

Land Bank Recovers Mailbox Data From An Extremely Large And Corrupt PST File

Land and Development Bank of South Africa (LADBSA) is a government-owned development bank in South Africa, which promotes and finances agricultural sector in the country. Land Bank had been using Microsoft Office 2013 for years and relied heavily on Outlook 2013 for emails and organizing day-to-day operations.

Situation Overview

Many of the tenured employees in the organization had been using the email client for several years, and had thus, built up sizable PST files (>10GB) with continued use. Though these users had auto-archival enabled but, due to an unexpected (& known) lapse in the Outlook archiving methodology, a sizable chunk of the messages - having send/receive dates older than the archive date - in the PST files were not being archived. Further, these PST files hadn't been compacted or cleaned up by using Outlook built-in tools like Mailbox Cleanup to optimize performance.

Business Problem

Due to the large size of PST files, these users had begun to face Outlook issues— folders not getting displayed correctly or taking longer to appear, synchronization problems, performance slowdown, etc.— typical of large PST files with too many items or folders. Later on, when the organization migrated from Office 2013 to Office 2016, one of the users couldn't open his Outlook 2013 PST in the upgraded 2016 version of Outlook.

Despite the PST file being placed in the default folder in his desktop and repeat attempts to open it in the Administrator mode, the PST file remained inaccessible. Outlook 2016 displayed Error 0x80040116, which is generated when Outlook client fails to access a PST file.

This clearly indicated that the problem was intrinsic to the PST file itself— vis-à-vis external impediments like restricted PST file access, incorrect file location, and such— and therefore the Outlook administrator in the organization began to analyze the file. This particular PST file was found to be more than 20 GB in size, and therefore, had most likely become corrupt, which is a known condition affecting oversized PST files*.

Technical Challenge

The Outlook administrator at Land Bank decided to run Outlook Inbox Repair tool (scanpst.exe) to diagnose and repair errors in this corrupt PST file.

However, when he attempted to repair the file by using scanpst.exe, the utility didn't function as expected.

In the first attempt, the utility scanned and analyzed the corrupt PST file, but, failed to respond when the user clicked the Repair button.

In the repeat manual attempt with using scanpst.exe, the repair process got stuck after completing the scan and analysis steps for the PST file.

The administrator then tried out running the Inbox Repair Tool via the command line to automate multiple rounds/passes of scanning in a batch— provisioned in Outlook 2016— to evaluate the possibility of reaching a steady state.

There was a significant amount of information stored in this PST, with important details to enable decision making at various levels in the organization, and hence, there was an urgent need to restore the mailbox data.

Land Bank had been evaluating a host of PST repair software - besides using the Inbox Repair Tool- when they came across Stellar Toolkit for Outlook, reviewed and featured on niche platforms and community forums like Experts Exchange and CNET.

The administrator evaluated trial version of the software, which allowed him to open the corrupt PST file via a plain drag-and-drop action and preview the mailbox contents including deleted emails in a simple layout.

Besides PST repair features, the toolkit also offers utilities for PST merge, split, and compact, along with recovery of deleted emails and forgotten Outlook passwords. Land Bank finally decided to go with Stellar Toolkit for Outlook for this particular PST repair case and other anticipated needs like PST compaction and splitting, equally essential for sustained upkeep and performance of Outlook.

Steps followed by the team for PST file repair and splitting:

1. Installed and activated Software Toolkit for Outlook
2. Opened the Mailbox Repair utility from the home screen
3. Selected the corrupt PST file for repair
4. Clicked Repair to scan the PST
5. After completing scan, the software displayed preview of mailbox
6. Browsed and validated the mailbox items
7. Selected PST as the output format from the multiple Save options
8. Split the PST by file size (5 GB each), and saved them
9. Imported the restored PST files in Outlook 2016 to verify the contents

Results

The Land Bank team successfully repaired the oversized and corrupt PST, and extracted the entire mailbox data in multiple smaller PST files to provide optimal performance.

All the mailbox components present in the corrupt PST were extracted with 100% integrity and in original form, as validated by the Outlook user after importing these PST files in Outlook 2016.