

## Exchange Alternatives: SCO Office Mail Server

# Sailing forward

In contrast to its predecessor “Caldera Volution Messaging Server” and thanks to its high level of Outlook integration, the *SCO Office Mail Server* is obviously aiming for the belt held by the current groupware title holder, Microsoft Exchange. And incidentally, the product is a hot competitor for SuSE’s Openexchange.

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The imminent withdrawal of support for Microsoft Exchange 5.5 makes migrating to a Linux based alternative to Exchange a tempting proposition for Microsoft customers. With its *SCO Office Mail Server* product, SCO (ex Caldera) has entered the illustrious ranks of Microsoft challengers, as the US based company have developed a working MAPI connector for Outlook.

As a late addition to the cover story in Linux Magazine April 2003 Issue 29 – the product was not available at the time – we decided to put *SCO Office Mail Server* through its paces.

## Installing and Managing the Server

Apart from the client side, SCO’s previous product, the “Volution Messaging Server”, was stable and easy to install.

The new SCO Office Mail Server product continues with the same ideals, running on numerous Linux distributions, as well as on its own SCO OpenUnix with the Linux Kernel Personality.

The *install.sh* launches the GUI installation routine straight from the program’s CD-ROM.

The script recognizes any packages that are needed to run the mail server, such as Cyrus IMAP or Postfix and installs them. After completing the basic installation steps, the admin user can use the web front-end, which should be familiar from the Volution Server, over an SSL connection: <https://servername>.

## Running Apache

The Apache web server, which is needed to communicate with the web front-end, is automatically configured and launched. The default username/password combination of *admin | admin* provides access to all the administrative features. You might like to make a good administration start by changing the default password to something more secure.

This clear cut interface has changed very little compared with its predecessor. The basic configuration tasks include setting the domain, and adding users

and aliases (see Figure 1). These changes will be stored in the LDAP directory.

The *System* menu option allows the administrator to change her password, and display the processes running on the SCO Office Server. This is also the place where admins can assign additional access privileges to users. In contrast to SuSE Openexchange, however, there is no easy to use GUI for Postfix. Admins will have to fire up their favorite editor to configure the MTA.

Normal users also have browser based access to the administrative web front-end, provided the administrator has permitted this in the access profile. Users are allowed to configure their personal preferences and mail forwarding.

## Outlook Connectivity via MAPI or IMAP

In contrast to the server components, Windows client connectivity has seen some positive changes in comparison to the Volution Messaging Server product. The Mail connector can synchronize

with Outlook, News, calendar, and contact information with the Internet Mail Access Protocol Service (MAPI). Outlook 98 and 2000 need to be running in "Corporate Workgroup Mode" to do so. Outlook 97 and Outlook 2002 do not require this, as the services are part of the default feature set in this case.

To provide support for the collaboration functions, the MAPI connector adds a toolbar to the Outlook menu. The toolbar allows users to setup an email account or modify the synchronization facility.

Additionally, users can define access privileges for folders and the like. This puts SCO's replication facility one step ahead of the SuSE Openexchange Server, as SuSE failed to produce realtime Outlook connectivity at this year's CeBIT fair, despite previous announcements to the contrary.

## Cyrus capable

If you prefer to do without MAPI and synchronize your clients with the Cyrus IMAP server using IMAP mail and folders, you will be pleased to hear that the server does support this option. The *Client Setup* menu allows automatic configuration of IMAP clients such as Outlook Express or Outlook, that is you

### SCO Office Mail Server

- Manufacturer:** SCO  
**E-Mail:** [info@caldera.com](mailto:info@caldera.com)  
**Phone:** +44 (0) 1923 816344  
<http://www.caldera.com>  
**Internet:** <http://www.sco.com/products/SCOoffice/mail/>  
**Prices:** Multiple licensing models, for example a 10 mail user bundle including Outlook connector, SCO Linux 4.0 and 12 months support: approx. US \$1,400.
- Requirements:**
- Pentium II CPU, 400 MHz, 64 Mbytes RAM plus 1 Mbyte per user
  - 40 Mbytes hard disk space plus mailbox storage
  - Operating systems: United Linux, Caldera OpenLinux Server, OpenUnix 8 with Linux Kernel Personality
  - SCO Office Mail Connector for Outlook runs on Windows 98, NT, ME, 2000, and XP.

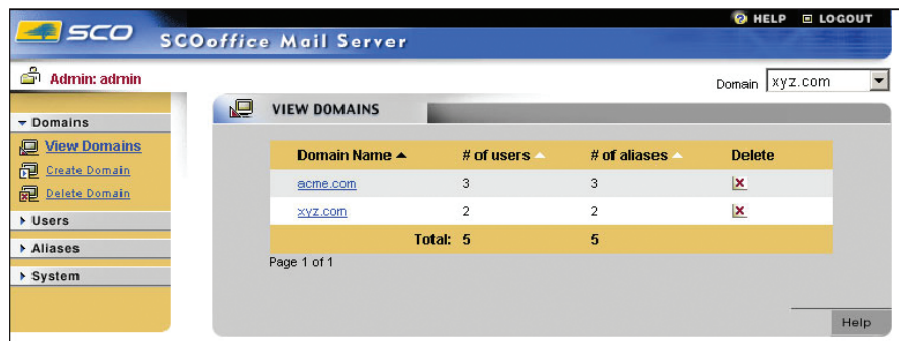


Figure 1: The web-based administrative front-end of the SCO Office Mail Server is extremely neat. The Postfix configuration still needs to be done manually

can set up the required user accounts to access the Cyrus MTA. *Configure* creates a Visual Basic script file with the configuration settings for the individual user, and runs the script to set up the account on the client side.

