

Manage your schedule properly with StarOffice Schedule 5.2, KOrganizer and GNOME Calendar 1.2

# WHEN THE DESKTOP RINGS TWICE

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**They are integrated into almost all office packages and even in the desktop environments KDE and GNOME: I'm talking about organisers, the small, almost invisible helpers that can be a real aid if you have a chock-full appointments calendar. This article shows you how to collect all your dates under one roof using one of the three main free schedulers under Linux, and even be reminded of them automatically.**

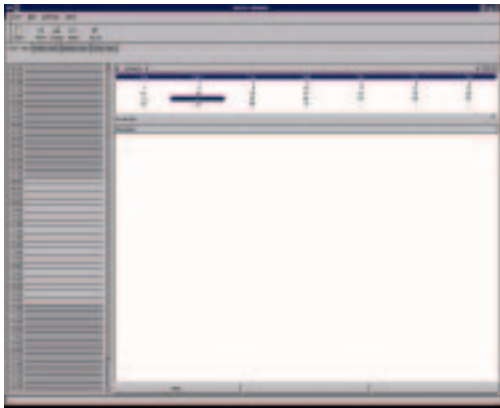
The way an organiser works can be explained using an example from the life of Noah Deer. Noah Deer is the managing director of a well-known car manufacturer and would like to administer and organise his business and private appointments by computer. This is where the three freely available organiser programs KOrganizer (part of the KDE Desktop), StarOffice Schedule (part of the office package StarOffice 5.2.) and GNOME Calendar 1.2 (part of the GNOME Desktop environment) come into play.

If you are using KOrganizer, you may be aware of the difference between the somewhat older version 1.1.1, which was developed for the old KDE 1.x, and the new KOrganizer 2.0, which is supplied as standard together with KDE 2.0. If at all possible you should use the slightly improved version 2.0.

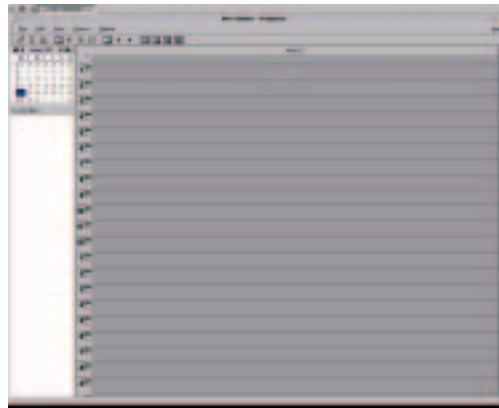
The fundamental structure of an organiser, also known as a scheduler or Personal Information Manager (PIM), is the same in each case: Each of the programs presented here differentiates between appointments and tasks. An appointment is always tied to a fixed time such as 'Conference on Monday morning at 9 o'clock'. A task (called a 'To-do-entry' in the Gnome Calendar) is characterised by the fact that it is not time-dependent, such as 'Ring Gary sometime about the garden party in July'. One further distinction is that the user can be reminded automatically of an appointment by the respective program.

## Appointments

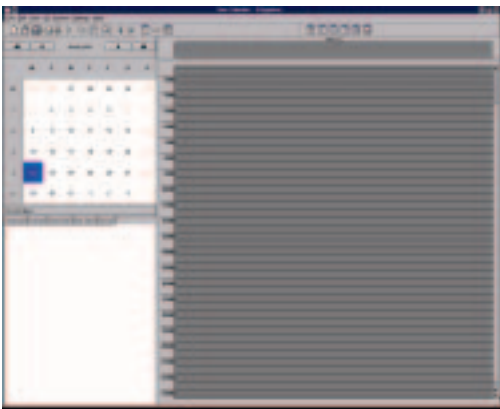
In order to join in with the following Workshop, you should first start the application you are going to



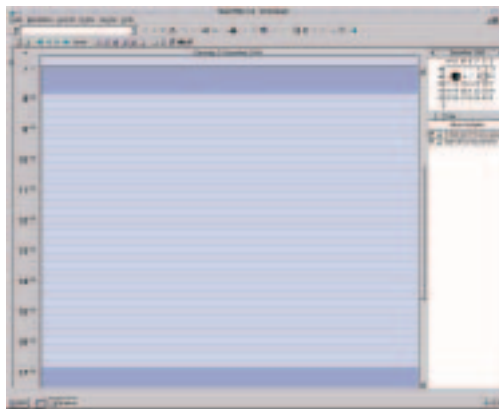
[left]  
Figure 1: Main window  
of GNOME Calendar



[right]  
Figure 2: Main window  
of KOrganizer 1.1.1



[left]  
Figure 3: Main window  
of KOrganizer 2



[right]  
Figure 4: Main window  
of StarOffice Schedule

use. To do this under StarOffice double-click on the Appointment symbol on the desktop.

