MDaemon GroupWare

(An Alternative to Microsoft Exchange Server)

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Abstract

MDaemon GroupWare allows enterprises to use the groupware functions of Microsoft Outlook without the expense of Microsoft Exchange Server. Businesses, charities, schools and individuals use Outlook because of its practical tools for managing time, contacts, documents and email. However, most of Outlook's best features — including information sharing — work fully only when coupled with Microsoft Exchange, the software publisher's email server. For many small to mid-sized organizations, Microsoft Exchange remains too expensive because of its hardware, software and licensing requirements, plus the need for highly trained administration personnel. MDaemon GroupWare addresses this issue by enabling the best features of Outlook through the ease and economy of MDaemon. MDaemon GroupWare is a client-server product with components on both the MDaemon server and the users' personal computers. It enables the sharing of Outlook calendars, contacts, journals, notes and tasks, plus other Outlook "objects". Outlook on MDaemon shares email messages using industry-standard IMAP folders.

GroupWare and Information Sharing

Both scholars and marketing experts research and write long papers on the benefits of groupware. But it only takes a little common sense plus some good life experience to understand the profits of cooperation and collaborative activity.

GroupWare helps people work together

GroupWare promises:

Communication among people.
Centralized contact information.
Easier scheduling for meetings.
Historical records of discussions.
Centralized storage of documents.
A knowledge base.

Because of its collaborative nature, groupware works well for applications such as conflict resolution, idea generation, issue discussion, negotiation, planning, problem solving, analysis and design.
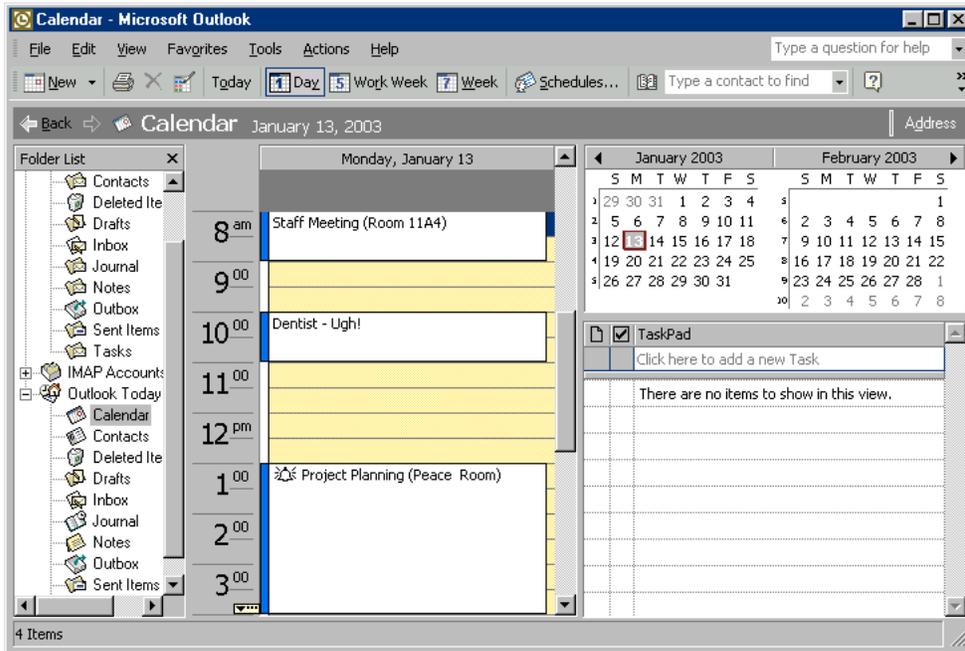
Cost and Quality

GroupWare is typically expensive to purchase, install, maintain and operate. High quality groupware demands thousands of hours to design and develop. It normally requires high performance hardware to run effectively and usually needs specialized professionals for installation and support.