## A Fully-Featured Alternative to Exchange?

Caldera hinted at full Outlook compatibility for the Volution Messaging Server, but this turned out to be restricted to the fact that Outlook can speak POP, SMTP, and IMAP – just like any other mail client. Of course that does allow you to access a Cyrus IMAP Server.

However, the new MAPI Service provided by the SCO Office Mail Server product is a genuine replacement for Exchange (at least in some respects) as it does allow you to replicate a large proportion of Outlook's mail, calendar, and to-do data.

The SCO product does not achieve the same level of groupware functionality as rivals, SuSE Openexchange Server or Skyrix Web Groupware 4.1. A MAPI connector for the latter was released at the

CeBIT fair 2003. Total integration of the calendaring facility via a MAPI Service Provider is a major pre-requisite for planning appointments with other users, or reserving time-slots – typical groupware tasks.

Linux users do not need Outlook anyway, and can benefit from the full feature set of the SCO Office Mail Server using the Webmail client supplied with the package via <https://computer/horde/imp>.

The Webmail client can manage arbitrary IMAP folders, of course, and can also perform lookups in the LDAP database. Again the Postfix MTA is the central component of the communications solution – but without an administrative front-end, as previously mentioned.

## Conclusion: Pro and Contra

The installation and handling of the server software were quite satisfactory, as was the case for the predecessor product Volution Messaging Server. However, the product has unfortunately inherited some of its predecessors bad habits, such

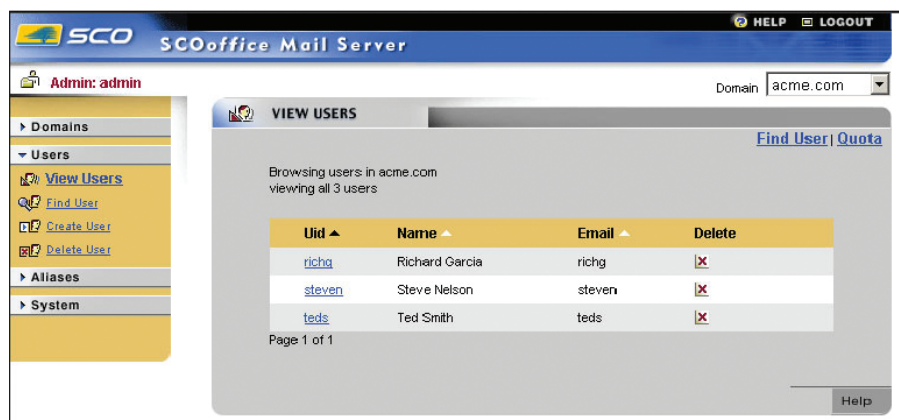


Figure 2: The Web based front-end for administering the SCO Office Mail Server. Sadly any Postfix administration must be done by hand

as the fact that the system administrator will need a lot of skill and knowledge to manually set up mail facilities such as virtual domains, virtual users, forwarding, or relaying with Postfix and Cyrus IMAP. Competitive products such as SuSE's Openexchange Server have an advantage in this respect.

The MAPI service provider, comprising a server component and Outlook connectors for Windows, is the most obvious indication of progress since the predecessor product. This really does allow you to synchronize Outlook data with SCO's IMAP and LDAP servers, and the SCO Office Server is an alternative to Exchange, with some restrictions.

Unfortunately, the groupware functionality of the product is limited, with Exchange compatibility being restricted to mail, IMAP folders, appointment and calendaring data.

When all is said and done, it is hard to reach a unanimous decision about the latest version of this Exchange

replacement, after all what is the use of a neat GUI and easy installation from disc, if the system administrator then later has to perform complex configuration steps manually?

However, SCO is on the right track, and has already overtaken some manufacturers thanks to a working connector. The SCO Office Server is also reasonably priced. ■

The screenshot shows a configuration window with two main sections: 'Email Account' and 'Directory Server Account'. The 'Email Account' section includes fields for Mail Account (Internet Email), Name (Ted Smith), Email Address (teds@acme.com), Server Type (IMAP or POP), Incoming Email (mail.acme.com), Outgoing Mail (mail.acme.com), and Account Name (teds). The 'Directory Server Account' section includes fields for Directory Server Account (LDAP), Server Name (mail.acme.com), Port Number (389), Authenticate (checked 'This server requires me to log on'), Account Name (uid=teds,ou=MSG Users,ou=acme.com,ou=SCOoffice Server,dc=my-domain,dc=com), Password (Use your mail account password), and Search Base (ou=SCOoffice Server,dc=my-domain,dc=com). There are 'Cancel' and 'Help' buttons at the bottom right.

Figure 3: Configuring non-Outlook email clients with SCO Office Mail Server using the tools provided by those clients