# **COVER FEATURE**

# Schedulers for the desktop

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Your colleagues and family are giving you a very sour reception because once again you've simply forgotten an important date - perhaps your own mother's birthday or an important business dinner – due to your lack of organisation. It's high time to bring some order into your chaotic daily schedule. Alongside the conventional solution of going into a stationer's shop once a year to buy an up-to-date appointments calendar made of paper, in this age of the microchip, there is of course, an electronic alternative.

Once you have made the decision that your Linux PC will henceforth be in charge of any dates which occur, the guestion arises as to which desktop program is best suited to this purpose. Linux Magazine presents to you schedulers, calendars and organisers for the X11 desktop.

### **Mobile assistants**

Anyone who travels a lot may well want to acquire a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) or even a keyboard handheld PC. These mobile dwarves really can perform miracles now, but this does not mean they are ready to replace the classic stand-alone computer, not by a long chalk. It is rather that they normally act as a sort of extended arm for home desktop applications, thus in our case, schedule management software under Linux.

### PIMs or groupware?

Schedulers do not usually come as isolated applications, but are normally an integral part of a collection of electronic help tools for more efficient organisation of the day-to-day running of the

office. If such an office bundle consists of applications best suited to the better organisation of the private and professional life of an individual, these are often referred to as Personal Information Managers.

Such PIMs usually consist of programs for managing appointments and tasks, an address database and (more rarely) an e-mail client program. If on the other hand the application has been designed so that entire organisations or other groups of people who frequently interact can coordinate better with each other, then the term groupware is usually used. In this article we are deliberately limiting ourselves to presenting a few PIMs which can bring order to your home Linux

# **Desktop, server or WWW?**

Historically, Linux has been regarded as a child of the Internet, designed right from the start for network compatibility. Unlike the worlds of Windows or Mac, many developers of Linux applications still assume even today that Linux will be used primarily in a network environment.

# OVERVIEW OF SCHEDULE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

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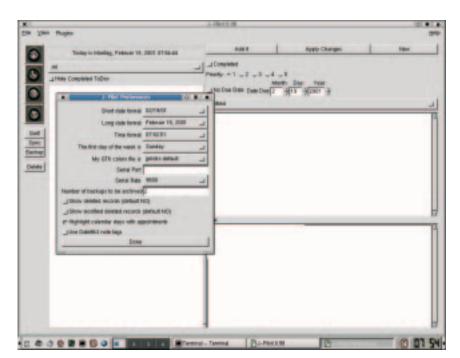
Accordingly, there is at present a relatively large range of network-based client-server solutions under Linux for every imaginable type of application. Desktop applications still need to mature somewhat. So don't be surprised if at the moment under Linux it is easier to find a groupware solution which can be synchronised with any and every PDA, than a corresponding universal desktop solution. There are also schedulers, which after a corresponding registration – similar to some e-mail and fax providers – can sometimes even be used as a free service on the Web (e.g. in the case of Yahoo or Netscape). It is of course entirely up to you whether or not you wish to share your personal appointments and notes with the operators of such Web sites.

### **Standard formats**

In the Windows world, in recent years it is MS Outlook and the Lotus Organiser in particular which have established themselves as the de facto standards in the PIM domain. Since it is only recently that Linux has come into the picture as a desktop operating system, there is as yet no comparable standard here. The developers of the latest PIMs (KDE-PIM or gnome-pim), though, now appear to be adhering to the Open Source philosophy of using open file standards, too, wherever possible. The Internet Mail Consortium, a world-wide committee to which the leading IT companies such as AOL, HP, IBM, Nokia and even Microsoft belong, has published two standard specifications for personal data interchange (PDI) at http://www.imc.org/pdi/: vCard and vCalendar. In particular the latter specification is intended to ensure that - obviously, only if the developers of a PIM or groupware also comply 100% with the specification requirements the interchange of data between electronic calendars, schedulers and address bases from various manufacturers runs smoothly.

### Synchronisation required?

If you own a PalmPilot made by the company 3Com and would like to synchronise your Palm appointments with your PC schedule management program, then, at least for the time being, your choice of the right scheduler is extremely restricted under Linux. Apart from the two PIMs presented in the overview, StarOffice Schedule 5.2 and J-Pilot, there are certainly a few other feasible solutions (such as the scheduler CorelCentral 9 in Corel's Wordperfect Office 2000, not presented here). The installation and configuration of the Palm synchronisation software is, however, not all that simple, but sometimes requires quite a bit of skill. But rescue is in sight: the PIM developers of KDE and GNOME are already hard at work on a corresponding Palm interface for KOrganizer and gnomecal.





Psion devotees, unfortunately, have been dealt a poorer hand at the moment under Linux, because they must either settle for the options and limitations of a range of command line tools (psiconv) or keep a look-out for the few groupware solutions under Linux, which also enable a corresponding Psion synchronisation (e.g. the Cyberscheduler from the firm Envicon).