Because of the cost, only large enterprises with deep pockets and large technical staffs can typically afford groupware. Even with the advantages offered by sharing, groupware usually has a cost-to-benefit ratio too high for small and mid-sized businesses. While many software companies offer groupware, Microsoft Outlook with Exchange Server is one of the most successful and expensive.
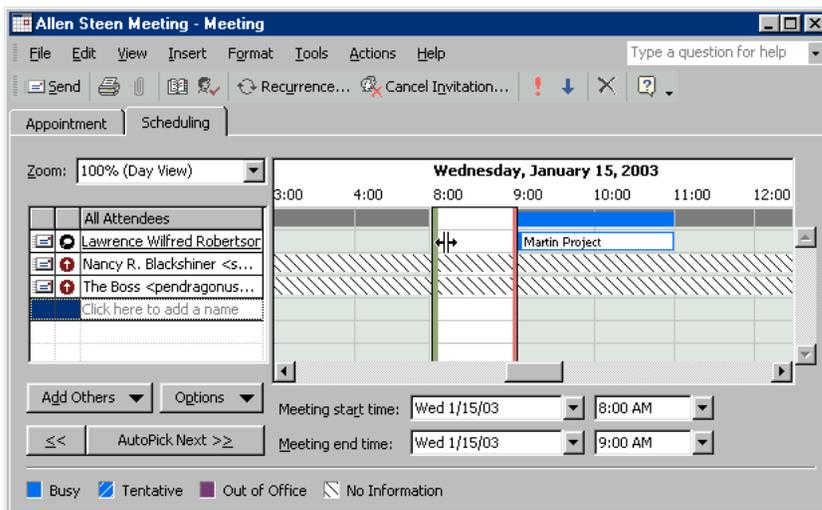
Outlook and Exchange Server Sharing

Outlook is a personal information management tool supplied with Microsoft Office. At its core, Outlook handles email, calendars, contacts and tasks for individual users. It can also keep a journal of documents and actions related to contacts. When coupled with Microsoft Exchange Server, Outlook supports integrated sharing of information among members of one or multiple groups.

Users tend to praise the features of Outlook. Especially popular is its ability to schedule a meeting and notify participants, all in one user operation. In the hands of skilled users, Outlook can help improve the efficiency and quality of communicating, planning and scheduling.

On its downside, one of the most common user complaints against Outlook appears to be its proprietary relationship to Microsoft Exchange Server when it comes to information sharing. Outlook, they say, can reach its full potential only when coupled with Microsoft Exchange Server.

The sharing complaints say Outlook and Exchange Server use proprietary methods for information interchange[1]. This hampers the swapping of calendar, contact and task information with individuals and enterprises using industry standard tools. It makes working together more expensive or more difficult or both. One obvious solution to improving communication among users is switching everyone to the Microsoft Exchange Server.

Some enterprises resist this because of the cost and complexity of licensing and operating Exchange Server. Exchange Server also requires high-performance and expensive hardware to run. Exchange also requires continual and costly updates to the underlying operating system.

While Individuals may like Outlook, many enterprises prefer a more open and easier to administer server than Exchange Server. For many organizations and businesses a standards-based IMAP[2] server is an attractive option.

Because the Outlook client itself is so popular, some third-party companies have implemented "connectors" between Outlook and industry-standard IMAP email servers. These tools intergrate Outlook's calendars, contacts, journals, notes and tasks with the built-in sharing capablities of IMAP.

Outlook is very popular and any competitor to Exchange Server must support Outlook's groupware functions. MDaemon GroupWare is the first complete Windows-based alternative to Exchange Server.

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[1] In fairness to Microsoft, Outlook includes an export function for limited sharing between Outlook clients without using Exchange Server. This type of sharing, however, is complex to use and introduces content synchronization problems.

[2] Some versions of Outlook do have IMAP capabilities. These share only the IMAP email folders. They do not share the calendar, contacts, task and journal.

MDaemon GroupWare Architecture

MDaemon GroupWare enables Microsoft Outlook clients to share their proprietary calendars, contacts, tasks and other Outlook-specific items through MDaemon Server 6.7 or later. It does this by sharing the data through industry-standard IMAP public folders.

The illustration shows a block diagram of how MDaemon GroupWare works.

On the client machine, Outlook stores its information in a PST file, the normal storage format for Microsoft Outlook data.

When using Outlook with MDaemon GroupWare:

The client account on Outlook uses either POP3 or IMAP protocols for email, at the preference of the user. Outlook uses its native technology for email processing.

