

# Free and easy

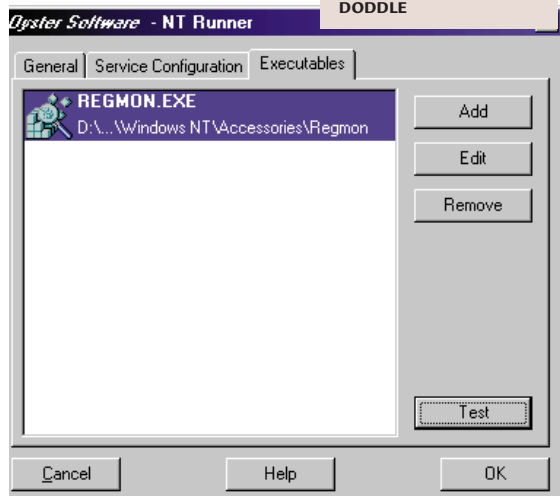
Andrew Ward finds NTRunner is a goer when running programs as services.

I'm going to return to the subject of running executable programs as services under Windows NT. Reader

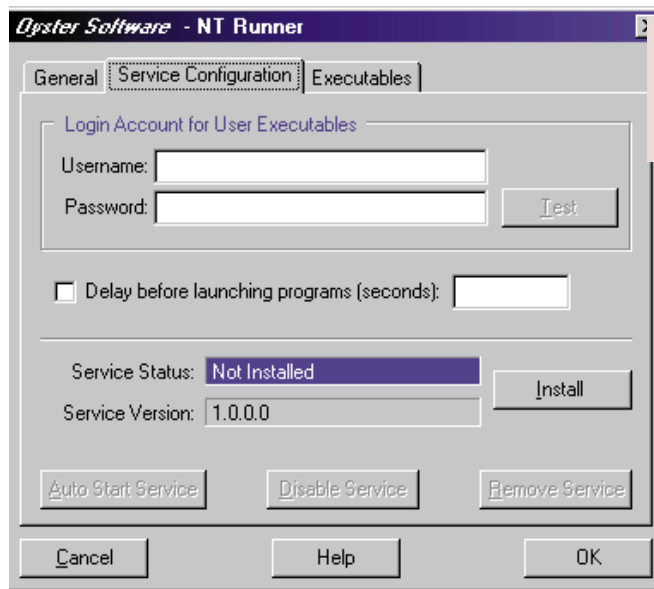
Darren Davis writes in to object that SRVANY is fiddly to use. I agree with him. And, he's found a more pleasant solution, in the guise of NTRunner. It's obtainable from [www.istare.com](http://www.istare.com), and what's more, it's freeware.

For NTRunner to work, you don't need to run a Setup program; just unzip the file you download. But before it can do anything, NTRunner has to have its corresponding service installed. This is easy — it's just a question of clicking the Install button in the Service Configuration tab [Fig 1]. The service is set to Automatic start by default but you can disable it if you wish.

**Adding executables** is easy enough, by clicking on Add in the Executables page [Fig 2] and navigating to the program file. You can specify whether the program should start up Maximised, Minimised or Hidden, although not all programs will take notice. To ensure you've set everything up correctly, you can click on the Test button which is quicker and easier than waiting for the system to restart.



▼ Fig 2 ADDING EXECUTABLES TO BE RUN AS SERVICES IS A DODDLE



◀ Fig 1 INSTALLING THE NTRUNNER SERVICE IS MERELY A MATTER OF CLICKING ON INSTALL

Programs installed to run as services will begin executing as soon as the system starts up, but where you would expect them to interact with the desktop you won't actually see them until a user logs on. Similarly, when the user logs off, the programs stay running in the background but without a user interface. Program termination will occur on a system shutdown if explicitly shut down by the user, or automatically if they are designed to do that. Actually, You can specify an optional delay before the programs start

up. This is necessary to ensure that all required NT services have started up before the program attempts to run. Similarly, you have probably noticed that it helps to wait a couple of minutes after the logon screen appears before you actually log on.

