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Z-Mail Pro has 'net features galore for power users

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Resumo:

NetManage Inc's \$79 Z-Mail Pro 6.1, tested in a beta version, is a very powerful E-mail client that supports both the POP3 and IMAP4 mail protocols and includes virtually every conceivable messaging feature but has a very steep learning curve. The program uses HTML to provide rich content, letting users insert live links, pictures, formatted text and tables inside the editor and browse Web pages from within the mail client. It supports automatic .ZIP archiving, encryption, Base 64 and UUencode for sending attachments. Z-Mail is noticeably faster than Microsoft Exchange and complies with the MAPI interface, allowing integration with Office 97. The user interface is complex and tends to be non-intuitive. Setting up multiple password-protected user profiles is simple, but each profile can work with only one POP3 server. There is also no way to selectively connect to mail servers. Z-Mail is a tool for power users who can gain the most from spending the time necessary to master it.

Texto completo:

Z-Mail Pro 6.1, beta

Z-Mail Pro is a feature-rich POP3 and IMAP4 mail client, but learning how to make full use of it may take time.

Pros: Every conceivable messaging feature.

Cons: Somewhat complex and nonintuitive user interface; only one POP3 server per user profile; not possible to selectively connect to mail servers.

NetManage Inc., Cupertino, Calif.; (408) 973-7171; fax: (408) 257-6405; <http://www.netmanage.com>.

Price: \$79 list.

Platforms: Windows 3.1, Windows 95, Windows NT; MacOS; Unix.

Ship date: Available now.

E-mail clients are evolving from simple messaging applications to complex collaborative tools, and NetManage's Z-Mail Pro 6.1 beta version is no exception. Z-Mail Pro 6.1 is an extremely powerful e-mail client, but it suffers from "WordPerfect for DOS syndrome": The features you require are likely to be there, but the learning curve is long.

Z-Mail Pro 6.1 can honestly claim to be Internet and intranet ready: It supports POP3, SMTP, and IMAP4 (the successor to POP3) protocols for e-mail, as well as Network News Transfer Protocol for discussions through the included Forum client.

Z-Mail uses HTML for rich e-mail content. You can insert live links, pictures, formatted text, and tables inside the e-mail editor and even browse Web pages within the mail client. Also supported are automatic .ZIP file archiving, encryption, and encoding (through UUencode and Base 64), which makes it easy to send attachments.

On my test bed -- a 166-MHz Compaq Deskpro with 32MB of RAM and Windows 95 -- Z-Mail Pro was noticeably snappier than Microsoft Exchange.

Z-Mail Pro 6.1 is Messaging API-compliant and, as such, integrates well with Microsoft's Office 97. It also integrates with NetManage's Ecco Pro personal information manager. If your company uses Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP) or X.500 directory services, Z-Mail Pro can access them via NetManage's Open Directory Services CGI scripts, which must be deployed on a Unix server. Native LDAP support is scheduled for inclusion in the next version of Z-Mail Pro.

Surprisingly, although Z-Mail Pro 6.1 readily converts mail files from Z-Mail 4, cc:Mail, Eudora, Profs, and Unix mail systems, Z-Mail Pro cannot import Microsoft Exchange files.

Setting up Z-Mail Pro with separate, password-protected user profiles on a single machine was extremely simple. Configuration dialogs for e-mail servers and accounts were also easy to deal with, and there are ample user preferences for sorting messages, e-mail composition, and retrieval options.

Z-Mail Pro also supports automatic setup with pre-determined user profiles and settings, which is useful for large-scale rollouts. However, the administration module for user message file maintenance can only be run locally, not remotely.

Z-Mail Pro's interface is not quite as slick as that of Microsoft's and Netscape's offerings, and it takes some getting used to. Drag-and-drop messages between local and remote (IMAP4) folders is supported, but the contents pane does not show which folder is selected, which is confusing.

I missed not being able to select which mail servers to connect to; Z-Mail Pro checks for mail on all the servers you've set up, which is inconvenient if one server is malfunctioning.

Rules for simple e-mail filtering and forwarding were easy to create and apply. Z-Mail Pro can also associate Visual Basic for Applications scripts with the rules for more advanced functions such as custom auto-responses and selective forwarding. A script editor and sample scripts are included.

I tried out the IMAP4 functionality of Z-Mail Pro 6.1 by connecting to NetManage's server. IMAP4 is hugely flexible when compared with the older POP3 standard, and Z-Mail Pro makes good use of it. Remote users will especially appreciate the capability to read and manage messages without downloading them from the server. Creating mail folders that users can share, browse, or download is another powerful feature.

Z-Mail Pro 6.1 is a powerful e-mail client, and it's worth considering if you need its features -- and have time to learn how to use it.

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