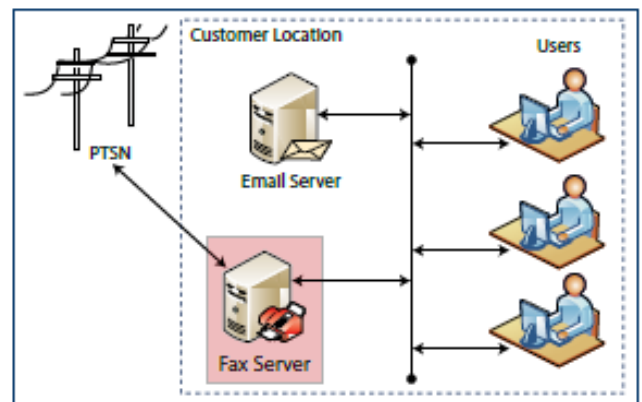
A fax server is an on-premises server that manages the interface between an organization's network and the Public Switched Telephone network (PSTN) or voice over IP (VoIP) service. A fax server can fax-enable any business application and allow any system to send or receive faxes. The fax server can take almost any type of electronic input and transmit it as a fax, automatically handling such details as dialing, retries, scheduling, queuing, and document conversion. The most commonly used feature of a fax server is integration with email systems.

This integration enables any user with an email address to send and receive faxes directly within their email client. Along with the support of desktop fax clients, a fax server solution can support automated production and batch faxing, thus providing a wide variety of business automation options. Other fax server features include: automatic inbound routing, integration with an LDAP directory such as Active Directory, rules-based routing via OCR or barcode recognition, and the integration of fax processing into very simple to very complex business workflows.

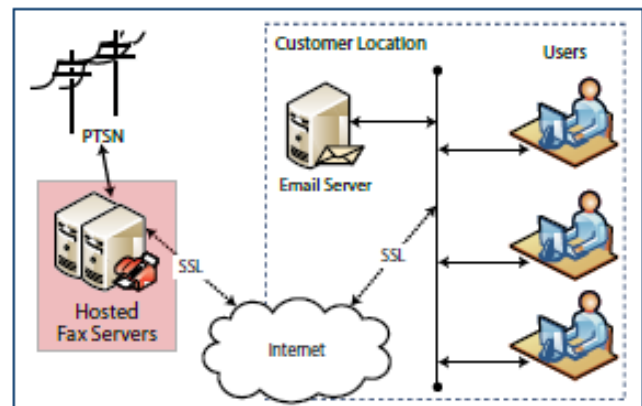
### Hosted (Cloud-Based) Fax Service

A hosted fax service is functionally identical to an on-premises fax server. The fundamental difference is that the actual fax servers are maintained by another organization, with fax functionality provided over the Internet. The key benefits of a hosted fax solution are as follows:

- Cloud-based solutions tend to have a lower initial cost, since organizations are not required to purchase



Fax Server Architecture



Hosted Fax Service Architecture

hardware or acquire additional telephone lines.

- Users pay only for the fax traffic they use (along with a nominal monthly fee), which is cost effective for organizations with regularly fluctuating fax needs.
- Fax services are easily extended to remote users or locations that may not have the faxing requirements or the technical expertise appropriate for an on-premises fax server.

As this document explains, these benefits can also be key to an effective business continuity plan.

## The Seven Tips

The following best practices are suggested for organizations that want to create a cost-effective, nonstop solution for their mission-critical faxing needs:

### 1. Use a hosted fax service to replace or supplement your existing fax system.

With more and more mission-critical business applications moving to the cloud, using a hosted fax service as a backstop is a truly viable fax continuity solution. Any fax machine or MFP is a potential point of failure; it can run out of paper or toner, lose its connection to the phone system, or have a software/ hardware problem. Any number of such malfunctions cuts off fax connectivity for the users of the machine. One common alternative is to consolidate enterprise-wide fax capability on a premises-based fax server. While deploying a fax server eliminates many of the disadvantages of fax machines (and provides many additional advantages), it actually consolidates more fax traffic from more users onto one device. No matter how reliable the fax server, the device still depends on a PSTN or VoIP connection always being available and of sufficient capacity to handle the fax traffic.