The main focus of an organiser program is on the management of appointments. To do this, each program has a calendar view, which is usually displayed immediately after starting. A day, a week or a month can be displayed here. With the exception of the monthly view, the days are shown along the horizontal axis and the time along the vertical axis. In the table grid thus created, the corresponding appointments can then be entered. In addition, there is also usually a small calendar inserted in one of the top two corners of the main window, on which the currently displayed month appears in the form of a small overview.

### It depends on your view

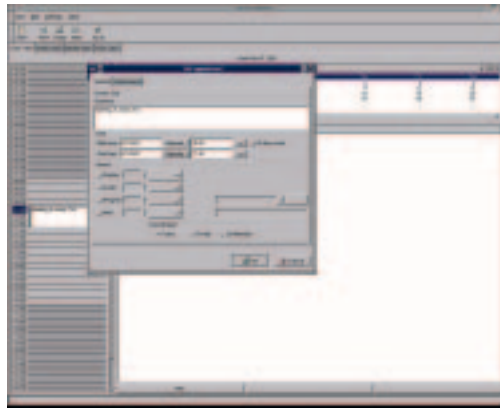
Noah Deer has discovered that on 22 January 2001 at 10 o'clock he has an important meeting with the works council. In order to enter this appointment, he must first switch to the daily view. To do this under StarOffice, it is vital for the so-called *Object bar* (*View/Symbol bar/Object bar*) to be inserted. Now click on the symbol with the calendar sheet and the *1* in the foreground. KOrganizer uses a similar method. But be careful here, as under the old Version 1.1.1 a second click on the said control button toggles between the display of just one, all five working days and all seven days of the week. Under the successor version 2.0, and in StarOffice, each of these forms

of display has its own symbols. In the GNOME Calendar you can call up the various views via the register pages below the symbol bar.

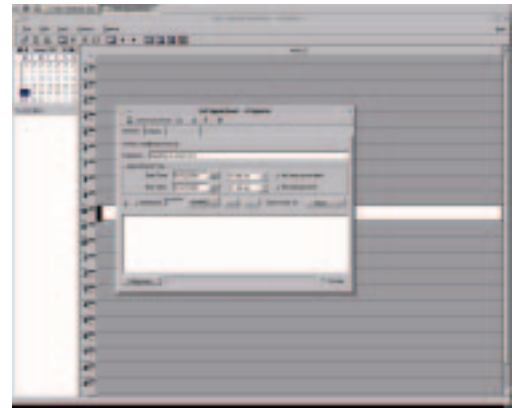
In order to display the appointments for 22 January 2001, you can either use the symbols with the arrows or click directly in the little *Overview calendar* on the corresponding entry (in the GNOME Calendar a double click is necessary to do this). This calendar usually has its own arrow buttons, with which the month can also be changed. But be careful here, since StarOffice and KOrganizer automatically adapt the date displayed in the large window to the newly selected month. Also, two dates are always marked differently in this little calendar. These are firstly the current date, which is specified by the internal clock of your computer, and the date, which is displayed in the main window. So if you do not complete this Workshop in January 2001, the first mentioned marking would obviously fall in a different month. In most organisers the appearance of these markings (such as their respective colours) can be altered in the program settings.

22 January 2001 should now be displayed clearly as the only date in the organiser you are using. Before we enter Noah Deer's appointment, here's another tip on navigation: If you no longer know where you are or want to save yourself lots of clicks, you can leap back in all the programs, with a single mouse click on the symbol *Today* in the symbol list, to the current date specified by your computer clock.