# Integrated and forward compatible

If you see no need, at least for the moment, for PDA synchronisation and are chiefly looking for an electronic scheduler for your own private use, then the two up-and-coming PIMs from KDE and GNOME would seem to be ideal. KOrganizer

J-pilot handles synchronisation with the PalmPilot

[above] Simple but powerful -the plan scheduler

# **COVER FEATURE**

# OVERVIEW OF SCHEDULE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

certainly gives the impression of being somewhat more refined with respect to the wide range of functions. The GNOME Calendar which is, incidentally, similar to Tagesplaner because of its interesting command line options, is presumably aimed more at advanced Linux users, who might for example want to (partly) automate their applications with the aid of original shell scripts and thereby wish to come nearer to achieving their goal of saving even more time.

To finish off, one quick look into the near future: The US company Ximian (formerly known as Helixcode) (http://www.ximian.com), which has made its name in the Linux scene by their generous provision of complete binary packets of the current GNOME desktops, has been working for some time now on a highly promising combination of PIM and groupware named Evolution. It is not yet ready for the end-user, since it is very difficult to install. But there is reason to hope that Evolution may be integrated into the next major release of Ximian GNOME.

# **Schedulers in Overview**

Name GNOME Calendar 1.2.0 Ical 2.2 J-Pilot 0.98 KOrganizer 2.0 StarOffice Schedule 5.2 Tagesplaner 1.8.4

Manufacturer/Developer de Icaza, Mena and others Sanjay Ghemawat Judd Montgomery Braun, Schumacher and others Sun Microsystems, Inc.

Thomas Driemeyer

URL http://www.gnome.org

www.research.digital.com/SRC/personal/

http://jpilot.linuxbox.com http://korganizer.kde.org

http://www.sun.com/staroffice

http://www.bitrot.de/plan.html

Sanjay\_Ghemawat/ical/home.html

Licence/price GPL freely copiable GPL GPL Sun's own licence / free of charge GPL-type licence GUI-Toolkit used GTK+1.2 / GNOME 1.2 Tcl / Tk GTK+ 1.2 qt 2.2.x / KDE 2.0.x staroffice internal

motif (static link also possible)

Appointments/Tasks

Start/end of appointment \*/\* \*/\* \*/\* \*/

\* \*/\*

Address details - - - \* \* -

Number of pre-set categories of appointment - - -12 (+ others definable) 5 (+ others definable) -Recurring appointments \* (inc. exceptions) \* (large choice of rep.) \* \* (inc. exceptions) \* \* (inc. exceptions)

Priority levels of tasks - - Level 1-5 Level 1-5 Level 1-5 -Access rights public/private/confidential - - public/private/confidential -

Archiving of old dates? - \* (via script icalexpire) \* (multiple back-ups) \* (as vcs file) \* (as XML file) -(delete options)

Reminder alarm

Via user dialog / tone \* / \* \* / \* \* / \* - / \* \* / \* \* / \* By e-mail \* (any other application) - - \* (any other

application) \* \* (any shell script) Repeat reminder? - min/max 15 days before min/hh/dd min/hh/dd dd/ww/mm/yy \*

Details on participants? - - - \* (Role/status) \* (status) -

Calendar views

Listing of all appointments - - - \* \* -

Day at a glance \* \* \* \* \*

Week at a glance \* \* - \* \* \*

Month at a glance \* \* - \* \* (small/large)

Individual working week - \* - \* \* -

Several working weeks - - - \* -

Year at a glance \* \* - \* (2 different views) Appointments after list of tasks - - \* \* \* -PDA synchronisation

PalmPilot in development - \* in development \* (no multi-user sync.) -

Psion 5 mx PRO / Revo - - - - -

Import/export filter

Import Import from Ical 2.2 possible

- Lotus Organizer (\*.txt) - - - - \* s.b.

- MS Outlook (\*.csw) - - - - \* s. b.

- XML-iCalendar (\*.xcs) - - - - \* s.b.

- iCalendar (\*.ics) planned - - - \* s.b.

- vCalendar (\*.vcs) \* - - \* - s.b.

Own file format vCalendar (\*.vcs) \$HOME/.calendar

\$HOME/.jpilot/ vCalendar (\*.vcs)

../usr/store/schedule.cal \$HOME/.dayplan Export

- iCalendar (\*.ics) planned - - - \* -

- vCalendar (\*.vcs) \* - - \* \* -

- XML-iCalendar (\*.xcs) - - - - \* -

- Web-site (\*.html) - \* (via script ical2html) - \*

(Event/task list) - -

Print options

Day at a glance - \* - \* via templates \*

Week at a glance - \* - \* via templates \* (2 different views)

Month at a glance - - (via date options) - \* via templates \* (also 2 years at a glance)

Task list - - \* \* via templates -

Date range of choice - - - - -

Special features

Large number of settings with Unix classics among schedulers Program for synchronisation Integrated task management Integrated task management Very large number of settings Calendar colours, To-do lists with PalmPilots Address book Link to address management Current daemon (alarms) and alarms also addresses/memos "Combine calendar" option Netscape-Calendar compatibility mode also command line calls command line options expandable via plugins Interaction with KDE file manager Konqueror Calculates German federal state public holidays Adaptable public holiday file Integral part of the packet gnome-pim Integral part of the packet kdepim in KDE 2.0.x Reads files out of databanks and from remote Netplan servers