## Hotfixes

Service Pack 4 has featured on our cover-mounted CD but for reasons of space we have been unable to include all versions. You can download the service pack from Microsoft's

web site, or obtain the CD itself from Microsoft for a nominal charge (phone 0345 002000). Even though not everyone has installed Service Pack 4 for Windows NT yet, there are already a number of hotfixes to solve problems which have come to light since its release. These may be downloaded via anonymous FTP from <ftp://ftp.microsoft.com/bussys/winnt/winnt-public/fixes/usa/nt40/hotfixes-postSP4/>.

**The problems solved** by the various hotfixes range from important security issues to others that are extremely trivial. For example, someone with access to the console of an NT workstation, where a user is currently logged on and the console is locked, can retrieve the first line of text from a logged-on user's clipboard.

You were able to do this by using the keyboard shortcut for paste (Ctrl-V) in the User field of the Unlock Workstation dialogue box. Potentially, it was a minor security risk. But no more.

Another problem solved is that of NT incorrectly identifying the ATAPI version of the Iomega Klik 40! drive as a floppy drive, and then assigning it the first available floppy disk drive letter (usually the letter B).

Rather more important than either of those two, however, is a slowdown in performance, followed potentially by a hang caused by a malicious attack. Specifically, these are attacks on RPCs (remote procedure calls) within NT using named pipes — they create multiple named pipe connections to a Windows NT system and send random data. The RPC service then attempts to send a response and close each connection, resulting in 100 percent CPU usage.



### ■ Mail servers

Reader Peter Holloway suggests that VPOP3 [Fig 3] is a mail server worth consideration as an alternative to NTMail. It's downloadable from [www.pscs.co.uk](http://www.pscs.co.uk) and in Peter's view, with which I agree, it's a lot easier to set up.

Like other programs of this ilk, it hosts its own POP3 mailboxes for users on your local network and will fetch mail from ISP accounts to put into these boxes. Thus, if all the mail for the domain award.co.uk goes to one ISP POP3 mailbox, for instance, VPOP3 will retrieve it all and distribute it among the appropriate users' mailboxes. Outgoing mail is stored by VPOP3 and then sent when it next connects.

The mail retrieval operation can be scheduled to occur at specific times and it can be optionally triggered by the action of sending a message with the priority set to Urgent. For example, if you

want users to be able to trigger it, too, perhaps because they're

main difference is an updated user interface, following representations from certain vocal users. But NTMail remains a fiddle to configure. It's especially difficult if you have a dial-on-demand router. With one of these, you have to set up NTMail for dialup networking to stop it bringing up the router incessantly. Unfortunately, unless you also install RAS and enter a phonebook number, NTMail won't allow you to configure scheduling. I prefer MDaemon.

### ■ Watch out, there's an offer about

If you're keen to get started with Windows NT and development, there's an offer from Microsoft that may interest you, but be sure to read the small print. It works like this: if you buy Visual Studio 6 Enterprise Edition it includes a copy of BackOffice Server 4.5. And BackOffice Server 4.5 includes a

below for a list of included products).

In theory, then, you can buy a new blank PC and a copy of Visual Studio 6 EE and be fully equipped with all the software you need to develop and test Windows NT BackOffice applications. But there's a catch. At the time of writing, you didn't really get a copy of BackOffice Server 4.5 — you got a card to send off. This is made clear enough on Microsoft's web site: 'Sent via fulfillment (*sic*) (see voucher in box) as soon as product is available', it says. All well and good, and by the time you read this the product will be available, but that didn't help those who had to wait a couple of months for it before they could install an operating system and start work.