The MDaemon GroupWare Plugin synchronizes any non-mail content with public IMAP folders on the server. All functionality for processing the non-mail content resides in the GroupWare plugin.
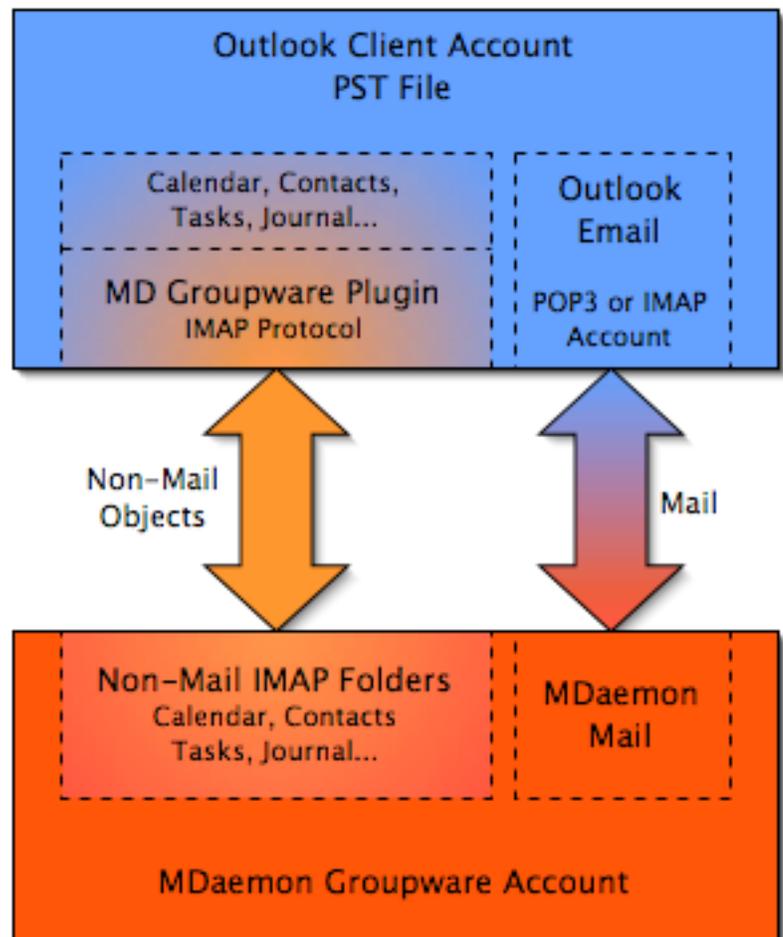
The plugin creates IMAP folders on the server and places the Outlook information into the folders. There is one folder for each type of non-mail content, such as calendar, contacts, tasks, journals and any folder the user creates. MDaemon GroupWare synchronizes the information in the folders with the content of the Outlook PST file, where all information resides.

Each account holder assigns folder sharing permissions to other users or groups of users or both.

In addition, users employing IMAP for their email can assign sharing permission using normal IMAP standards.

Note: GroupWare enables folders sharing between Outlook users, not with the users of WorldClient. ComAgent can synchronize the address books of Outlook and WorldClient.

Installing, Configuring and Using MDaemon GroupWare

Some of these instructions are not universally accurate. They are general guidelines with enough details to explain the concepts. Detailed instructions may vary depending on the version of Outlook.

Server-Side Instructions

Enabler Installation

MDaemon GroupWare Enabler is the server-side installer for MDaemon Pro v6.7 and higher. It is available as a download from http://www.altn.com/download/. This stand-alone installer enables MDaemon v6.7 or higher to run MDaemon GroupWare.

To install the MDaemon GroupWare Enabler:

1. Download the latest version of MDaemon GroupWare Enabler from http://www.altn.com/download/.

   Note: Keep track of the folder where you download the installer.

2. Navigate to the downloaded installer and open it to display the installation wizard.

3. Read the first panel and use the *Next* command button.

   ![MDaemon GroupWare installer Welcome panel. "Welcome To MDaemon GroupWare! This installer will "GroupWare Enable" your existing MDaemon PRO installation. It is strongly recommended that you exit all Windows programs before running this Setup Program. Click Cancel to quit Setup and close any programs you have running. Click Next to continue with the Setup program. WARNING: This program is protected by copyright law and international treaties. Unauthorized reproduction or distribution of this program, or any portion of it, may result in severe civil and criminal penalties, and will be prosecuted to the maximum extent possible under law." with Next and Cancel buttons.]