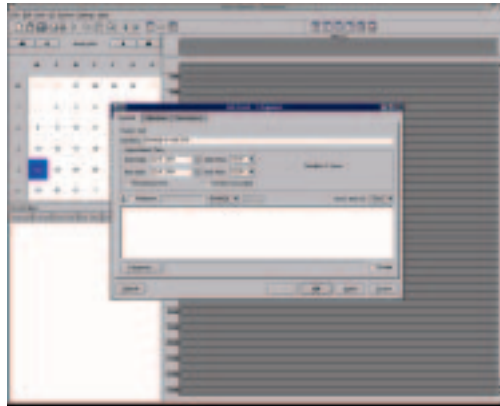
[left]  
Figure 5: Edit window  
of GNOME Calendar



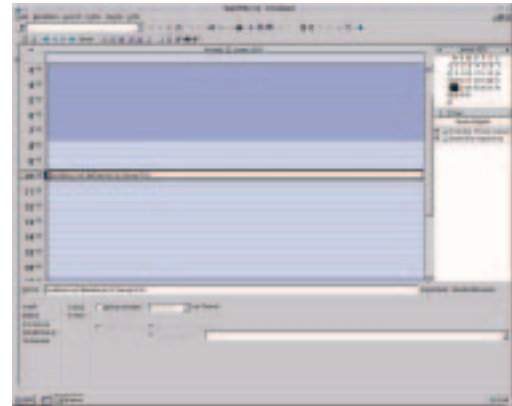
[right]  
Figure 6: Edit window  
of KOrganizer 1.1.1



[left]  
Figure 7: Edit window  
of KOrganizer 2



[right]  
Figure 8: Detailed view  
of StarOffice Schedule



## New Appointment

In order to insert Noah Deer's appointment, move using the scrollbar to the 10:00 line. Double click there with the mouse on the corresponding empty line. If you are using the GNOME Calendar, you must first mark the corresponding appointment, by clicking on it once with the mouse. Then press the right mouse button and select *New appointment* from the menu that appears. Under StarOffice and KOrganizer 2.0 you should have the use of two cells for the 10:00 o'clock appointment. In this case, use the upper of the two lines, as the lower one is allocated to an appointment starting at 10:30.

The organiser program you are using should now automatically switch into input mode, in which you must enter a description of newly made appointments. In our case this would be 'Conference with works council in Room 514'. Complete the input by pressing the enter key. Under KOrganizer 2.0 and GNOME Calendar the procedure is somewhat different: Here an *Edit* window opens (more on this later), in which you must enter the above description. Then click on *OK* to complete the entry. The newly made appointment is now visibly highlighted and in some programs marked at the same time. Under KOrganizer 1.1.1 this marking is seen from the vertical black bar on the left.

## Remember me

Since the meeting with the Works council is very important, Noah Deer wants to be reminded of it by

his organiser program. To do this, open the Properties window, which is reached under StarOffice via the symbol *Details* from the object list. This window henceforth remains visible at all times on the bottom edge of the screen and displays the data of the appointments marked in the calendar view. To make this view disappear again, all you need do is click again with the mouse on the symbol *Details* in the symbol list. Under KOrganizer and GNOME Calendar you should position the mouse cursor on the corresponding appointment and then press the right mouse button. From the context menu that appears, you should then select *Edit* or *Edit entry*. Although the structure of the properties windows differs somewhat in each of the programs, their contents are all roughly similar.

To activate the automatic message when the time arrives for the appointment, select the point, under StarOffice, *Reminder*. There, the field *Dialog* should already have been activated. On the right side, mark the box *Display dialog*. In addition, you can play a sound file (loud, staccato sounds are excellent for extremely important appointments). Using the upper list, you can set how many minutes before the actual appointment the corresponding message should appear. So if you select 15 minutes for instance, the message window will automatically remind you at 9:45 about the 10:00 appointment. KOrganizer 1.1.1 does not yet have such comprehensive equipment in this respect. But it does have control buttons for playing audio files (the note) and even starting a corresponding program (the running person),

although these functions are only integrated in KOrganizer 2.0 onwards.

As long as you activate the *Reminder* box, a message window will be displayed here. The input box and the list on the right next to this specify the precise length of time that the message window should appear before the actual appointment. In the GNOME Calendar, you activate the reminder function by marking at least one of the little boxes in the *Alarm settings* field. The GNOME Calendar, apart from displaying a message window, can play a sound file, start a program and even send an e-mail to any address.

If you have switched on the automatic reminder function in your organiser in one of the ways just described, a small bell will be inserted in all programs in the calendar view as a reference to this function.

