

# FLASH FORWARD: PUTTING MANAGED FILE TRANSFER IN PERSPECTIVE

Traditional enterprise-class managed file transfer (MFT) solutions have solidly established themselves as a strategic enabler for collaboration between people, and for integration between processes. As organizations are adapting their MFT initiatives to keep pace with several dimensions of the hyper-growth being caused by current technology megatrends, they should also look ahead to ensure that their capabilities incorporate two important themes: speed, and governance.

→ **Derek E. Brink**, CISSP,  
Vice President and Research  
Fellow, IT Security and  
IT GRC, February 2015



**In Aberdeen's analysis, better visibility over file movements is reflected in tangible business benefits such as *fewer errors (which avoids cost) and more efficient business processes (which reduces cost, and supports faster time-to-revenue).***

## 1. Traditionally, managed file transfer solutions have become established as reliable, automated, secure – and strategic to fundamental enterprise business processes.

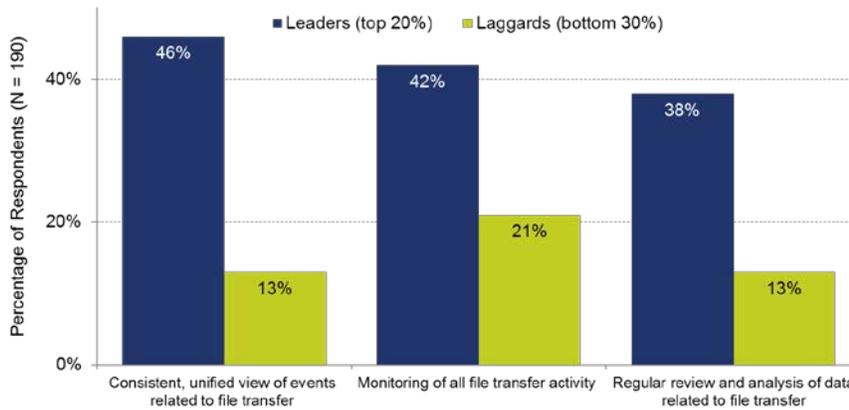
At one time, many organizations viewed *file transfer* as a tactical problem, with an emphasis on technical details such as file types, transfer protocols and encryption algorithms. In recent years, however, enterprise-class **managed file transfer (MFT)** solutions have evolved to deliver a more strategic, holistic set of capabilities that address fundamental business requirements – MFT today provides organizations with the secure, reliable and automated means to support *collaboration* between individuals, and to *integrate business processes* within (and between) enterprises.

As Aberdeen noted in [Seeing Managed File Transfer as Strategic](#) (September 2013), enterprise-class managed file transfer solutions are likely to include several advanced capabilities, including:

- Support for multiple modes, file types and transfer protocols
- Convenient, reliable and secure delivery mechanisms
- Centralized policies, management and administration
- Integration with multiple enterprise platforms, mobile devices, applications, and other existing IT infrastructure

Today, these capabilities should be considered as table stakes for MFT solutions. In addition, Aberdeen's [research](#) confirms that *file movements* alone are not enough – business users also need greater *visibility* into what's happening throughout the file movement process (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: For Business Users, the Value of Visibility is in Seeing the File Movements that are Relevant to Themselves**



Source: Aberdeen Group, September 2013

In Aberdeen’s analysis, better visibility over file movements is reflected in tangible business benefits such as *fewer errors* (which avoids cost) and *more efficient business processes* (which reduces cost, and supports faster time-to-revenue). On average, the leading performers in Aberdeen’s study were 10-times more likely than the lagging performers to experience no incidents of data loss, audit deficiencies, or unauthorized access related to file transfer in the last year, and experienced 16.7-times fewer actual incidents.

**2. Today, enterprise-class managed file transfer solutions are being transformed further in response to technology megatrends.**

As Aberdeen described in [\*Six Ways to Re-Think Your File Movement Strategies\*](#) (November 2014), many organizations are realizing that their current managed file transfer capabilities must be adapted – or potentially replaced – to keep pace not only with a rapidly changing *operational context*, but also with growing executive-level attention to the *risks* associated with the transfer of confidential information and intellectual property.

