SuSE Openexchange Server 4

Posture

The Web front-end provided by SuSE's all-inclusive workgroup package promises system administrators some relief from the daily grind and offers users more support with their daily work. However, you know what it's like with promises – some are kept, and some are not. **BY NICO LUMMA**

Anyone who feels like doing so can just grab a Linux distribution and put together a workgroup server to their own liking. Distributors such as SuSE offer complete package deals that ideally leave only the configuration of local parameters to the admin. Whereas the first product generation, such as SuSE E-Mail Server, mainly focused on providing integrate mail services, later packages, such as SuSE's Openexchange Server 4 [1] now look towards providing workgroup solutions and establishing themselves as competitors to Microsoft Exchange.

In contrast to many competitive products Openexchange Server 4 is not an add-on for an existing system, but a complete package for Intel compatible PCs, including a Linux distribution. The latter turns out to be SuSE's Linux Enterprise Server 8 (SLES 8) on the basis of the 2.4.19 kernel – attentive administrators will also note the United Linux logo that appears during installation. Thus, the distribution is both current and stable, and provides users with a comprehensive maintenance program.

The email and groupware components are stored on a separate CD, with Postfix 1.1.11 serving as the Mail Transport Agent (MTA), and IMAP functionality courtesy of Cyrus IMAPD 2.1.9. The Groupware facilities are based on Com-

fire [2] and replace Skyrix in the former SuSE E-Mail Server 3 software. User data is handled by OpenLDAP 2.1.4 LDAP server, and groupware data is stored in a PostgreSQL repository. The bundle is rounded off by the Apache 1.3.26 web server, bind 9.1.3 as a Domain Name server, Samba 2.2.5, a spam filter (SpamAssassin 2.31), and an anti-virus scanner (Amavis Postfixd 20020531).

The Nuremberg based company provides a pretty box to go with the bundle, throwing in both a user manual and a more comprehensive admin guide. Both manuals explain the use of the feature rich Web front-end that provides both a neat Webmail solution and an interface to the range of Groupware features.

In addition to calendaring and contact management, you can expect a knowledgebase, to-do lists, project and document management facilities, a forum and a billboard [4]. An Outlook replicator ensures that Microsoft clients can synchronize calendar, contact, and to-do data. Mail facilities are available to any IMAP capable client.
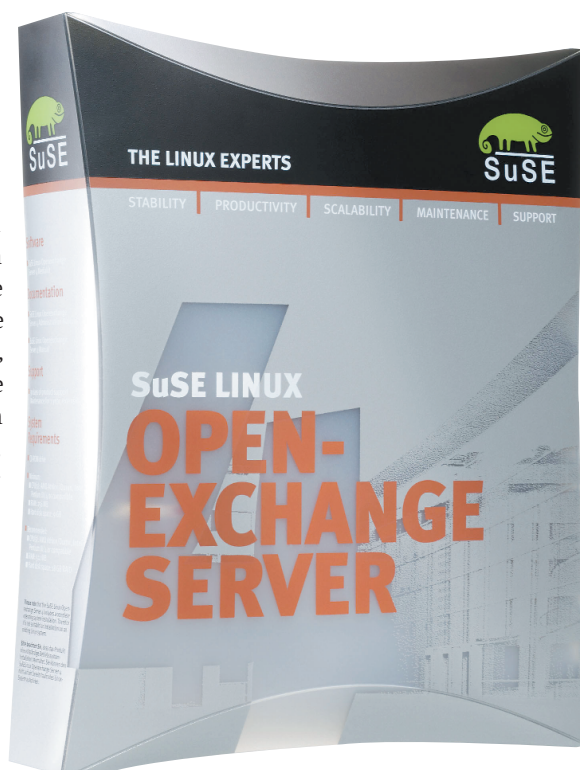
Newly Installed

As you would expect from SuSE, the installation is more or less fully automated. Package selection has been dumped in favor of automatically installing pre-selected packages for SuSE Openexchange Server 4 and, of course, that saves a lot of time. The procedure assumes a blank system and there is no way to stop the complete SuSE distribution, plus the mail and groupware components, from taking over that system.

If you are upgrading from SuSE E-Mail Server 3, you should use the backup script supplied by SuSE to backup your mail, user, contact and any other valuable data before you start. After installing a new system, the Openexchange update script converts and restores any data you had backed up.

