

In the Shadow of the Heavyweights

Communication systems – Popular mail servers on the Windows platform include Microsoft Exchange Server, IBM Domino and Novell GroupWise. However, just because a product is popular doesn't make it good by any means. Network Computing tested other products to see whether mail servers of the second rank have got the right stuff to take on the heavyweights.

Exchange Server and IBM Domino are the most frequent answers to the question of which mail server a company uses on its Windows platform. Novell's GroupWise enjoys a certain popularity as well. In the shadow of these mighty products, however, there is a whole lot of other mail servers that are quite capable of handling the e-mail traffic of large companies. Network Computing tested four such mail servers.

Ipswitch IMail Server, Secure Edition 2006.1

The Ipswitch IMail Server and the Kerio Mail Server are among the better known products that enjoy a certain degree of popularity next

to the Microsoft and IBM products. The release of the »IMail« server at the time of the test was 2006; however, Network Computing had the opportunity to try out the new 2006.1 release. The messaging and collaboration products of Ipswitch come in different configurations: The IMail Server is a simple e-mail server with web mail and list server, while the Secure Edition of the IMail Server adds a number of security features to that basic functionality and the Ipswitch Collaboration Suite rounds off the IMail Server with Instant Messaging, shared calendars and contacts. Since our test focused on the mail server functionality, we chose the Secure Edition of the IMail Server.

I-mail is essentially an e-mail server based on standards that supports the SMTP, POP3 and IMAP4 protocols. Users send and receive e-mails using their preferred mail clients, including Microsoft Outlook, Outlook Express and Eudora. However, I-mail itself also contains an adaptable web-messaging interface that supports nine languages, German and English among them. That means users receive access to their mail, contacts and calendars through the web from any computer connected to the Internet. In this context, it's worthwhile mentioning that there was no import function to put contacts from another mail client, for example, Outlook, into the web-messaging interface.



Foto: NASA

Administrators have remote and secure access to administrative functions as well. The web administrative interface is easy to understand and easy to use. The administrator uses this interface to manage users, authentication, domains and various services and he or she can activate monitoring for any important service. The log files are also available in a simple text format in the web administrative interface.

The IMail Server authenticates users against an I-mail database and active directory of its own or against another ODBC-capable database. Using the I-mail SSL configuration tool, the administrator can activate the I-mail SSL feature by installing an SSL certificate. The product contains tools, which effectively thwart dictionary attacks and hammering.

All these functions notwithstanding, the IMail Server doesn't stand out at this point. What really makes this product interesting is the add-on components of the Secure Edition. With the aid of the included Symantec Scan Engine, the IMail Server efficiently protects users from destructive code, Trojans, worms and other threats caused by e-mails. The standard IMail Server already contains some basic anti-spam

functions with blacklists, Bayesian filter and phrase filter; however, the Secure Edition adds a language-recognizing, automatically updated anti-spam technology of mail filters.

The IMail Server runs under Windows 2000 Server or Windows Server 2003 and requires Microsoft IIS 5.0 or higher, Microsoft .Net Framework 1.1, Internet Explorer 6 or Windows Scripting Host 5.1, MDAC 2.6 or higher. The setup of the IMail Server proved easy enough, although, with all the trimmings, it took up quite some time.

Kerio Technologies Kerio MailServer 6

The Kerio MailServer (KMS) was available for testing in Version 6.2.2. This product is a fully equipped mail server with many standard GroupWare features. The MailServer supports SMTP, POP3, IMAP4 and, with its Outlook connector, access to e-mail via a MAPI interface. KMS furthermore supports the »WebDAV« interface, which can be used for accessing e-mail accounts as well as for joint editing of files on the server. Support of WebDAV in KMS allows links to Microsoft Entourage, an MS-Office-2004-for-Mac-e-mail-client.

KMS has two interfaces for administration: A graphic Windows interface and a web interface. The Windows interface allows access to all settings, status information and protocols. Although it looks rather plain, it is logically structured and easy to use. Unfortunately, the web interface only allows the administration of user accounts, user groups and alias names. Even though one language can be selected for installing the KMS, with English and German among them, the web interface only communicates in English. Ditto for the online help. On the other hand, the web application interface is fully rounded off, providing access to e-mail, private and public folders, contacts, tasks, notes and calendars. Its layout is similar to that of Outlook, allowing most users to quickly familiarize themselves with it. In addition to the complete web interface, KMS also offers a narrowed-down interface for PDAs and other handheld devices.