Before going any further with Noah Deer's example, a couple more brief comments on the detail view and the editing window. Here you can alter all settings relating to an appointment, which the respective organiser program provides. You can enter a more exhaustive description, or a simple comment. In StarOffice, this function can be found under *Content*, while with KOrganizer this text can simply be entered in the large, empty field in the lower half of the first register sheet. Furthermore, under StarOffice and KOrganizer the persons taking part in this appointment can be specified. In StarOffice this function can be found under *Participants*, and in Korganizer, to do this, select the register *Details*, then complete the field below the large list for any participant and finally click on *add*.

## Again and again and again...

Noah Deer has found out that his meeting with the works council will in future always take place at 10:00 o'clock on the first Monday of every month. So as not to have to enter the appointment again every month, the individual organisers offer a handy aid for this in their detail view or in the editing window. In KOrganizer, mark the point *Recurring Appointment* on the first register. Then switch to the third register *Repeat entry*, which has been opened by the preceding action. Under *Repeat*, mark the point *monthly*, as well as *1st Monday* next to this on the right.

You can also make other, more extensive settings on this register. So, for example, in the lower right area of the register you can specify which appointments are to be excluded from this rule. To close the window again, select *Save and Close* from the symbol bar, or in Version 2.0 *OK*.

Since 22 January was not the first Monday in the month, KOrganizer has deleted the appointment and only entered it for the first time in the next month, February. StarOffice deletes this appointment for exactly the same reason. But there you must first select *Repeat* from the detail window

on the left side, then mark the box *monthly* and set, in the right part of the corresponding lists, *first Monday of every month*. Unlike KOrganizer, any changes you make here come into effect immediately. Then replace the automatically deleted appointment 'Meeting with Works Council in Room 514' on 22 January. The procedure with GNOME Calendar is similar to that with KOrganizer, the only difference being that the corresponding register *Repeat* can be selected directly. Here, by the way, you have the option of defining *Exceptions* to this rule in the right lower area of the register card.

## It may take a while

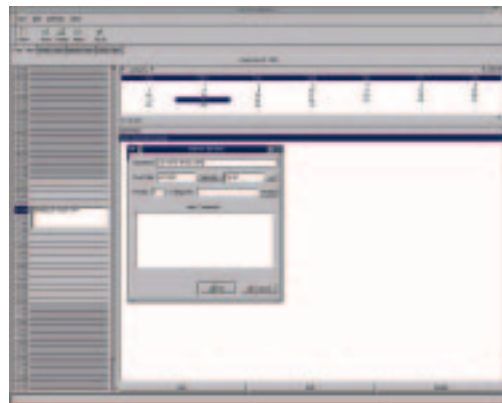
Noah Deer has now been definitively informed that the meeting on 22 January will last until 11:45. In order to adapt the length of the appointment, you can alter the corresponding values in the *Detail window* of StarOffice or in the Editing window of KOrganizer and GNOME Calendar. The first two programs mentioned even offer (in addition to this option) another and somewhat easier way. To do this, move the mouse to the lower edge of the appointment, until the mouse cursor turns into a double arrow. Now hold down the mouse button and drag the end of the appointment to *11:45*. The appointment should now lock-in to the specified time positions. Now release the mouse button, and the duration of the appointment will be adapted to the target time.

Obviously, this method functions with the start time and on the upper edge. But there's more of this: Position the mouse cursor on the centre of the appointment, where it turns into a cross. If you now hold down the mouse button you can move the complete appointment easily to any new time position on the calendar.

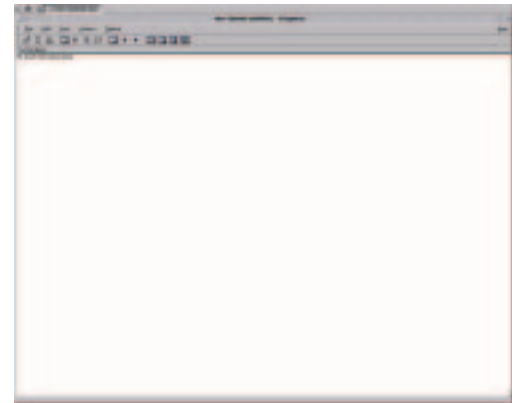
If you are using StarOffice, you will certainly have noticed that you were only able to drag the appointment either to 11:30 or 12:00. This is because the time slot is preset to a 30 minute pattern. To alter this, click with the right mouse button on an empty space in the appointment slot and then select a different resolution from the menu under *Time slot*. The GNOME Calendar, incidentally, offers only fixed steps in units of 30 minutes when you adjust times by mouse.