After completing the installation, the admin is again allowed to specify a few

SuSE Openexchange Server 4	
Manufacturer:	SuSE Linux AG
Internet:	*http://www.suse.co.uk/uk/index.html*
Prices:	
License for ten groupware clients, unlimited external email clients (POP3/IMAP) and 30 days installation support, 12 months system maintenance and update service	approx. 1,440 Euro
Additional license for groupware, for example five clients	approx. 290 Euro

configuration options for the LDAP server in YaST. When you are done, you might like to go to the Maintenance Web site at *http://support.suse.de/psdb/* to check what is on offer there, as a number of bugfixes and important security patches have become available since the package was released last autumn. To do so, you will need to register your product's support key at *http://support.suse.de/en/register/*, to obtain a password for access to the SuSE Maintenance Web site.

Content on the site is sorted by data and product, providing both an overview of the range of updates and patches for each product (for Openexchange Server 4 this is *http://sdb.suse.de/en/psdb/html/SuSE-Linux-Openexchange-Server-4.html*) and some insight into their history. In addition to descriptions for each patch, the Maintenance Web site also has links to downloads and installation notes.

Alternatively, SuSE allows you to use YaST. Look for the *Online-Update* option under *Software* and specify *http://sdb.suse.de/download/* as the source. Again you will be required to authenticate, as already described. Depending on whether you opt for a manual or automatic update, YaST will either present you with a list of optional packages (Figure 1) or simply download and install any required patches.

The Web front-end provides functionality for both configuring and managing Openexchange, conveniently allowing you to create or modify users. These resources are stored in LDAP and can additionally be viewed using the LDAP Web based browser supplied by SuSE.

Web Based Configuration

The admin user can specify the extent to which users can modify their own data, and at the same time assign privileges for working with groupware features, or disable/enable Samba accounts. Of course, the dialog also allows the admin to change passwords and compose vacation notes for users. Additionally, users can change their own passwords and create their own vacation notes on the Web front-end, although it may be preferable to leave this task to the admin.

It is quite easy to create groups and assign users to them; although assigning a share IMAP folder for multiple users and groups was more convoluted, patient admins should be able to talk the Web front-end into complying. Unfortunately, there is no way for the admin to assign shares for mail folders to users – this is a task users have to take care of themselves. As Cyrus IMAPD privileges may not be entirely intuitive at first glance, this does cause unnecessary irritation.

Admins wishing to give their users a helping hand are forced to use the *cyradm* command line tool. Listing 1 shows an example where the admin uses *lm* to view a directory, and *sam* to assign lookup (*l*), read (*r*), and store (*s*) privileges, so that users in the *tech* group will have access to the folder.

Mail alias make things really confusing. You can use the user management facilities to define aliases for arbitrary users and store them in LDAP. Shared folders can be configured not to store incoming mail, but to forward it to one or multiple users. Independently of this, the admin user can fire up her favorite editor and add alias addresses to */etc/aliases*. As there is no way of providing a central overview of aliases, you can soon lose track of them.

Making Sure the Mail Gets Through

The Web front-end provides the *Postfix*, *Postfix for Experts*, *IMAP Configuration* and *Fetchmail* configuration items for electronic mail. Five options are provided for the basic Postfix MTA configuration: the admin user needs to specify a Relay host, and enable or disable Dial-on-Demand, SMTP Auth (SASL), TLS and the Spam filter. Expert configuration mode allows you to edit the default Postfix configuration parameters and add new parameters. Experienced admins may find the Web interface somewhat restricting and prefer to edit */etc/postfix/main.cf* manually.

The Web interface parser will honor any manual changes, thus guaranteeing an overview of any expert parameters you set. IMAP configuration is similarly concise and comprehensible and should not prove too challenging even to inexperienced admins. Message retrieval options for Fetchmail are also simple and uncluttered.

Certificates and Domains

Anyone who has tackled OpenSSL and its range of command line options in order to create an SSL certificate will appreciate the convenience that the Openexchange Web front-end provides. In this case SSL support for POP3, IMAP,
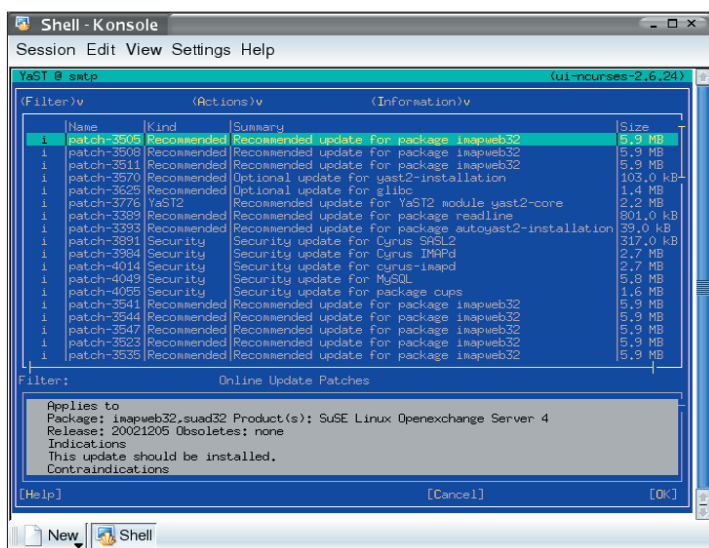