These risks can be avoided by using a hosted service to supplement the on-premises fax server, since hosted fax services rely upon the internet to send and receive faxes. Loss of telephone connectivity has no impact on an organization's fax traffic. In addition, a hosted service is never "down for maintenance." Supplementing a premises-based system with a hosted service gives IT staff the freedom to manage, upgrade, or maintain an on-premises fax server without interrupting fax traffic. Most importantly, a hosted fax solution has infinitely flexible bandwidth with no limits on capacity, making it such an effective supplement to a premises-based fax server (see point 5 for more details).

### 2. Implement a hosted fax service that seamlessly integrates with your existing fax system.

Business continuity is hardly continuous if users have to change the way they send and receive faxes. The goal of any business leader searching for an uninterruptable fax solution is to find a solution that seamlessly integrates with the existing business process and which is completely transparent to the end user. With cloud-based fax services, an on-site fax system or a telephone line could fail with no impact on the business and no awareness on the part of the fax users.

In other words, if most users are sending and receiving fax via their email clients, the hosted solution should be able to let them continue to do so. If faxes are being transmitted automatically as part of an electronic process, then the hosted service must be able to do the same. The optimal hosted solution supports many email systems and many document types, is easily customized through a choice of APIs to work with your existing systems, and is backed by a service provider who can offer any needed customization development support.

### **3. Set up an on-demand, failover cloud-based fax service (pay only for you use).**

Fax machines have associated costs: paper, toner, maintenance, and the fixed, monthly cost of a phone line. While fax servers are much more efficient, they still require fixed-cost telephony connections and maintenance – regardless of fax volumes. An ideal solution is to deploy a hosted fax service for automatic failover whenever the existing fax system stops working. Since a hosted fax solution charges on a per-usage basis, the business pays just for the fax traffic sent/received during the (hopefully brief) outage.

When the existing system is back online, the hosted fax service lies idle and generates minimal additional costs. Best of all, if the service is seamlessly integrated with in-house business processes (see point 2), the users are never aware of any disruption/change in service.

### **4. Implement a cloud-based fax service that supports enterprise-level features (not just basic end-user functionality).**

All hosted fax service vendors support basic, desktop, email-to-fax functionality i.e., sending an email to a fax destination. As long as a business requires nothing more from the hosted service, there are many vendors from which to choose. If, however, an organization has automated production fax transmissions, or routes inbound faxes according to OCR/barcode recognition and pre-set rules, or wants a fax client to manage fax traffic separately from email traffic, what is needed is an enterprise-level hosted fax service. A hosted fax solution from a vendor with sophisticated and complete solutions enables organizations to ensure that all their faxing needs can be met.

### **5. Use the hosted fax service for load balancing or to provide extra capacity for peak usage/fax blasts.**

Fax traffic volumes can vary widely, even within the same organization. When the number of faxes exceeds system capacity, problems mount. Outbound faxes take longer to be transmitted, and inbound faxes receive busy signals, resulting in anything from the inconvenience of a minor business slowdown to a near-catastrophic halt of business.

Traffic volume changes can sometimes be predicted. For example, accounting organizations can expect a significant increase in fax traffic during tax season. At other times, the traffic increase is a result of one-time outbound fax blasts (fax newsletters, alerts, advertisements, etc.). Moreover, fax traffic spikes can occur without any warning, impacting specific geographic locations. For example, a business-related change to state laws may dramatically increase fax traffic for an organization's offices in that state (and only in that state). Such a usage spike can overwhelm the organization's fax system for that state, or even have a wider impact if that state is supported by a remote fax server.