4. If you agree with the license agreement, click on the *I Agree* command button.

5. Use the *Next* command button to install the software.

6. Activate any check boxes you want for MDaemon GroupWare Enabler, then use the *Finish* command button to exit from the installer. The installer now restarts MDaemon with GroupWare running.

7. To verify the installation, open the administration application window by double-clicking on the MDaemon icon in the Windows system tray.
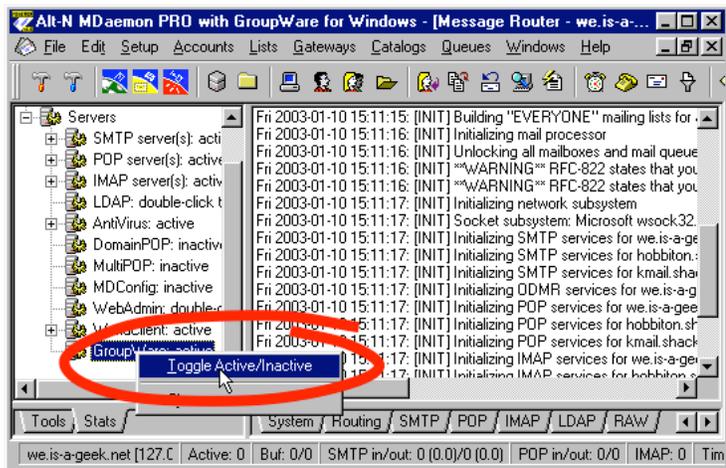

8. Click on the *Stats* tab and scroll to the *GroupWare* entry. Right click on the entry and use the *Toggle Active/Inactive* command. GroupWare should become active.

Note: Activating GroupWare requires the enabling of IMAP folder sharing. MDaemon displays a dialog concerning this when you activate GroupWare if sharing is not already enabled.

Enabler Configuration

Configuration is mostly automatic when you activate GroupWare. There is, however, one panel for enabling GroupWare and configuring user access.
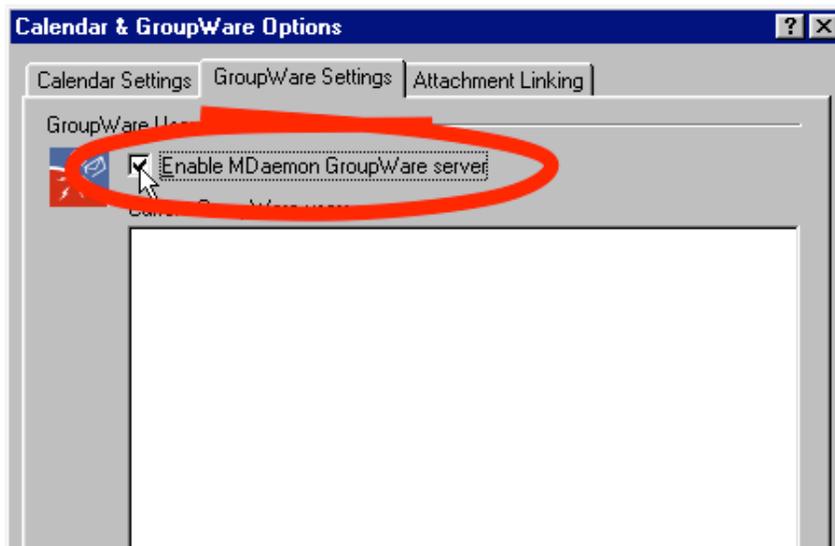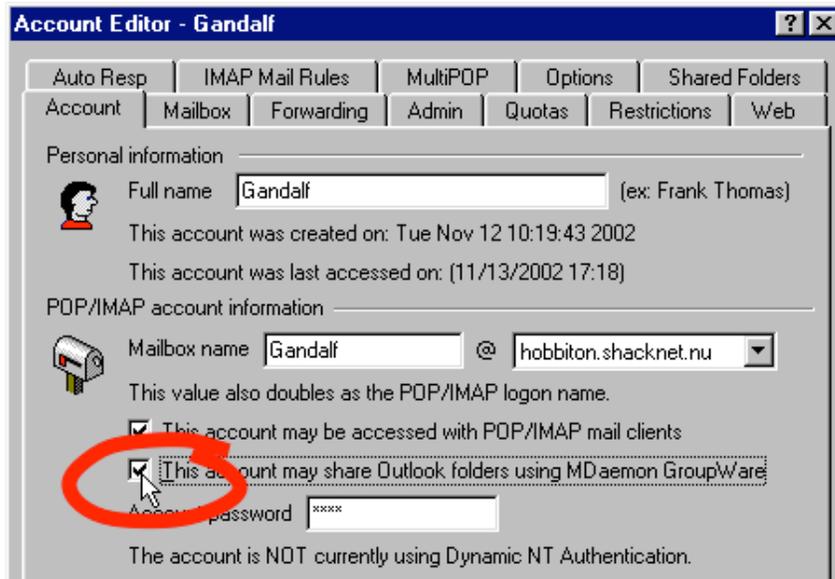