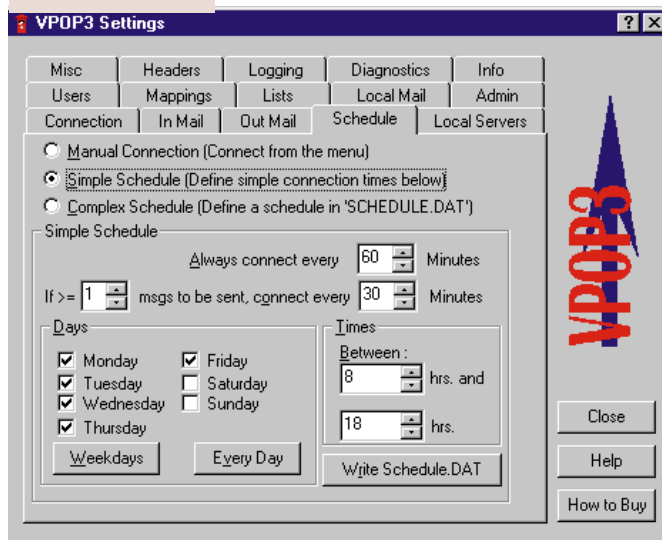
And neither is that the only catch. To complete the fulfilment card you need to provide a Visual Studio registration number. And how do you find out the registration number? By installing and running Visual Studio on your non-existent operating system installation!

So, what you would have to do is to

either borrow a copy of NT Server from someone else (under the circumstances, Microsoft wouldn't dare have the cheek to complain), or obtain the 120-day evaluation CD from Microsoft.

Visual Studio 6 Enterprise Edition (see the box on p212) is

▼ **Fig 3** COMPLEX DIALUP SCHEDULES CAN BE CONFIGURED FOR VPOP3



expecting something urgent and want to check incoming mail, it's possible to trigger a connection by creating a file with a specific name in the VPOP3 directory. You could set up a simple batch file and an associated icon on people's desktops to do this.

There is now also a new version, 4.2, of NTMail [Fig 4]. The

copy of Microsoft Windows NT Server 4.0 with Service Pack 4 (see the box

## Included in BackOffice Server 4.5

- NT Server 4.0 with Service Pack 4
- NT Option Pack, with Internet Information Server, Transaction Server, and Message Queue Server
- SQL Server 7.0
- Proxy Server 2.0
- Site Server 3.0 with Service Pack 2
- Systems Management Server 2.0
- SNA Server 4.0a
- Internet Explorer 5.0
- FrontPage 2000 (single user)
- Visual InterDev 6.0 (single user)
- Outlook 2000 (for use by licensed client systems)
- Seagate Crystal Info 6.0 (five users)



▲ **Fig 4** A MUCH NICER USER INTERFACE FOR NTMAIL VERSION 4.2



available from Grey Matter at [www.greymatter.co.uk](http://www.greymatter.co.uk) and other software retailers for a cost of around £1,316 (inc VAT).

### ■ Diskeeper update

Those of you who use Executive Software's Diskeeper to keep your hard drives defragmented may like to know that there's an upgrade from version 4.0 to 4.1 available. This corrects a number of important potential problems, three of which are listed below. Other changes are more cosmetic, although nevertheless important. The upgrade can be downloaded from [www.execsoft.co.uk](http://www.execsoft.co.uk). Look for the 4.1.202 Free Upgrade.

**1** **Corrections** have been made to the boot-time module to prevent possibilities of data corruption under certain circumstances.

**2** **This version** incorporates changes in both NTFS boot-time online engines to properly handle certain varieties of extremely fragmented files and directories.

**3** **A number** of access violation problems have been corrected in the Diskeeper FAT and NTFS online analysis and defragmentation engines in this version.

### ■ Happy with Hyena

The debate about the most effective management tool for NT 4.0 shows no sign of receding and I particularly like one tool, Hyena, drawn to my attention by a PCW reader. Hyena is available from [www.adkins-resource.com](http://www.adkins-resource.com) and offers you a single point to manage practically every aspect of a Windows NT machine or domain [Fig 5].

Within an Explorer-style view, you can see all machines and domains on the network (or those you choose to

include), and for each Windows NT system you can manage users, groups, printers, shares, sessions, open files, services, devices, events, disk space and user rights.

