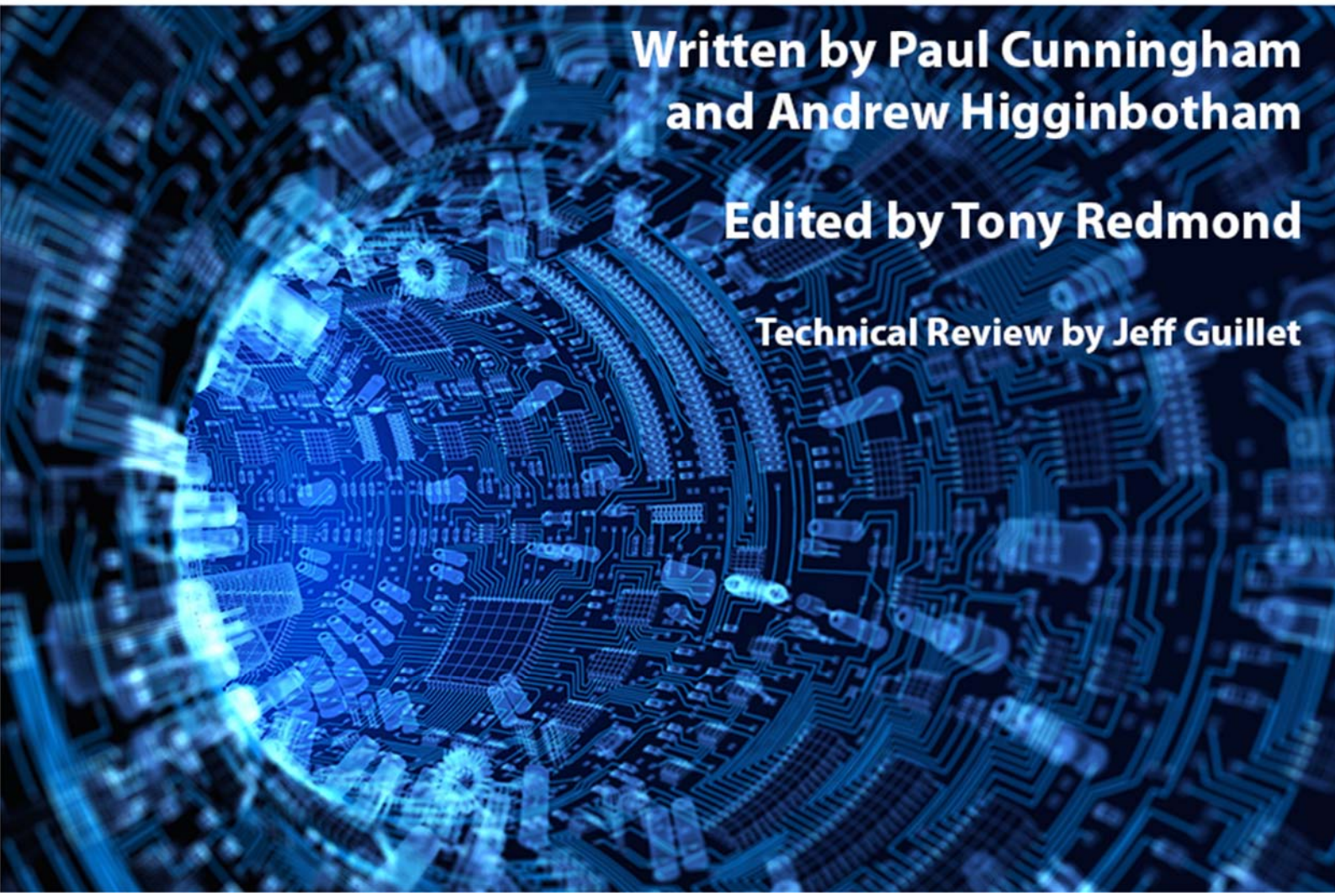
Exchange Server Troubleshooting Companion



Written by Paul Cunningham and Andrew Higginbotham

Edited by Tony Redmond

Technical Review by Jeff Guillet

The Legal Stuff

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Foreword

Microsoft shipped Exchange 4.0 in 1996. The first version of the server was pretty rudimentary and few components apart from the ESEUTIL program have survived to be included in Exchange 2016. Even though the software was simpler, the complexity of support remained high at times. This was partially due to a lack of knowledge as everyone was finding out how Exchange worked (or didn't, at times) and it was partially due to the email world as it existed at that time. Migrations were everywhere as people moved off PC-LAN based systems such as Microsoft Mail and Lotus cc:Mail, and interoperability was horrible because SMTP had not become ubiquitous then.