One way to ensure business continuity in the event of a sudden fax traffic increase is to implement a hosted fax service that instantly provides additional capacity on demand. With a seamlessly integrated hosted fax solution, excess traffic (either inbound or outbound) is automatically shunted to the service as needed – without impacting the organization's existing fax systems. The hosted fax service not only accommodates unexpected fax traffic increases, it also enables an organization to reduce overall costs by maintaining a less costly, lower volume, on-premises fax solution. If, for example, an organization is faxing 200 pages each week – with the sole exception of the first two

weeks of April when traffic increases to 5000 pages per week – a hosted fax service makes it feasible to implement a premises-based solution built to support the lower volume. There is then no need to maintain a vastly overpowered fax server solution for the other 50 weeks of the year.

#### **6. Use a hosted service that supports detailed billing for chargeback and tracking purposes.**

Organizations that use fax as an essential part of their business process have to be able to track their fax usage. Depending upon the business, faxes may need to be included in customer records, be routed through accounting for chargeback purposes, or entered into other business applications. A hosted fax service that provides only a single, un-itemized bill may very well get the fax traffic delivered – but only by sacrificing needed detailed billing information. A hosted fax service must provide the same level of detailed tracking as is generated in-house.

Such information includes fax duration, number of retries, as well as the identities of both the fax originator and the fax recipient. For organizations that charge fax expenses back either to the customer or the originating internal department, this information is essential. Preferably, a hosted fax service can not only provide this information as part of its billing process, but it can also support the direct download of the detailed bill in a spreadsheet format for easy integration into an organization's accounting systems.

#### **7. Use a hosted-fax vendor that can provide reliable service and exceptional support.**

Murphy 's Law is always in effect: if anything can go wrong, it will. In fact, it is this reality that drives efforts to develop a business continuity plan. As this paper has established, a hosted fax service is an effective way to ensure that an organization's faxing processes continue despite unforeseen failures. Because business continuity then depends on the reliability of the hosted fax service vendor, it is imperative that the vendor be one with both a strong fax business track record and a sure fax business future.

Any prospective vendor must be able to offer the benefit of solid experience and responsive support. Since one of the keys to maintaining business continuity is the tight integration of your business processes with the hosted fax service, a vendor must support an organization in the planning phase, during installation, and on an ongoing basis once the integration is complete. Regardless of whether an organization suddenly needs to double capacity, or unhappily realizes fax traffic has stopped, what is needed is a cloud-based fax vendor that answers the call for support not with a recording but with the voice of a real, knowledgeable, human support person.

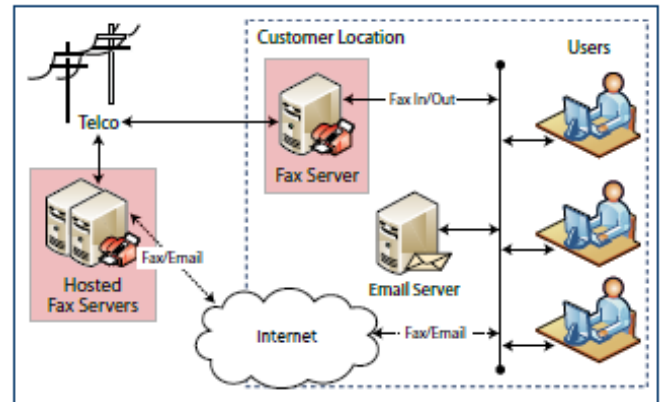
### **A Real-World Example of Business Continuity with a Hosted Fax Service**

While the top best practices for implementing business continuity with a hosted fax service seem very effective in theory, how do they work in reality? The following section is a detailed account of how one customer has achieved non-stop business faxing by supplementing their existing fax server solution with a hosted fax service.