Users are authenticated by KMS against its own internal database, against Windows NT domain accounts or via Kerberos 5 against active directories or Apple Open Directory. The method of authentication can be selected on a user basis. The Active Directory Integration requires the installation of Kerio Active Directory Schema extensions. This pays off with an auto-

matic import of all users and groups of the AD domains and a simplified e-mail user administration.

To protect e-mail users from viruses, worms and Trojans, the KMS relies on the McAfee anti-virus – a scanning engine is integrated in the product. External anti-virus software can be used as an alternative or in conjunction with that engine. KMS provides protection from spam too. Available are blacklists, Caller-ID checks, Bayesian filter and SPF checks. Administrators can also define message controls of their own. The anti-spam functions are more expansive than I-mail, for example, but it's difficult to make a direct comparison as conclusive results necessitate more long-term training of the filters.

KMS runs under Windows 2000 (SP4), Windows XP (SP1 or 2) and Windows Server 2003 (SP1). A 20-user installation is possible using a Pentium II with 500 MHz, 256 Mbyte RAM and 50 Mbyte disc space for installation. Of course, each mailbox requires additional disc space.

Installing the KMS (from a download file with approx. 47 Mbytes) only took two minutes. Configuring the numerous functions and features, on the other hand, proves to be a lot more time-consuming.

Alt-N Technologies MDaemon PRO for Windows 9.0

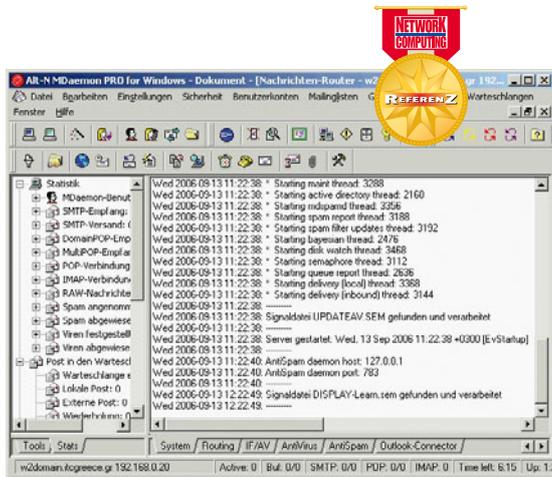
MDaemon is a mail server loaded with features, which, like KMS, contains some a number of

TEST PROCEDURES

Mail Servers

One after another, all four products were installed on a machine with Pentium 4 2.67 GHz, 512 Mbytes main memory and 40 Gbyte hard-disk space under Windows Server 2003 (SP1) for one week each. The Internet connection was provided by ADSL. The machines exclusively worked as mail servers. The following e-mail clients were used for accessing the mail servers:

The web client of each product, Outlook Express 6 and Eudora 6. One week of live action with each product gave us ample opportunity to evaluate the mail server functions, anti-virus components and content / spam filters of the products, their configuration work and their local and remote management.



At first glance, the graphic application interface of MDaemon Pro seemed overloaded, but after a short time spent on getting familiar with it, it proved to be an excellent configuration and management instrument.

Kerios spam filters perform well and the clearly structured administration console makes them easy to configure.

GroupWare functions. The server naturally supports SMTP, POP3, IMAP4 and LDAP. Users receive access to the GroupWare/Collaboration features via a web interface. If the administrator installs the Outlook connector add-on, that access is also possible via Outlook.

The administration console is a graphic Windows application, which can be intimidating at first glance. It contains a menu bar, a double symbol bar and several register cards for choosing protocol files to be displayed. On the left side, there's also an Explorer-like tree structure for choosing information to be viewed or tasks to be performed. It's going to take

administrators a while until they get a grip on the vast array of symbols. Alternatively, the product contains a web administration console called »WebAdmin«, which, as far as the test showed, reproduces all the functions of the Windows application. This web interface is clearly structured, visually more appealing than that of I-mail and considerably more replenished than that of the Kerio MailServer. As a standard, Web-admin runs on an internal web server of its own, although it can also be run on external web servers, such as IIS or Apache.

