How Public Folder Use Will Change for Office365

Public Folders are often used to receive email for specific business functions such as FOIL requests or interacting with prospective students during the enrollment process. These functions are critical to their respective office. These special folders are currently located inside an Office Workgroup folder collection within the Public Folder tree in Outlook.

Office 365 does not support Public Folders so we needed find a new way to provide similar functionality.

Now, each user in an Office Workgroup will mount a “shared mailbox”, where emails can be accessed by those with permissions just like with Public Folders. This folder will be called an Office Shared Mailbox. Each Office Shared Mailbox has been created to mimic its Public Folder Office Workgroup counterpart, and contains the same list of folders that your current Office Workgroup Public Folder contains. Each user will connect only to those Office Shared Mailboxes that match the current Office Workgroup Public Folders they use now.

The Office Shared Mailbox in itself does not entirely replace the full functionality of a Public Folder. For example, subfolders in the Office Shared Mailbox cannot be assigned a unique email address and unique “Send-As” permissions; these things can only be assigned to the root of a mailbox. However, at the same time, we want sub-folders in an Office Shared Mailbox for organizational reasons and to minimize the number of mailboxes that need to be mounted by a user.

To solve this, we implemented “behind the scenes” mailboxes which can each be assigned unique email addresses and “Send-As” permissions. These are called “Functional Address Folders”.

Each Functional Address Folder will match the name of a Public Folder that currently receives email. Because this Functional Address Folder is configured with a unique email address, it will be the mailbox that receives emails from users. These emails must then be forwarded to the Shared Office Mailbox (and correct subfolder of the Mailbox) in order to be viewed by users with permissions. In other words, the Functional Address Folder will automatically forward its messages to the respective Office Shared Mailbox which will place the messages in the matching subfolder.

In addition to being able to view this email, a user may have a need to reply to an email with a “Send-As” address that matches the address the email of the Functional Address Folder, instead of the user’s own personal email address. Because “Send-As” permissions are applied to the Functional Address Folder, the address is available in the GAL (Address Book), and can be used as the From address of an email if the user has the correct permissions to do so.

Currently, when a user has Send-As permission for a Public Folder and needs to reply using that folder email address, they add the Public Folder email address to their Contacts and then place this contact on the “From” line of the reply. In like manner, when a user needs to respond to a message in the Office Shared Mailbox, they will be able to choose the Functional Address Folder from the Address Book and use it on the “From” line of the reply.

Another area of functionality that is part of our current Public Folder setup is the use of auto-reply messages. Some Public Folders are configured with auto-reply messages, and the corresponding Functional Address Folders will have automatic replies configured as well.

Unlike Public Folder Office Workgroups which exist together in one folder tree, Office Shared Mailboxes are distinct entities, by Office. Therefore, if you currently use more than one Office Workgroup Public Folder you will have to connect to multiple Office Shared Mailboxes.

The following diagram illustrates the change. Example: The Ask SUNY folder, below left at the bottom, is used to interact with prospective students and is used during the enrollment process. Staff with Send As permission may reply as the folder email address. On the right is an illustration of the new Office 365 strategy. Users will connect to the APC Office Mailbox to access Ask SUNY.
Email to
Asksuny@suny.edu

Current Public Folder Strategy

New Office 365 Strategy

Users with Send As permission:

Ask SUNY
Functional
Address Folder

APC Office Mailbox

APC
ASC-Assessment
ASC-Contacts
ASC-CustomerServices
ASCSearch
Ask SUNY

email
forward