For most enterprises, the operational context for moving files has gotten considerably more complex, with the rapid adoption of transformational technologies – such as *mobility, virtualization and cloud computing, social collaboration, big data and analytics*– driving hyper-growth in several important operational dimensions, including:

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[\*Six Ways to Re-Think Your File Movement Strategies\*](#)  
 November 2014

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- The **number of users** needing to transfer, synch or share files, which may include not only employees, but also temporary employees, contractors, business partners and customers.
- The **number of devices** from which files need to be transferred and accessed, along with an increasing expectation of access from any device and any location.
- The **volume of files** being transferred, and the **size of files** being transferred.
- The **increasing distances** that files need to be transferred, in support of collaboration and business processes that are increasingly being globalized; many scenarios involve moving files large distances over networks of varying bandwidth.
- The **multiple modes** of moving files that need to be supported, which includes *file synch* and *file share* in addition to the four distinct modes of *managed file transfer: person-to-person, process-to-person, person-to-process, and process-to-process*.
- The **number of applications** that are integrating content from multiple sources, transforming the content in the context of other applications and workflows, and delivering the content to business users in the context of what they are working on; the need for file integration elevates the importance of MFT support for standards, application programming interfaces and other means of integration.
- The **flexibility of delivery mechanisms** for enterprise-class MFT solutions, which have been predominantly on-premise, but are rapidly including cloud-based options (e.g., managed services, or Software-as-a-Service); as always, the choice of delivery mechanism should be based not only on a comparison of functionality and cost, but also on an analysis of acceptable levels of risk.

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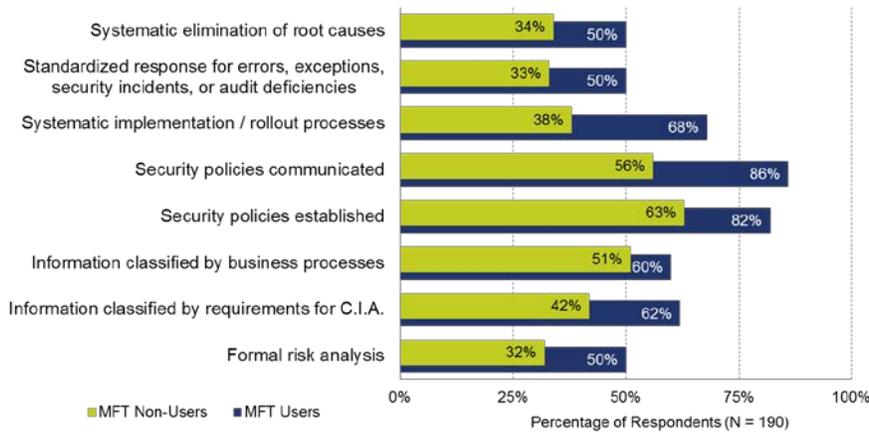
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It's important to note that technology megatrends are not the only driver for the transformation of managed file transfer implementations – Aberdeen's research has also highlighted several "people" and "process" capabilities of more mature managed file transfer processes, as described in its report on [From Chaos to Control: Creating a Mature File Transfer Process](#) (November 2013). See Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Managed File Transfer Users Exhibit More Mature Policies and Processes for File Movements**



Source: Aberdeen Group, November 2013

As a solution category, enterprise-class managed file transfer is clearly not standing still – on the contrary, leading MFT solutions are vibrant, changing and growing.

**3. Going forward, the capabilities of leading managed file transfer solutions should also incorporate two important high-level themes: speed and governance.**

Extrapolating these trends, Aberdeen’s research suggests that the capabilities of leading managed file transfer implementations will also need to incorporate capabilities in support of two important high-level themes: **speed** and **governance**.