To become more familiar with the various views of the individual organiser programs, you should now do a bit of experimenting with them. To do this, create some additional appointments and watch how these are displayed in the individual views (day, week and month). In this connection the *List display*, which only GNOME Calendar does not provide, is interesting. This display, which is also reached via the associated symbol from the symbol bar, lists all appointments for the current month as an overview.

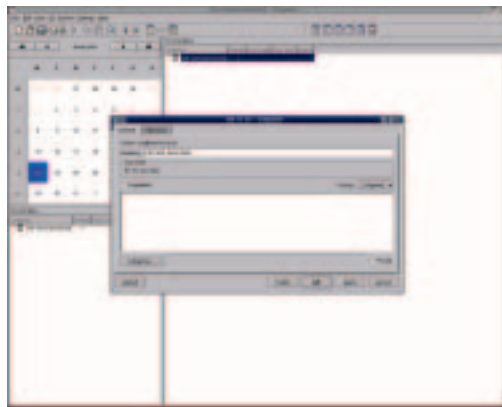
[left]  
Figure 9: Adding a task  
under GNOME Calendar



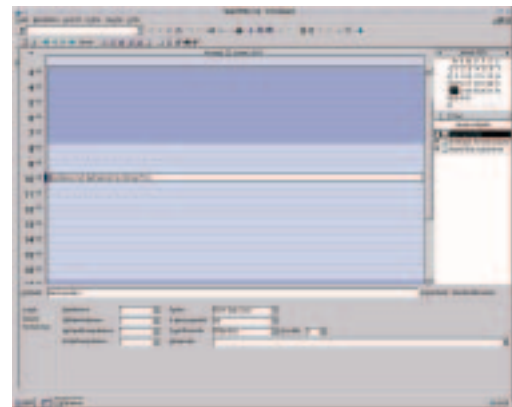
[right]  
Figure 10: Adding a task  
under KOrganizer 1.1.1



[left]  
Figure 11: Adding a task  
under KOrganizer 2



[right]  
Figure 12: Adding a task under  
StarOffice Schedule



## Tasks

Noah Deer wants to celebrate with a garden party in October on the occasion of his service anniversary. His friend Gary is meant to help him with this. But he has to make the phone call about this in the next few days. Since a few work-related appointments have not yet been fixed and Gary can only be reached at certain times, Noah Deer does not yet know when he will be able to phone Gary. As a result, this call becomes an ideal candidate for a new task (also called a To-do entry under GNOME Calendar).

Under StarOffice, click in the object bar on the symbol *New task*, in KOrganizer you should first switch with the corresponding symbol from the symbol list into the Task view. Once there, click on any free space with the right mouse button and then select *New to-do* from the menu. The GNOME Calendar provides a special control button for this purpose in the lower right corner of the day view, *Add*. Under StarOffice a new entry in the Task list will now appear on the right hand side under the calendar. If this is not blended in, click on the *Tasks* symbol in the object bar.

The entries created in this way look the same under both StarOffice and KOrganizer 1.1.1. In the new KOrganizer 2.0, and the GNOME Calendar, a corresponding window opens. Now enter a description in the text field: in our example this would be 'Ring Gary about garden party'.

As already seen with the appointments, here again in the same way a *Detail* or *Editing* window can be blended in, in which the progress of the task can be entered as a percentage. If the task has been done, you can simply tick off the small box before the description. KOrganizer 2.0 even offers the option in this connection of breaking down individual tasks into smaller sub-tasks. To do this, click on the task to be broken down with the right mouse button and then select *New Task sub-group*. The new sub-point is then entered exactly like a main point. Unfortunately the GNOME Calendar is left behind somewhat when it comes to management of tasks, as its setting options in this respect are substantially sparser in comparison with its competitors. After you have marked the appropriate candidates in the list, call up the associated *Editing* window using the control button *Edit...* on the lower edge of the screen.

