Post restante

Bob Walder shows how you can pick up your email anywhere, from a standard browser.

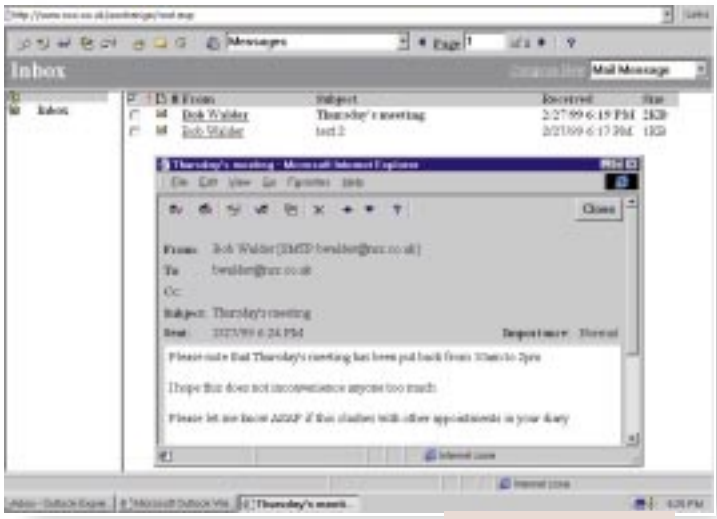
Last month, I told you how to get your Exchange Internet Mail Connector (IMC) up and running and so by now you should be merrily sending and receiving mail via your very own SMTP/POP3 mail server. Many Exchange users will use the Outlook client, too, although with the internet mail support we installed last month that is by no means compulsory as any POP3/IMAP4 client can now be used to send and receive mail via your Exchange Server.

No matter which client you use, though, you can frequently find yourself incommunicado when you are out of the office without your desktop or notebook PC. You cannot simply walk up to any old PC and check your email using someone else's client. Well, you could but it would involve some serious reconfiguration as well as inconvenience to the owner of the PC you are borrowing.

There is a way around the problem, though. While you do not pick up your email from the mail server it simply resides there in limbo until you return to your office and download it again. By installing Outlook Web Access (OWA), you gain access to your Exchange mailbox over the internet using nothing more than a standard browser [Fig 1]. With Exchange 5.5 came additional support for OWA including contacts and calendaring support over the web, plus access to Public Folders.

The first step is to ensure that Internet Information Server (IIS) and Active Server Pages are installed and working correctly. The next is to ensure that the OWA components have been installed. OWA must be installed on the same server as IIS and Active Server although this does not need to be the same machine which is hosting the Exchange Server accessed with these scripts.

Note that IIS 4.0 is not supported by the Exchange Server version 5.0 Active Server Components [Fig 1] installing them both on the same computer results in error messages and the OWA client returns error messages. Exchange Server 5.5 does support Internet Information Server 4.0, though. To use Exchange with the OWA client you must install Exchange Server 5.5 before installing IIS 4.0.



▲ Fig 1 Reading a message using OWA

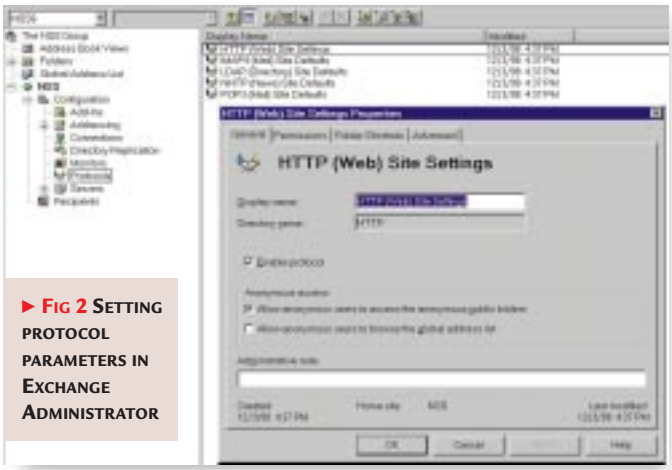
■ Installing OWA

To install OWA on your IIS/ASP server, first insert the Exchange Server 5.x CD and then run server setup.

- **Select** custom install and the OWA option. If this is an existing installation, simply run the Set-Up program and select the Add/Remove Components option.
- **Select** OWA in the Options list and click Continue. This will install the Collaboration Data Objects (CDO), the CDO Rendering library and various Active Server Pages and associated script files.