Acclaris is a leading service provider for employee benefits reimbursement. Their end-to-end solution enables its customers to submit and approve reimbursement requests for travel, healthcare, and childcare expenses. Acclaris is not limited to any particular type of benefits plan or reimbursement system, and offers a high-tech approach that differentiates them from the competition. End users fax

receipts from North America to Acclaris. The receipts are processed overnight by their call center in India, with reimbursements available the next morning. Acclaris can also provide financial imaging of checks and receipts, as well as complete tracking and reporting capabilities. The system is responsible for sending and receiving up to 4,000 fax pages each day.

“When fax is such a big part of your business, an improvement in your faxing solution can result in big savings in both time and money,” said Subhadip Chatterjee, VP of information Technology for Acclaris. With 30,000 customers across North America (many of them Fortune 500 and Fortune 50), Acclaris provides an essential solution for business reimbursements. Reimbursement accounts invariably require the submission of receipts – lots of receipts! Fax is the simplest and most effective way for end-users to submit these receipts to Acclaris; it’s fast, efficient, secure, and ubiquitous. Such intense use of fax, however, means that fax reliability is key to Acclaris’ success.



*Hybrid Faxing Solution: Premises-Based & Service Model*

“The moment our customers try to fax and get a busy tone, they will pick up the phone to call us,” said Mr. Chatterjee. “This will cost us both time and money.” Acclaris initially installed a fax server solution provided by another vendor, but that implementation proved to be inadequate as the company grew and bottlenecks became a concern. “The previous solution had both software and hardware issues, and we began to look for a better solution,” said Mr. Chatterjee. The new fax solution needed to deliver nonstop business faxing and provide a high level of security to ensure compliance with HIPAA regulations.

When they began the project of upgrading their fax solution, Acclaris looked into solutions from both Biscom and another fax server provider. Overall, it was determined that their best option was Biscom’s award-winning FAXCOM server supplemented by FAXCOM Anywhere, Biscom’s hosted fax service.

Acclaris chose Biscom over the competing vendor for two primary reasons: Biscom’s premises-based FAXCOM fax solutions have long been recognized for their legendary business faxing reliability. And, unlike its competitors, Biscom also offers non-stop hosted business faxing via FAXCOM Anywhere. Acclaris was able to implement and test the hosted fax service on a small scale at first, then roll the service out to additional users, and finally establish on-premises fax servers as required. Both the on-premises and cloud-based solutions look and feel identical to the end-user and both provide the same extensive faxing functionality.

By installing a FAXCOM server on-site and setting up the FAXCOM Anywhere cloud-based fax as an automatic failover backup system, Acclaris was able to ensure that fax traffic would never be interrupted. “A big driver for us is reliability,” said Mr. Chatterjee. “End users need fax, and when the fax doesn’t work they send receipts via postal mail. That results in more work for us and lower customer satisfaction.”

The second reason Acclaris chose Biscom was because Biscom provided a completely integrated solution that included the fax server, the fax cards, the software, and the service – all from one source. The competing solution offered similar functionality and pricing, but Acclaris would have had to build the fax server themselves. Only Biscom was able to provide direct support for both premises-based and hosted faxing from the same vendor – a unique offering in the Enterprise fax marketplace. Biscom’s combined fax server and hosted fax service solution was the obvious route to take.

The capability to evaluate Biscom’s fax solutions without having to make an investment in hardware or software was also a big factor. “We started with the hosted service and quality was good,” said Mr. Chatterjee. “We then implemented fax servers for our primary business units and configured FAXCOM Anywhere as an automatic service rollover for when fax traffic gets high.”

According to Chatterjee, another advantage of working with Biscom has been the world-class service and support for which Biscom is known. “One of the best things about working with Biscom is their troubleshooting and testing support,” enthused Mr. Chatterjee. “When we wanted to set up FAXCOM Anywhere as a failover backup, we were uncertain of the best way in which to test it. Biscom helped us thoroughly test the system. We really liked the fact that they went beyond what was expected of them.”