➔ **The need for speed** is actually reflected in several dimensions, including:

- **The time it takes for onboarding** – including new users, and new connections. Enabling user access to files and file movements, based on policy and business need, are among the foundational capabilities that should be provided by the organization’s existing identity management and access management systems. In Aberdeen’s study, 77% of the leading performers have *integrated MFT with their existing identity infrastructure*, compared to just 44% of the laggards. In addition, leaders were more than 50%

## The performance advantages of extreme file transfer protocols over traditional FTP are dramatic:

→ Across the US: 30-times faster; 20- to 40-times more predictable

→ Between the US and Europe: 150-times faster; 100- to 200-times more predictable

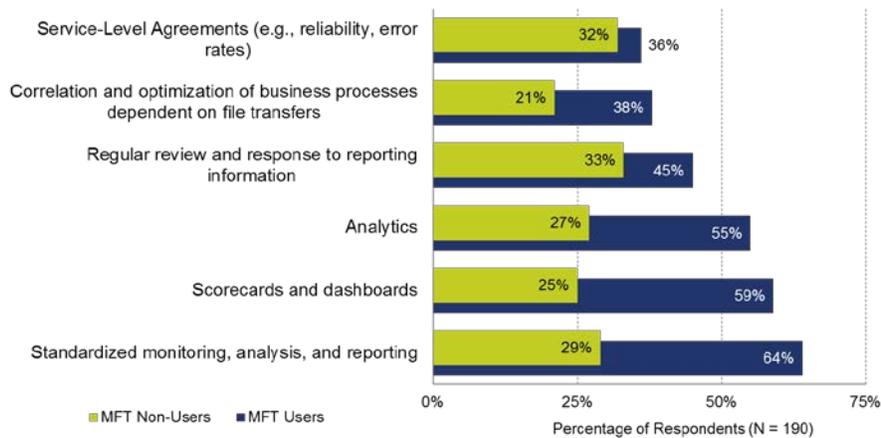
→ Over satellite links: 250-times faster; 140- to 370-times more predictable

more likely than laggards to support *automated ways for users to establish new connections*.

- **The time it takes to integrate file movements with applications and processes** – with minimal need for manual intervention. Timely integration of file movements with business processes and workflows is where the real business value gets created. In Aberdeen’s study, the leading performers were more likely to support every one of a dozen different technical means of integration and automation, by an average of more than 70% compared to the lagging performers.
  - **The time it takes to transfer files** – not only in terms of *time*, but also in terms of *predictability*. A new category of solutions, referred to as **extreme file transfer (XFT)**, has emerged to deal with use cases for moving files that involve bigger file sizes, higher file transfer volumes, faster and more predictable transfer speeds, and greater transfer distances. Organizations should explicitly consider current “extreme” use cases (and anticipate future use cases) as part of their solution selection criteria.
- **Governance** implies more than just *visibility*; governance implies having the information and processes needed to support *making decisions* and *taking action*, including:
- **Visibility** not only into *what happened*, but also into *what’s happening right now*, *what can we keep from happening*, and *what can we prevent from happening again*. In Aberdeen’s study, the leading performers were more likely to support every one of a dozen different capabilities related to visibility and governance of file movements, by an average of more than 75% compared to the lagging performers. See Figure 3, page 6.
  - **Security and compliance** from a broad perspective. Most organizations recognize that it’s no longer good enough simply to say “we’re encrypting the pipe” – governance over security, risk and compliance implies a much broader perspective that includes an *inventory of all existing file transfer activities*; *prioritization of*

*security control objectives* for file movements as a function of compliance, audit and customer-specific requirements, and the organization's appetite for risk; *consistent policies* for file movements; *awareness and training* for users; *monitoring* of all file movement activity; and *automated enforcement* of file movement policies whenever reasonable.

**Figure 3: Visibility into File Movements is Important, But MFT Users are Proactive in Making Decisions and Taking Action**



Source: Aberdeen Group, November 2013

Simply put, organizations need to **focus on the files that matter**, and proactively **govern their movements** – reliably, promptly and securely – throughout the extended enterprise.