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## FTP: New tricks for an old dog

### Rules-based enhancements help FTP revamp its old-school image

Not only has the multimedia revolution increased our appetite for storage, but it has also beefed up our portions, as average file sizes just keep getting bigger every day.

Most of the time, this file obesity doesn't affect performance, thanks largely to the fact that the capacity of our storage devices has grown proportionally. But there's a limit to everything, and if we cross our capacity line and try to squeeze an overgrown data blob into an e-mail attachment, we could be in for a lot of trouble.



In fact, many e-mail admins cap file attachments at a few megabytes, which is a worthwhile practice, given that pushing gigabytes of data across e-mail paths clogs those routes, much like a slow-moving semi on a one-lane road.

For exchanging productivity documents such as Word files, the e-mail path works just fine. But for other, beefier documents, attachments won't do. Because of this, organizations that transmit or receive large quantities of very large files are finding comfort in an old friend: the FTP server. In fact, the breadth of companies embracing FTP these days is a little surprising.

"We have a broad range of customers in many markets; however, the focus [of FTP servers] is on government, finance, health care, and manufacturing," a [GlobalScape](#) representative told me in a recent conversation.

If GlobalScape is not a name you are familiar with, CuteFTP -- its very popular FTP client -- will probably ring a bell. GlobalScape also offers a software-only WAFS (wide-area file services) solution and a bevy of FTP servers, including EFT (Enhanced File Transfer).

EFT 5.0, which GlobalScape released in June, allows you to create rules that automate the handling of incoming files. For example, you can create a rule to issue a warning when a new file arrives or to automatically move specific files to a new location.

Launching an application is also possible with EFT 5.0, and rules can be cascaded, which enables you to create some rather elaborate handling processes for files sent to your EFT servers. Moreover, the rules engine runs on Windows servers, as does EFT itself, and includes

an easy-to-use GUI. No command-line scripts are necessary.

FTP may sound like yesterday's solution, but recent implementations such as EFT 5.0 could change your mind -- or at least prove that old does not necessarily mean antiquated. In fact, EFT supports more protocols than I can enumerate on the spot, and its robust security features include the ability to manage keys and encrypt data using OpenPGP.

You don't need to have EFT at both ends of a connection because file transfers can also be initiated from a command prompt or from a browser. After playing with it for a while, my favorite EFT upload app is GlobalScape's extended browser client. Just point and click, and your list of data transfers are on their way, allowing you to move on to other tasks while they run.

Of course, using an FTP server such as GlobalScape's comes at a price, with licensing for EFT starting at \$8,000. But it might just be the most efficient and secure approach to moving large files around.

Join me on The Storage Network with questions or comments.

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