Figure 1: YaST can be used to update the product

Listing 1: Creating shares for user specific mail folders

```
cyrus@smtp:~> cyradm --auth login localhost
IMAP Password:
localhost> lm user.nico.test
user.nico.test (\HasNoChildren)
localhost> sam user.nico.test group:tech lrs
localhost> lam user.nico.test
cyrus lrswipcda
nico lrswipcda
group:tech lrs
```
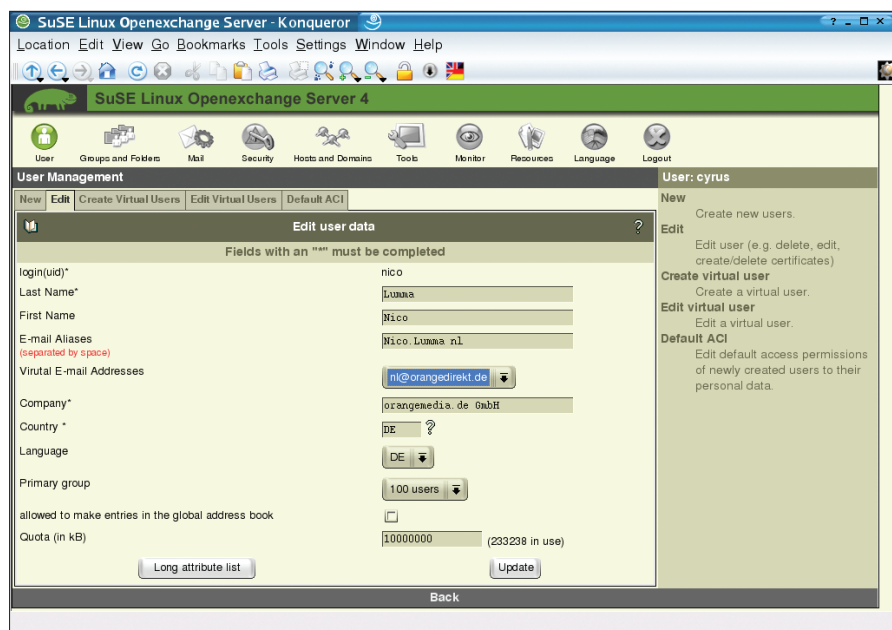
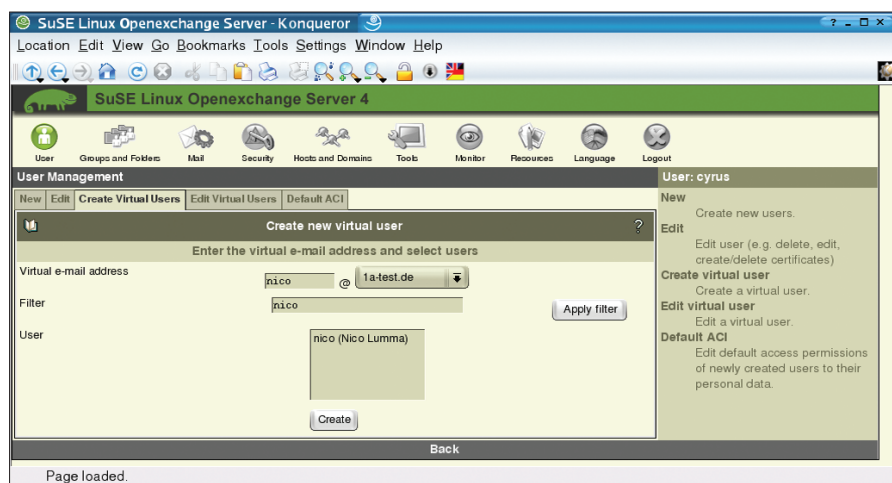**Figure 2: Convenient manipulation of user data**
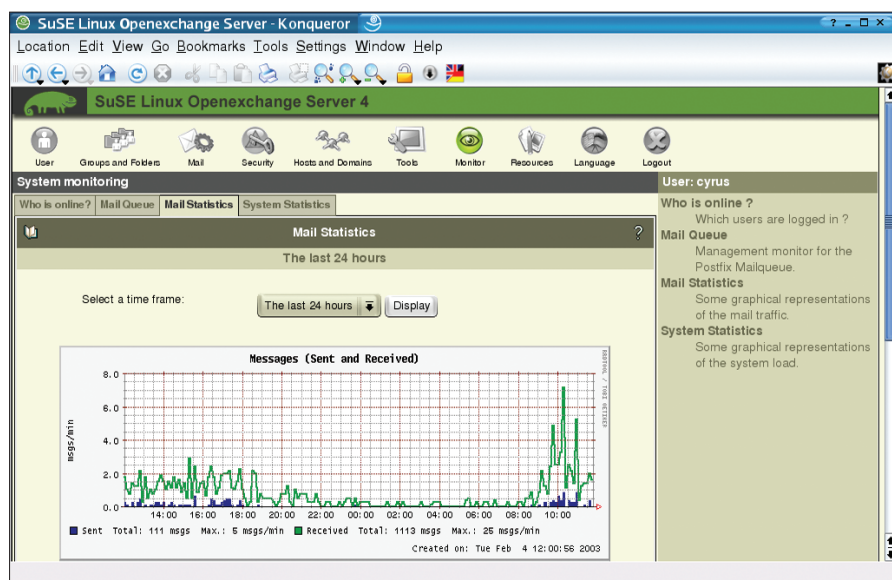