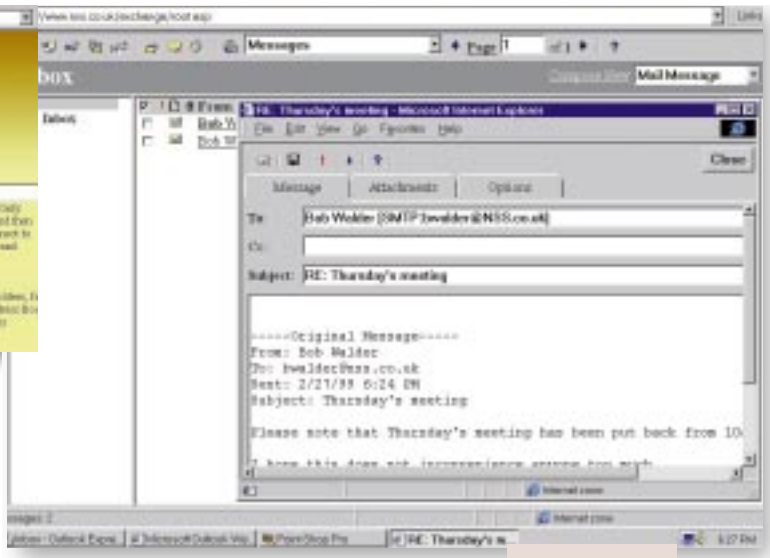
The next step is to configure Exchange Server to support the necessary protocols.

- **Log on** to the server as Administrator and start the Exchange Administrator program.
- **Expand** the Site container of the organisation tree and select the Protocols container. The key one here is the HTTP (web) Site Settings: double click on it.
- **Make sure** the Enable Protocol box is checked [Fig 2].
- **Confirm** the settings in the Anonymous Access section if you wish to allow anonymous users to access the public folders or browse the global address list.
- **Click** on OK. Double click on the LDAP (Directory) Site Defaults.
- **The port** number should be OK. Check the Enable Protocol box.
- **Check** the Allow Anonymous Access box on the Anonymous tab. Strangely enough, even if you are not planning to allow users to browse your Exchange Directory using LDAP you still need to perform these steps to get OWA working.
- **Double click** on POP3 (Mail) Site Defaults.
- **Check** the Enable Protocol box. And do the same for IMAP4 and NNTP if you



▶ Fig 2 Setting protocol parameters in Exchange Administrator

▲ FIG 3 OWA LOGON PAGE



▲ FIG 4 COMPOSING/ REPLYING TO A MESSAGE USING OWA

wish to use these protocols. Although the HTTP protocol applies to the entire site it is possible to override the settings for IMAP4, LDAP, NNTP and POP3 on a per server, or per user basis. Simply expand the Servers container, expand the server in which you are interested and then select the Protocols container. To override settings for each user simply select the mailbox from the Recipients folder and select the Protocols tab. This provides a fine-grained level of control for web access.

If you have done everything right, and your web server is behaving itself, you should now have web access enabled. To try it out, fire up your web browser and type in the address of the OWA directory on your web server. If your normal web server address is www.mycompany. co.uk, you will need to enter www.mycompany.co.uk/exchange. This will bring up the OWA logon screen [Fig 3] where you enter the name of your Exchange alias and click on the 'click here' prompt. If the mailbox is found, you are then prompted for your network login name and password: these should be entered just as if you were logging on to the network back at the office. Once past the logon screen you have something similar to Fig 1, with the toolbar down the left and the inbox full of outstanding messages on the right-hand side. Each message in the inbox is a hyperlink which can be accessed via a single click and from here you can compose, read [Fig 4], forward, reply to or delete your messages, as well as access calendar and contact details. You can also search the Exchange directory for email addresses and phone numbers and browse the public folders.

You can now sit at any PC in the world that is connected to the internet, and has a standard web browser, and gain instant access to your email, calendaring and contacts data. There is even a cut-down version of OWA for use with Pocket Explorer on CE devices.

☛ *In a future column, I will cover how to make your Exchange Server function as an Internet News server.*

THE ZERO COST OPTION

In my recent remote access workshop piece I mentioned the Dial-Up Server for Windows 9x and said that although it was included in Windows 98 you would need to acquire the Plus! Pack for Windows 95 to get hold of it. Although this is perfectly true I neglected to mention the 'zero cost' option (shame on me). John Robson wrote in to put me right.

'Thanks for the "Home and Away" remote access workshop in the April issue. I've just tried Dial-Up Server. It worked a treat and promises to be very useful. However, you comment that "Windows 95 users will have to purchase the optional Plus! Pack to acquire it".

'Actually, you can download DUN 1.3 from www.microsoft.com/windows/downloads/contents/communications/dun13win95/default.asp and this includes Dial-Up Server. This could save readers the cost of the Plus! Pack or an unnecessary upgrade to Win98, the two options I had considered until I found DUN 1.3 on the web.

'I still run Win95 OSR 2 with the USB supplement and have yet to see anything about Win98 to persuade me that it's worth shelling out to upgrade. Mind you, I got close this time.'

Thanks for the tip, John. For the record, I think there are enough new features in Windows 98 to warrant the upgrade although it depends on what you want from your system, and I suppose your OSR2 release with USB will give you most of them! Those with an earlier release of Win95 might be interested in the increased range of updated drivers conforming to the new Windows Driver Model, improved NetWare client with support for NDS, ISDN support built in, client support for PPTP, and FAT32. The last is especially interesting, being an improved version of the FAT file system that allows disks over 2Gb to be formatted as a single drive. It also uses smaller clusters than do FAT drives, which results in a more efficient use of space on large disks. FAT32 alone was worth the upgrade cost to me.

PCW CONTACTS

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