MDaemon stores user accounts in a file of its own, in an LDAP directory or in an ODBC da-

tabase and allows close integration in Active Directory. Active Directory users can be imported without any problems. Moreover, MDaemon can be set to monitor changes to the user accounts of an Active Directory domain and to react accordingly. Obviously, this makes administration a lot easier.

The web application interface of MDaemon, the so-called WorldClient, was the best one of the products tested. The screen of WorldClient is a pleasure to work with and provides users with access to folders familiar from Outlook, including incoming mail, drafts, contacts, tasks and calendars. Especially the calendar was praised: Appointment series can be entered as easily as inviting participants to certain appointments. The interface understands German, as does the implemented spelling check.

MDaemon comes with an anti-virus add-on that implements a scanning engine by Kaspersky. The program automatically updates AV signatures in accordance with timetables or administrator requests.

When it comes to the spam filters, MDaemon sets the standard. Based on the address books of local users, the e-mail addresses of the mail recipients and the Bayes database, the program automatically creates a white list. This list can be extended with manual entries of recipient and/or sender addresses. Of course, there's also a blacklist in addition to the White List, along with an exclusion list. Messages sent to addresses on the exclusion list are unable to pass the spam filters. MDaemon works with a Bayesian Filter and performs a heuristic evaluation of messages.

MDaemon requires a computer with Windows 2000, Windows XP or Windows Server 2003,

REPORTCARD MAIL SERVERS

interactive under www.networkcomputing.de

	Weighting	Alt-N Technologies MDaemon Pro for Windows 9.0	Ipswitch iMail Server, Secure Edition 2006.1	Kerio Technologies MailServer 6	Qualcomm Eudora WorldMail 4.0
Management/configuration	30%	4.5	5	4	4
Mail server function	20%	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5
Security	20%	5	4	4	4
GroupWare	15%	4	3.5	4	0
Price	15%	5	4	4.5	3
Total result	100%	4.6	4.33	4.18	3.35
A ≥ 4.3; B ≥ 3.5; C ≥ 2.5; D ≥ 1.5; E < 1.5; The evaluations A to C include + or - in their ranges;		A	A-	B+	C+
Total results and weighted results are based on a scale from 0 to 5.					

at least a Pentium III processor and 256 Mbytes RAM. Installing the 34.6 Mbyte download (plus 8 Mbytes anti-virus add-on) took about a minute. The installation even included entering the domain, a first user account and the IP address for the DNS server.

Qualcomm Eudora WorldMail 4

The best known product of Qualcomm is certainly Eudora, a popular e-mail client. With WorldMail, however, Qualcomm also offers a

mail server that's completely based on standards. Network Computing tested Eudora WorldMail in Version 4. WorldMail 4 supports SMTP, POP3, IMAP4 and LDAP. Users receive access to their mailboxes via each POP3 or IMAP4 e-mail client or via the Eudora web client.

The web client is not as polished as the corresponding clients of the competitors, but it gets the job done for undemanding users. It comes with a personal scheduler and rudimentary task planning. No function allowing a user to invite

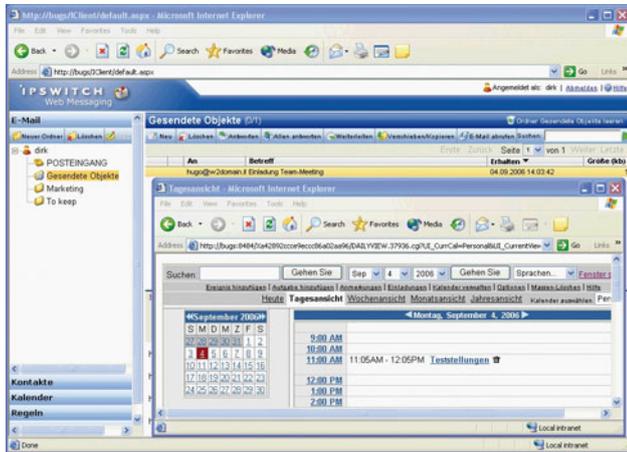
others to an appointment was found. Other GroupWare functions, like shared folders, are absent too. The package does include wireless mailbox access via WAP-compatible wireless devices, such as cell phones and PDAs.