Figure 3: Creating a virtual user

Figure 4: Viewing mail statistics for the last 24 hours

and LDAP is simply enabled or disabled below *Security* – and it is just as easy to remove a certificate.

At first glance it might seem to make sense to use the Openexchange server as a Samba PDC or nameserver, but implementing this might be tricky.

Basic Samba configuration is not too challenging. You first create a new SMB host, and then share the Samba account to your users to provide access to basic Samba functionality. Changing the basic setup means manually editing the *smb.conf* configuration file to suit your needs – SuSE does not provide forms for this task in the admin front-end.

Configuring a Domain NameServer is even more annoying. The Web interface only provides the option of supplying a host name for the machine in a subnet of an existing domain. This is a mere fraction of the functionality provided by a real DNS server. If you want more, you will again need to edit the zone file and modify */etc/named.conf* manually.

Of course, the Postfix mail server supports the virtual domain paradigm, and thus can accept mail not primarily destined for the host, but reaching it by reference to its MX record. To utilize this feature, the admin uses the Web front-end to create a virtual domain, selects *Export*, and then under *Users* (Figure 3) creates so-called virtual users who can be mapped to actual user accounts on the system. The Web front-end automatically stores the virtual domain in the Postfix configuration file, */etc/postfix/localdomains*.

Tools

In addition to the LDAP browser mentioned at the outset of this article, SuSE permits Web based manipulation of system-critical configuration files, although there is no help of any kind, meaning that admins with little experience of Unix (and not only them) will have some difficulty using this feature. Text based forms are provided for editing the configuration files, although many admins will find this less useful than simply firing up their favorite editor.

The system monitoring facilities appear far more beneficial in comparison, proving the admin both with an overview of the current Web front-end users, and – using *rrdtool* – with views of

the system and mail load [3]. An overview of the mail queue (Figure 4) is also useful, and you can use the Web front-end to clear the queue. The fact that the admin user can send a message to all users via the Web interface may prove to be a useful gimmick in production environments.

What's Missing?

It is not only the fact that more and more spammers are making an effort to circumvent the SpamAssassin spam filter that makes you wish SuSE had integrated RBLs. If you want to block determined spammers, the Web front-end will be of no assistance, instead you will need to edit the Postfix configuration file, /etc/postfix/access, manually.

Admins wishing to scan both incoming and outgoing mail will be pleased to hear that the system is preconfigured to use Amavis, although you will need to specify the exact configuration. A bundle comprising a license for an anti-virus scanner might be the more

customer-friendly alternative and would allow SuSE to pre-configure Amavis by default.

As most larger LANs today need a DHCP server, one might ask why the Web front-end does not allow you to configure dhcpd, after all you can use it to configure SMB hosts. We were also disappointed by the fact that SuSE Openexchange Server 4 does not include Arkeia backup software, unlike its predecessors, which even provided comprehensive documentation for Arkeia. It is up to the admin to take precautions, to avoid losing data should disaster strike.

Conclusion

It remains to be seen if SuSE can take care of the rough edges discussed in this article before the next update. The current version presents itself as a stable mail server with a convenient Web-based facility for most of the administrative chores. Users on the LAN get exactly what they expect from a

modern mail and groupware server: a Web front-end, Outlook synchronization and tools for daily chores. Within this framework, Openexchange Server can handle the tasks often performed by Exchange Server.   ∎

INFO

[1] SuSE Openexchange Server: *http://www. suse.co.uk/uk/business/products/ suse_business/openexchange/index.html*

[2] Comfire: *http://www.comfire.de/englisch/ produkt/produkt.htm*

[3] Rrdtool: *http://www.rrdtool.org/*

[4] SuSE Openexchange Server, Linux Magazine, Issue 27, p44

THE AUTHOR

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