To configure MDaemon GroupWare using the MDaemon server administration application:

1. Use the *Calendar/GroupWare* command from the *Setup* menu. This displays the *Calendar & GroupWare Options* dialog.

2. Click the *GroupWare Settings* tab.

3. Activate the check box for *Enable MDaemon GroupWare Server*.

4. To give a single user access to GroupWare, choose the user from the *New GroupWare User* drop down list and then use the *Add* command button.

5. To give all current users on the server access, use the *Authorize all accounts...* command button.

6. To give access to any user on demand, activate the check box for *Automatically authorize accounts the first time they use GroupWare*.

7. Use the *OK* command button to activate the changes and exit from the dialog.

Add One User

Account information contains a control for enabling or disabling groupware authorization for each account.


To add one user to MDaemon GroupWare on the MDaemon server:

1. Use the *Edit account...* command from the *Accounts* menu.
2. Select an account from the list and use the *OK* command button.
3. Click the *Account* tab if it is not already selected.
4. Activate the check box for *The account may share Outlook folder using MDaemon GroupWare*.
5. Use the *OK* command to save the changes and exit from the dialog.

Add Multiple Users

MDaemon has facilities for selectively adding multiple GroupWare users.
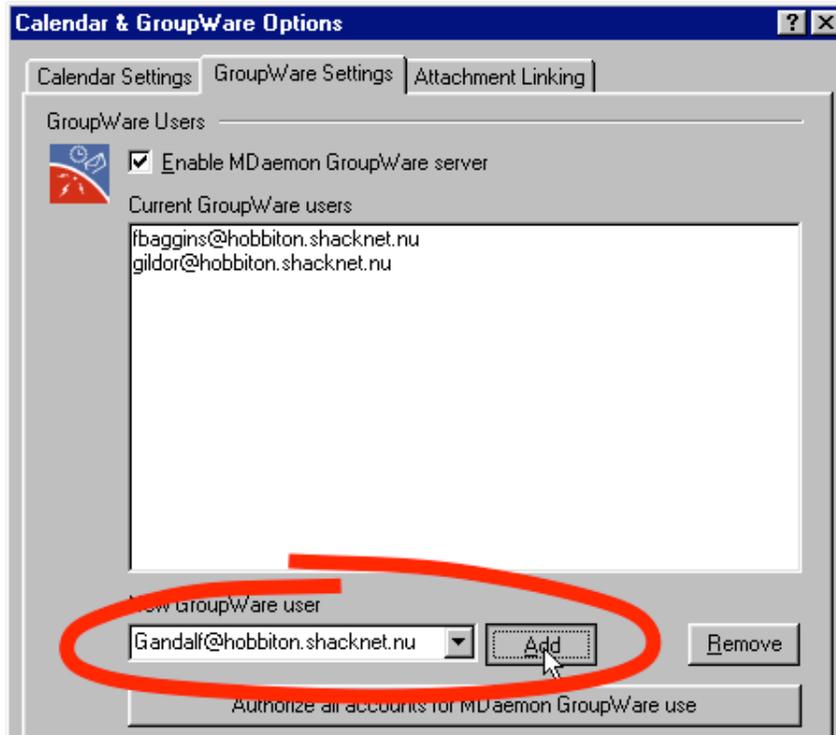
To activate multiple users for MDaemon GroupWare:

1. Use the *Calendar/GroupWare* command from the *Setup* menu. This displays the *Calendar & GroupWare Options* dialog.

2. Click the *GroupWare Settings* tab.

3. Choose a user from the *New GroupWare User* drop down list and then use the *Add* command button. The user account information now appears in the *Current GroupWare Users* list box.