The administration console is a clear and easy-to-use Windows program that's also good for remote performance. The web administration console is only for administering synonyms, mailboxes and mailing lists, which makes it just as flimsy as that of Kerio. WorldMail authenti-

TECHNICAL DATA WLAN-PERFORMANCE- UND SECURITY-ANALYSATOREN

	Ipswitch iMail Server, Secure Edition 2006.1	Kerio Technologies MailServer 6	Alt-N Technologies MDaemon Pro for Windows 9.0	Qualcomm Eudora WorldMail 4.0
Operating system	Windows 2000 Server, Windows Server 2003	Windows 2000 (SP4), Windows XP (SP1 or 2), Windows Server 2003 (SP1)	Windows 2000, Windows XP, Windows Server 2003	Windows 2000 (SP4), Windows XP (SP1), Windows Server 2003
Administration				
GUI setup	●	●	●	●
GUI configuration	● (web)	●	●	● (web)
Web configuration	●	● (user accounts, User groups, alias names)	●	● (synonyms for domains, user accounts, mailing lists)
Remote administration	●	●	●	●
User import from Active Directory	○	●	●	●
Multiple log files	●	●	●	●
Security				
Active Directory Authentication	●	●	●	○
LDAP Authentication	●	●	●	●
SSL	●	●	●	●
Anti-virus	● (Symantec)	● (McAfee)	● (Kaspersky)	● (Kaspersky)
Anti-spam	●	●	●	●
Access control	●	●	●	●
Features				
Shared folders	●	●	●	○
Group scheduling	●	●	●	○
Mailing lists	●	●	●	●
Web application interface	●	●	●	●
Installed web server	●	●	●, as well as external web servers are supported	○
Web	www.ipswitch.com	www.kerio.com	www.altn.com	www.eudora.com
Price (in \$ for 100 users)	2495	749 (basic package, 20 users), 1349 (add-on for 100 users)	1015 plus 440 for anti-virus (Outlook connector for 100 users \$ 720)	2985

● = yes; ○ = no;



The web client of Ipswitch has the right stuff to be a serious competitor to Outlook.

cates users against an existing user database. SSL authentication is performed on request. Mailing lists can be created by accessing mailbox and mailing list data of an ODBC database – based on a database table. User accounts are quick and easy for administrators to create. For example, if he or she selects groups of a Windows domain, then the program automatically creates a mailbox for each group member.

WorldMail 4 contains anti-virus filters by Kaspersky and anti-spam filters by Mailshell. Content filters (Sieve filters) can be configured for handling incoming mail. Sieve filters have their own white and blacklists. Administrators can import addresses into these lists, but first they have to collect them in a text file. Assistants aid the administrator in setting up anti-spam, anti-relay and anti-DoS features. The program offers effective protection from Directory-Harvest-Attacks (DHA).

WorldMail 4 runs under Windows 2000 (Professional and Server), Windows XP Professional and Windows Server 2003. A minimum of 512 Mbyte RAM and 100 Mbytes of disk storage should be available. Installing the program takes about two minutes during which the administrator only has to handle three or four simple tasks, such as domains and service accounts.

Upshot

MDaemon Pro took the lead in the test field as a rounded-off, secure product. None of the other products were able to hold a candle to the web administration / application interface and to the spam filters of MDaemon. As its price is acceptable too (especially when the Outlook connector isn't required), MDaemon Pro received the award »Reference« of Network Computing.

The Kerio MailServer is a very rounded-off and reliably working product too – a serious competitor for the Exchange Server/Outlook

team. Without taking into account the GroupWare features in the evaluation, the KMS provides more functionality than the IMail Server. Although the web interface for administration appears meager when compared to that of the IMail Server, the KMS partly makes up for this drawback by rendering remote access via its graphic Windows interface.

WorldMail 4 was a disappointment. Being familiar with Eudora and knowing that this product originates from the Shareware corner, we expected WorldMail 4 to be a contender for the price / performance award. At the end of the test, we took a look at its price and we learned a sobering lesson: WorldMail 4 turned out to be the most expensive product in the test. Now, this test wasn't predominantly about GroupWare features, but since the three other products contained these features and since they didn't rank behind WorldMail as pure mail servers either, there was no award for WorldMail, but instead the red lantern. dj@networkcomputing.de