Acclaris now has a system to send and receive faxes that provides business continuity. The FAXCOM server’s award-winning reliability is further supplemented by FAXCOM Anywhere, ensuring that users can always send and receive faxes, regardless of whether the fax server is down for maintenance or peak fax traffic exceeds the available bandwidth. This implementation provides the reliability and availability that Acclaris demands.

**“Implementing this solution has resulted in big savings in both time and money. The more efficient fax is for our end-users, the more they’ll use it and the less they’ll call our support desk. The solution has also had a significant impact on customer satisfaction levels.**

**For Acclaris, the most important benefit remains reliability. Set it up and forget about it and it keeps working. That’s exactly what we were looking for!”**

Subhadip Chatterjee, VP of information Technology,  
Acclaris

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## **Biscom Provides All the Pieces of the Business Continuity Puzzle**

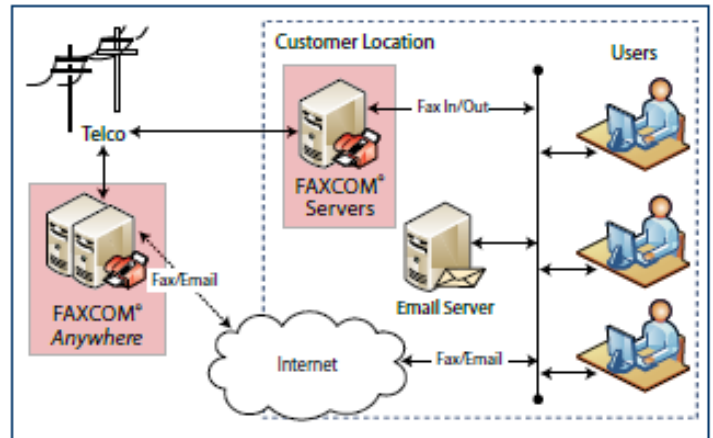
As has been demonstrated, any organization for which fax is an essential business process can ensure business continuity by supplementing a premises-based system with a hosted fax service. Moreover, the ideal business continuity solution for fax communications is a hosted fax service that seamlessly integrates with the fax solution already in place, one that is backed by a vendor with a history of reliability, sophisticated enterprise technology, and industry-leading service and support: Biscom.

## Fax Servers and Fax Services – the Best of Both Worlds

Supplementing a premises-based fax server with a hosted fax service quite literally provides the best of both worlds, as it ensures un-interruptible fax connectivity and guarantees business continuity.

During normal operations, all fax activity can use the local fax server for transmission. Should that fax server experience any sort of disruption, however, all fax traffic can automatically, instantaneously, and seamlessly fail over to the hosted service. The advantage of such an implementation is obvious: neither hardware failure, telecom failure, nor internet failure alone can interrupt fax traffic.

Combining both solutions also enables system administrators to focus maximum resources on building, managing, and supporting fax servers at the organization's largest and busiest geographical locations or departments, while at the same time supporting smaller remote sites that do not justify a dedicated fax server via the hosted fax service.



*Biscom's Business Faxing Continuity Solution*

## Biscom's FAXCOM Enterprise Fax Solution and FAXCOM Anywhere

The industry-leading hybrid enterprise and hosted-fax solution is provided by Biscom. With over 25-years' experience in developing enterprise-class fax solutions, Biscom has established itself as a respected leader of highly reliable fax servers. Biscom has now used its tried-and-true FAXCOM technology as the foundation of its hosted fax service, FAXCOM Anywhere. Used in combination, the FAXCOM Enterprise Fax Solution and FAXCOM Anywhere become a unique business continuity solution, with direct support from Biscom for simple integration and customized development.

### About Biscom

Biscom, headquartered in Chelmsford, Massachusetts, pioneered the development of the first enterprise fax server. Since 1986, Biscom has provided the most scalable and reliable secure document delivery and file sharing solutions to the world's largest enterprises.