Even if these projects remain painful, we have become better at migrations since 1996 and interoperability between email systems is now a given. The Exchange software has improved too and is more automatic and generally easier to manage. There's a lot more documentation to read and a mass of knowledge to be absorbed from blogs, webinars, conferences, and so on. Some of the blogs are extraordinarily helpful; some are much less so. We've all read posts that are badly written, inaccurate, and based on outdated information.

Even with all the additional information available to us, I think the support challenge remains high. Configurations scale to unheard-of heights using hardware that no one anticipated in 1996. Virtualization creates more complexity for administrators to master. The spread of mobile devices and more functional clients creates new demands on infrastructures and the software is much more complex. Just mastering a single topic such as Autodiscover (especially in a hybrid cloud environment) can take more time than you'd imagine.

All of which means that we still need help to master Exchange, if that is even possible for a single human being. And it's not just Exchange; it's a complete ecosystem of network, hardware, software, clients, and people that has to be understood and managed. Books like this that are founded on the experience gained in the school of hard knocks are especially valuable because they strip away the veneer that often disguises bad administrative practices to approach the topic in a very practical sense. I rather like that and I think you will too.

No book is ever complete. Software evolves. Humans learn. People make mistakes and come up with new solutions and writers suddenly realize that they have missed something important. Don't treat this book as the definitive word on troubleshooting Exchange because it can never be. No author understands your environment or business goals or even the unique brand of "office politics" that exists in your company. The best way to use the advice given here is to put it into context. Question the guidance and make sure it fits your needs and you'll benefit from the exercise.

Above all, remember that Exchange evolves on an ongoing basis. Every update shipped by Microsoft brings its own unique quirks, so be prepared to continue to learn. It's the only way to succeed.

Tony Redmond

April 2016

Preface

Andrew Higginbotham

When Paul Cunningham approached me 2 ½ years ago about writing an Exchange troubleshooting book, I was a bit surprised. When a man with over twenty-times the Twitter followers as you and who runs one of the most popular Exchange Server websites in the world asks to collaborate with you on a project, it's a bit of a shocker. I had published a blog post about Troubleshooting Issues with Client Access Servers and Paul wanted to expand the concept into a full book's worth of troubleshooting information. Due to other projects we each had, it actually took another year for the project to begin. The original idea started off as just a large dump of useful OneNote data acquired over combined years' experience, to be used by those looking for a place to begin when troubleshooting relative Exchange components.

However, as writing began we realized the true value in this book would be the message of WHY the product breaks in the way it does and HOW to go about fixing it. The beauty of an eBook is we can easily add as many hyperlinks to blogs, tools, and Support articles as we feel necessary. This means we can still provide the value of a "OneNote knowledge dump" while simultaneously explaining why the product behaves the way it does, giving the reader valuable knowledge to be used in diagnosing an issue. If you know how a product is supposed to function, you're able to accurately identify when it is malfunctioning and whether the advice you're receiving (either from the internet or another source) is good or poor advice. What we hope to accomplish in this Exchange Server Troubleshooting Companion is to give the reader both an understanding of the product and a tool to be used as a reference when troubleshooting the many complex features of the Exchange Server product.

Whether you're an experienced Exchange professional looking to uncover a nugget of product knowledge you may not have encountered before, or someone entirely new to the product who wishes to become a capable Exchange troubleshooter, we hope this book proves useful. Here is a list of those we feel may benefit from this book:

- New IT Professional expected to manage or support Exchange Server
- Seasoned IT Professional who may be tasked with supporting Exchange Server, though they may not have extensive experience with the product
- Helpdesk staff required to support Exchange Server or various clients used to connect to Exchange Server or Office 365
- IT Professional looking for practical, real-world scenario training material for Exchange Server

Whatever your goals, we hope you enjoy the book and find it useful to your tasks as an Exchange Administrator, Support Engineer, or Consultant. If even one outage or call to Microsoft can be avoided as a result of reading this book, the return on your investment will be instantly rewarded.

We'd love to get your feedback on the book, including any topics you feel we should cover. Please send all feedback to feedback@exchangeserverpro.com.