Hyena is extremely thorough. You can view and modify such things as obscure user rights that you would otherwise have to set via the registry. And, as well as viewing open sessions on a system, you can send messages to connected users before you disconnect them — a nice touch as this saves you having to do it by some other means such as using NET SEND. In the Services screen, Hyena shows not only all the usual stuff that's accessible via that Control Panel but also any service dependencies.

By right-clicking on a computer name you can also set the Account Policies and Audit Policies. You can find out how long a system has been up, and shut it down (remotely). Overall, it's difficult to find much that Hyena won't do. In one single place, it combines administrative tasks that you would otherwise undertake from the Control Panel, Windows NT Explorer and a variety of utilities located

within the Administrative Tools program menu and the Resource Kit.

Additionally, Hyena tackles many of the challenges of user administration. User names can be renamed *in situ*. Users, groups, printers and computers

can be exported wholesale and any combination of users can be modified simultaneously.

**First, you select** multiple users with the mouse and shift key (or control key) as is normal with a list. Then, modifications you carry out to the properties will take place over all selected users. There does not, however, appear to be any way to set up multiple user accounts by importing user name data from an external source.

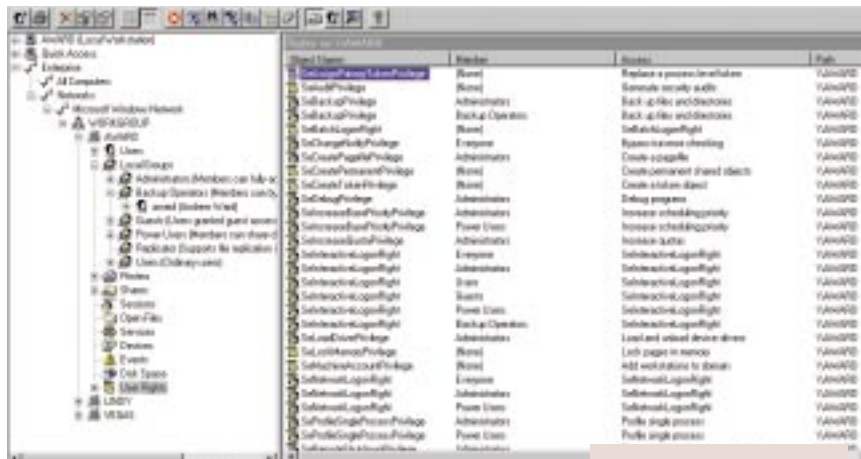
To make life easier when scheduling remote jobs, Hyena even acts as a front-end to the Windows NT AT service. Shares can be navigated and files copied and deleted without you having to map drives to them.

By adding Custom Tools you can include other applications such as the Performance Monitor, ping or tracert under Hyena's Tools menu to make them quickly accessible. And to quickly go to computers and printers that you frequently need to administer without having to navigate through the Explorer-style tree each time, you can add them to a Quick Access object.

A trial version of Hyena may be downloaded from the Adkins Resource web site and you can purchase it there for \$199 — the organisation will email you a registration key. If you do not mind paying £150 for it, you can buy it from UK resellers such as [www.giant-technologies.com](http://www.giant-technologies.com).

### PCW CONTACTS

Andrew Ward welcomes your comments on the Windows NT column. He can be contacted via the PCW editorial office (address, p14) or email [NT@pcw.co.uk](mailto:NT@pcw.co.uk)



► **FIG 5** A CONVENIENT WAY TO MANAGE YOUR WINDOWS NT SYSTEMS

## Visual Studio 6 Enterprise Edition

- Visual Basic 6.0 Development System
- Visual C++ 6.0 Development System
- Visual J++ 6.0 Development System
- Visual InterDev 6.0 Development System
- Visual FoxPro 6.0 Database Development System
- BackOffice Server 4.5 Dev. Edit.
- Visual Modeler 2.0
- Visual Studio Analyser
- ActiveX Data Object 2.0 (ADO)
- Oracle and SQL Server Database Designer
- Visual Database Tools
- Distributed Web Project Model
- Visual SourceSafe 6.0
- Microsoft Repository 2.0
- Visual Component Manager 2.0