Our trip around the world of organisers ends with the tasks. To become more familiar with the individual programs, you should experiment with a few test entries and in particular try out the functions not mentioned in the article. Obviously there are still lots of other free organiser programs, and projects on the Internet, from which you will surely find your own personal favourite.

### Info

Corel Linux Homepage: <http://linux.corel.com>  
StarOffice Homepage: [www.sun.com/staroffice](http://www.sun.com/staroffice)  
Homepage of the KDE Desktop: <http://www.kde.org>  
KDE 2.0: Article and cover CD: *Linux Magazine* issue 4 (January 2001)  
Homepage of the GNOME Project: <http://www.gnome.org>



### Watching in the background

For the dialog field to be displayed, the programs constantly check the time on their computer clock. Obviously this can no longer happen if you shut down the corresponding organiser application. So that you can be reminded nevertheless at the right time, the organisers start small programs in the background, which remain active after the actual application has been shut down and alert the user at the right moment. KOrganizer does this automatically, and this is shown by the small symbol on the right at the bottom of the KDE start list next to the clock.

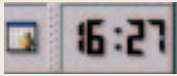


Figure 13: This symbol shows you that the background program of Korganizer has been activated

StarOffice sadly is a special case, where you always have to start the entire office package and even then there is no guarantee that you will be reminded of your appointments. Normally this actually only happens if you have started the schedule module. StarOffice does, however, expressly ask, after the activation of the Reminder function, if you wish to be reminded of your appointments even when the schedule module has not been started. So that you only have to start StarOffice itself, you should always answer yes to this question.

### Additional functions in StarOffice 5.2

StarOffice offers a host of additional functions, which the other programs described in this article do not. The most interesting ones will be mentioned here briefly.

Firstly, StarOffice provides for separation into private and work time zones. In the calendar different colours in the background show these zones. A light blue background marks working hours, while dark blue stands for leisure time. So to extend the work time, mark the cells to be changed with the mouse. To do this, hold down the left mouse button and drag the grey marking to the desired size. Release the left mouse button and then immediately press the right one. In the menu that now appears, select the point Mark as work time from the entry Background.

If you have a great many appointments, it is very easy to lose perspective. To avoid this, under StarOffice so-called Filters can be activated (View/Define appointment filter..., or in the case of tasks, View/Define task filter...). In this way, only the appointments are displayed which belong to the category specified in the filter. This can be used to blend in all private appointments. The assignment option for a category can be found in the Detail view of the respective appointment under the Details point.

In addition to the simple reporting options in the form of a dialog or an acoustic signal, StarOffice also offers the option of sending an e-mail to any address you like. You reach this function by marking the corresponding appointment, blending in the detail view, there selecting from the left list Reminder and then clicking on E-mail under Dialog. But please bear in mind that the message, depending on the mail provider, may arrive with a considerable delay.

### Installation and reference sources

**StarOffice:** Firstly, make sure that you have installed the module StarOffice Schedule when installing StarOffice. This should be the case if you do a full installation. If you want to manage both appointments and tasks at the same time, double-click on the symbol marked Appointments on the desktop. If you just want to look at and edit your queue of tasks, a double click on Tasks is enough. If one of the two symbols is missing then blend in the explorer on the left edge of the screen and there open the group Explorer. Then click on the plus sign before Tasks and Appointments. A double click on the corresponding sub-entry then opens the desired window.

**KOrganizer:** KOrganizer 1.1.1 is an integral part of the old KDE 1.x desktop and in many distributions it is included with the installation. If you find this is not the case, or if you are using a different desktop manager, such as GNOME, you should be able to install the corresponding packet later with the associated program from your distribution (with SuSE Linux with YaST. The packet is in the series kde and bears the name korganizer). Korganizer should be included with your distribution, but if not you can download it for free from <http://apps.kde.com>. KOrganizer 2.0 is also an integral part of the new KDE 2.0 desktop, which you will find either on our coverdisc from issue 4 (January 2001) or it can be downloaded from <http://www.kde.org>.

**GNOME Calendar:** The calendar is an integral part of the GNOME desktop. Although it is possible in principle to start the GNOME Calendar under KDE or another desktop, this only works if you first install the main components of the GNOME desktop. In addition to this, you may only be able to use some functions to a limited extent, or not at all, under a different desktop. The GNOME Calendar should be included with your distribution, but if not you can obtain it on the Internet from <http://www.gnome.org>.