4. Repeat the previous step for each account you want to enable.

5. Use the *OK* command to save the changes and exit from the dialog.

Add Users Automatically

MDaemon can be configured to automatically give GroupWare access to an account.
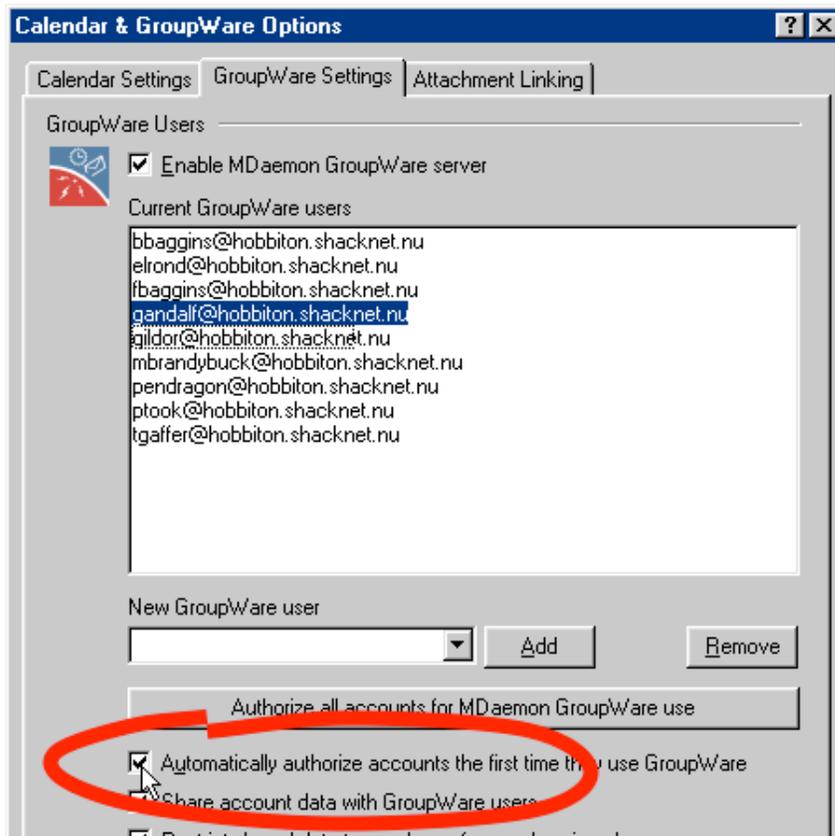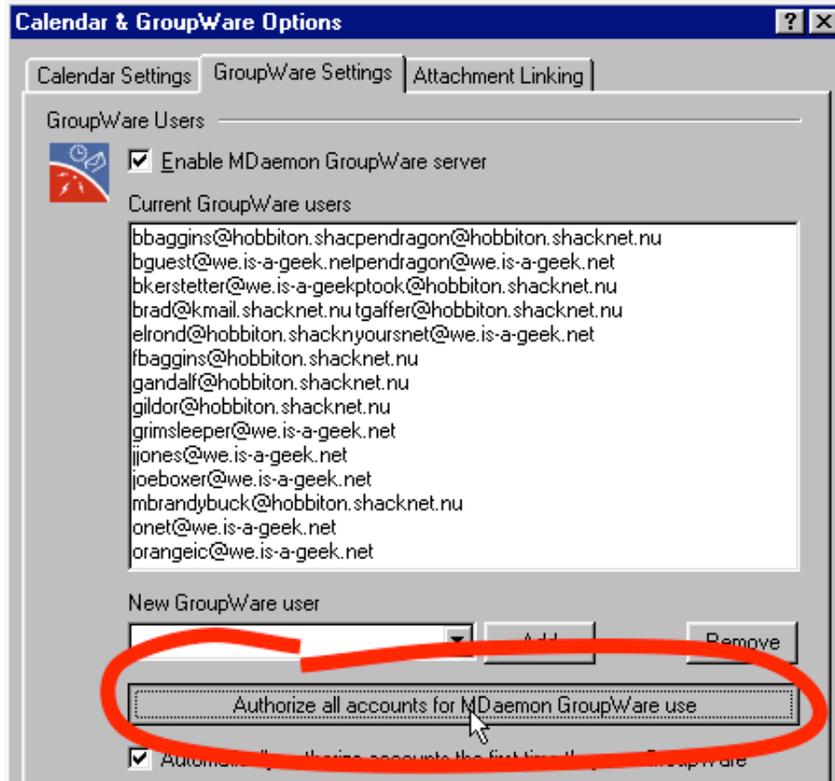

To setup GroupWare to automatically authorize GroupWare access:

1. Use the *Calendar/GroupWare* command from the *Setup* menu. This displays the *Calendar & GroupWare Options* dialog.

2. Click the *GroupWare Settings* tab.

3. To give access to any user on their first use, activate the check box for *Automatically authorize accounts the first time they use GroupWare*.

