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WHITE PAPER

Still Using SFTP to Move Large Files? **It's Time to Take Another Look.**

While free and ubiquitous, standalone SFTP misses the mark on key functionalities and overall ease-of-use.

Executive summary

Fast and seamless transfer of sensitive, mission critical data has become the Holy Grail of today's digital business. Fueled by the expectation of "anywhere, anytime information" delays can impact operational efficiency, which is why the exact mechanics behind the movement of information at scale is increasingly under the spotlight.

This white paper considers the evolution of File Transfer Protocol (FTP) and Secure File Transfer Protocol (SFTP). Within the context of an evolving business environment and the heightened requirement for speed and security, the paper outlines the limitations of conventional SFTP as a standalone solution. We explore why enterprises are looking for new and better ways of moving information, and how next-generation file transfer solutions and services offer speed, reliability, security, and cost savings.

The evolution of moving information within enterprises

How critical data is moved from point A to point B has become an increasingly competitive driver for today's business with expectations now extending beyond solutions that deliver purely convenience.

Some factors exacerbate this challenge. The volume of information has risen exponentially and in a more customer-centric era, data must undergo a more complex and integrated journey, spanning enterprise and even global boundaries and flitting seamlessly between on premises to the cloud.

Amid this more complex infrastructure, ensuring the right information is available at the right time is vital for accurate decision making, boosting operational efficiencies and leaving an organization better equipped to provide the best product or service for their customers.

FTP, 40 years later

Developed in the 1970s, FTP was once considered to be the cutting-edge solution to a critical logistical issue in the early days of computing. Free and accessible, FTP's ability to deliver a mass upload to a server quickly in one hit, slashing the time and effort involved in moving files has traditionally made it a go-to option in the enterprise. But sending data from one organization to another was much more complicated and difficult four decades ago.

One primary reason was that FTP was never designed to meet security protocols. While the FTP approach may suffice if data security is not a concern, there are shortfalls if the information shared is sensitive and confidential.

Adding the "S" to FTP

Using the same commands as standard FTP, SFTP was developed by the Internet Engineering Task Force to securely transfer and manage files over a TCP/IP network. SFTP is a network protocol for accessing, transferring, and managing files on remote systems over the Secure Shell protocol (SSH).

As with FTP, SFTP evolved into an inexpensive, widely used way of getting files from one place to another while safeguarding confidentiality and integrity. SFTP encrypts data, moving it through an encrypted tunnel that makes interception and decoding much more difficult.

While this helps enterprises meet certain security standards, limitations with SFTP arise mainly around usage and visibility:

- SFTP is more difficult to setup compared to FTP. Most companies require skilled IT personnel to manage SSH and more complex configurations.
- SFTP requires programming knowledge to enable key functions such as log consolidations, intermittent send, and file validation.
- Internal management and coordination of private and public keys are needed with SFTP.
- If a file transfer is interrupted due to a network fail, SFTP does not easily restart where it left off.
- In-flight error detection is difficult to impossible with SFTP. If an error or data corruption happens during the transfer, you won't know until the entire process is completed.

Introducing HULFT Transfer: Faster and more flexible

Up to six times faster than SFTP, HULFT Transfer provides next generation managed file transfer to ensure mission-critical data is transported securely in real time, encrypted and traceable with a unique ID.

Built around a robust framework of character code conversions, multi-OS environment support, and cross-platform integrations, HULFT Transfer provides fast file transfers – up to six times as fast as legacy SFTP solutions. Its compression technology offers stability (without any special tuning during a remote transfer), large data capacity, and inter-cloud service transfers.

With HULFT Transfer, configurable encryption at the transfer job level is built in. Users can select the encryption algorithms offered: AES256 encryption and HULFT 160-bit proprietary encryption. HULFT Transfer also includes data loss prevention and access management technologies that help you establish the strongest levels of security and compliance within the network.

Flexibility, usability at core of HULFT Transfer

Flexibility is at the heart of HULFT Transfer, built around a framework for users to easily automate their file transfers. File triggers provide a mechanism to detect file changes such as a new file creation, deletion or update, which can all be configured to invoke job transfer execution. HULFT Transfer also provides a scheduling mechanism so:

- Transfer jobs can be started at a point in time and on a recurring basis.
- Transfer jobs can be started from the sender side or from the receiver side based on business requirements.
- Transfer jobs can be adjusted to groups – a single cast or multicast where one HULFT server sends many files to different receivers and hundreds of simultaneous transfers.

Failure recovery and detection

File transfers that go wrong with SFTP are often undetected until the very end, when the transfer has been "completed." When you're facing missing or corrupt data in the file transfer process, you're at risk for losing critical data that can cost your business. HULFT Transfer offers enhanced search capabilities for rapid flaw detection, helping you pinpoint the cause of error and reduce your recovery time.

Part of a comprehensive data logistics platform

Moving data is only one part of your organization's data architecture. Data teams are working around the clock to discover, sort, collect, and secure transfer information, often coding scripts to integrate complex systems.

HULFT Transfer fits into HULFT's comprehensive data logistics platform, which includes HULFT Integrate and HULFT Director. HULFT Integrate provides an intuitive, drag-and-drop approach to creating complex data workflows, while HULFT Director is the "glue" that brings together both data transfer and integration for highly flexible, web-based central management that includes user authentication, access control, workload processing, system status updates, and more.

With over 10,000 companies spanning finance, health and manufacturing sectors across 43 countries using the software, HULFT occupies the second largest global market share. In short, HULFT is one of the most trusted and widely adopted data logistics solutions on the market today.

Side-by-Side Comparison: HULFT Transfer and SFTP

	HULFT Transfer	SFTP
File validation	✓	✗*
Encrypt data during transfer	✓	✓
Data compression	✓	✗*
Intermittent send to reduce network traffic	✓	✗*
Pre- and post-transfer jobs	✓	✗*
Character encoding conversion	✓	✗*
Built-in hooks for pre and post transfer jobs	✓	✗*
Failure recovery and detection	✓	✗*

*Can be done, but requires programming

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Conclusion

SFTP had its merit back in the day as a cost effective and user-friendly option, which explains its longevity as a 'go to' option for file transfer.

But in today's operating environment this option falls short; the digital revolution has fueled different needs and challenges, notably an expectation for real-time data and robust security as businesses look to use data in more innovative and complex ways to secure a competitive advantage.

By ensuring mission-critical data is transferred fast, securely and reliably, surpassing the speed of legacy approaches and meeting the heightened compliance and regulations which traditional SFTP falls short on, HULFT Transfer, working in conjunction with HULFT Integrate and HULFT Director for a unified global logistics platform, represents the most viable solution.

About HULFT, Inc.

Today's enterprise works hard for data. IT spends time and money manually connecting far-flung silos of data which are often insecure. A division of Saison Information Systems (TYO: 9640), HULFT has helped more than 10,000 global customers automate, orchestrate, and accelerate the secure flow of information at scale. HULFT provides a single global platform that helps IT quickly find, secure, organize, transform, and move the right information – automating the entire business process of data flow, and unlocking value in a sea of information. With 25 years of customer experience, HULFT is the engine that makes data work.


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*HULFT Integrate is sold in the U.S. and is available in other countries under the brand DataSpider Servista