4. Use the *OK* command to activate the changes and exit from the dialog.

Add All Current Users Now

You can quickly give all current users GroupWare access.

To add all current users to groupware:

1. Use the *Calendar/GroupWare* command from the *Setup* menu. This displays the *Calendar & GroupWare Options* dialog.

2. Click the *GroupWare Settings* tab.

3. Use the *Authorize all accounts for MDaemon GroupWare use* command button. All of the accounts for your server now appear in the *Current GroupWare Users* list box.

4. Use the *OK* command to save the changes and exit from the dialog.

GroupWare Client-Side Instructions

Plugin Installation and Configuration

MDaemon GroupWare Plugin is available as a download from WorldClient, MDaemon's webmail client. This stand-alone installer adds MDaemon GroupWare capabilities to Microsoft Outlook.

Note: If your email account does not have WorldClient access, ask your email administrator for a copy of the MDaemon GroupWare Plugin.

To install the MDaemon GroupWare Plugin:

1. Open *WorldClient* in your web browser, log in, and click on the *Options* link.
2. Click on the *MDaemon GroupWare* link.
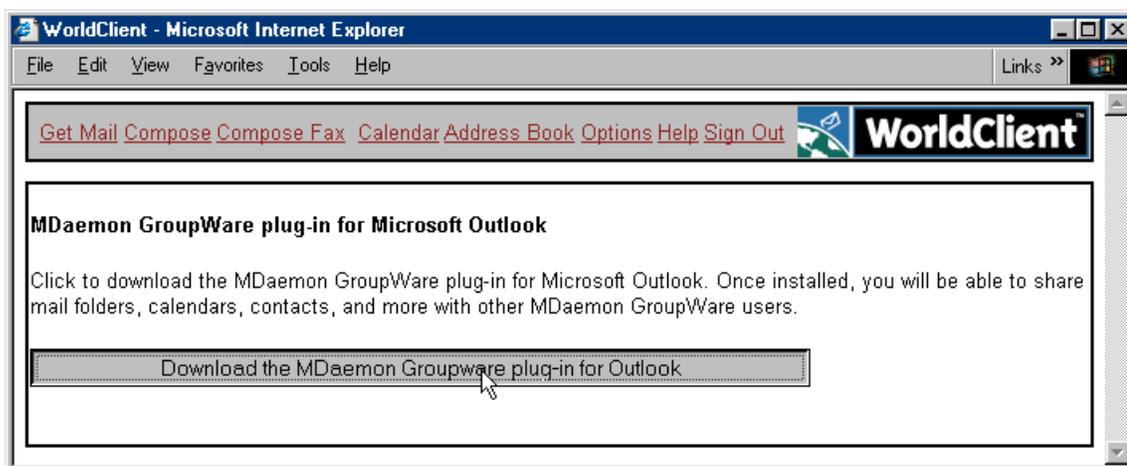
3. Click on the command button to download the latest version of MDaemon GroupWare Plugin.
Note: Keep track of the folder where you download the installer.
4. If Outlook is running, close it.
5. Navigate to the downloaded installer and open it.
6. Read the first panel and use the *Next* command button.
7. If you agree with the license agreement, click on *I Agree*.
8. Use the *Next* command button to install the software.
9. Activate the *Launch Microsoft Outlook* check box then use the *Finish* command button to exit from the installer. The installer starts Outlook and displays the GroupWare installation wizard.
10. Read the instructions and use the *Next* command button.
11. On the dialog enter:

   o the *DNS name* or *IP address* of the MDaemon server.
   o your email account name for the *Login*.
   o your *password*.
   o the *Port* number is 143 by default and works in almost all cases.

12. Use the *Ping Server* command button to test the settings. If the test fails, check with your network or email administrator for help.

13. Use the *Next* command button.

14. Choose whether to create a new PST file or use an existing one. PST files are the normal storage format for Microsoft Outlook data. Here are some general guidelines for choosing, depending on the type of email account:

    o   If this is a new account with no existing mail, then a new PST file is appropriate.
    o   if this is an existing IMAP account with all of the email stored on the server, then a new PST file is okay.
    o   If this is an existing POP account with an existing PST file containing your current email messages, then selecting the PST file for the account may be the best.
    o   If there is an existing Outlook account for either POP or IMAP, plus contact and calendar information and the like, then the existing PST files may be the best.

15. Use the *Next* command button to display the Finish dialog.
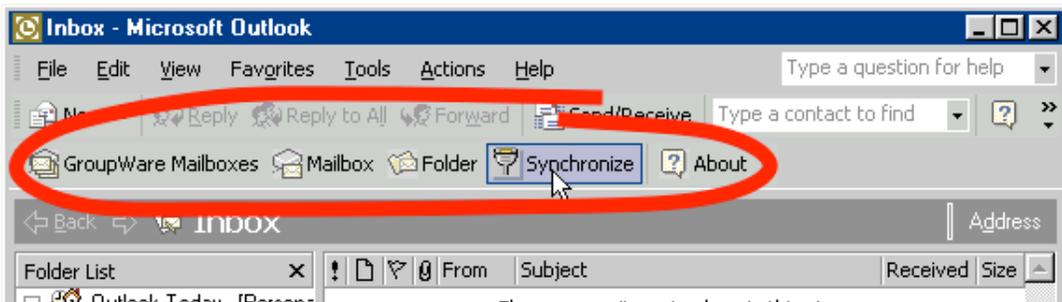

16. Use the *Finish* command button to complete the installation. You should see a GroupWare tool bar near the top of your Outlook window. The toolbar contains commands for:

    o   Configuring mailboxes for MDaemon GroupWare
    o   Setting the IMAP server for GroupWare
    o   Configuring folders
    o   Manually synchronizing folders.

17. To verify the installation, see if you can send and receive mail.

The content of your Outlook folder list depends on whether you are using a POP or IMAP account for your email:

>   For a POP account, your folder list contains a single group of folders listed under *Outlook Today*.

>   For an IMAP account, your folder list has the *Outlook Today* folders, plus a separate set of folders for IMAP.

Folder Creation

Users can create new folders to store and share information through MDaemon GroupWare.
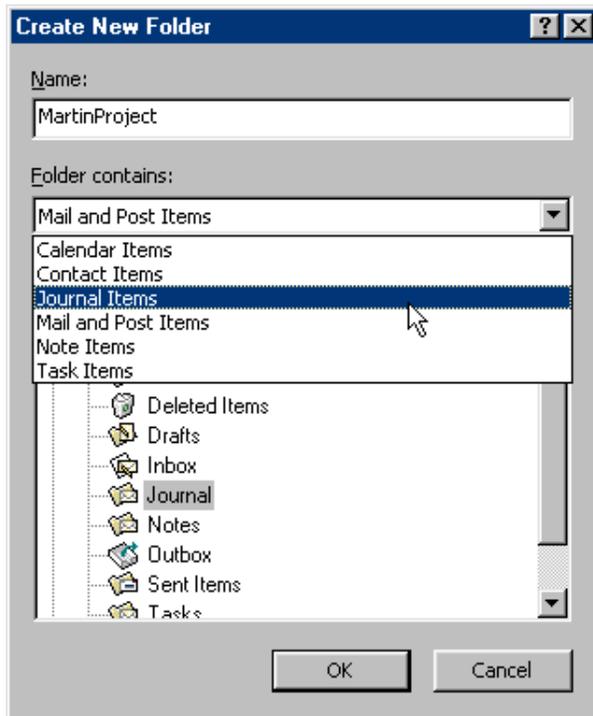

To create a new folder:

1. Use the *New Folder...* command from the Outlook *File* menu. This displays the *Create New Folder* dialog.

2. Type the new folder name in the *Name* text box.

3. Select the type of content from the *Folder contains* drop down list.

4. Choose a parent folder from the *Select where to place the folder* list box. The new folder will be a subfolder of the one you select here.

5. Use the *OK* command button to create the folder. It should appear in the file list where you placed it.

Non-Mail Folder Synchronizing

The user can set a synchronization schedule for each Outlook folder with non-mail content.
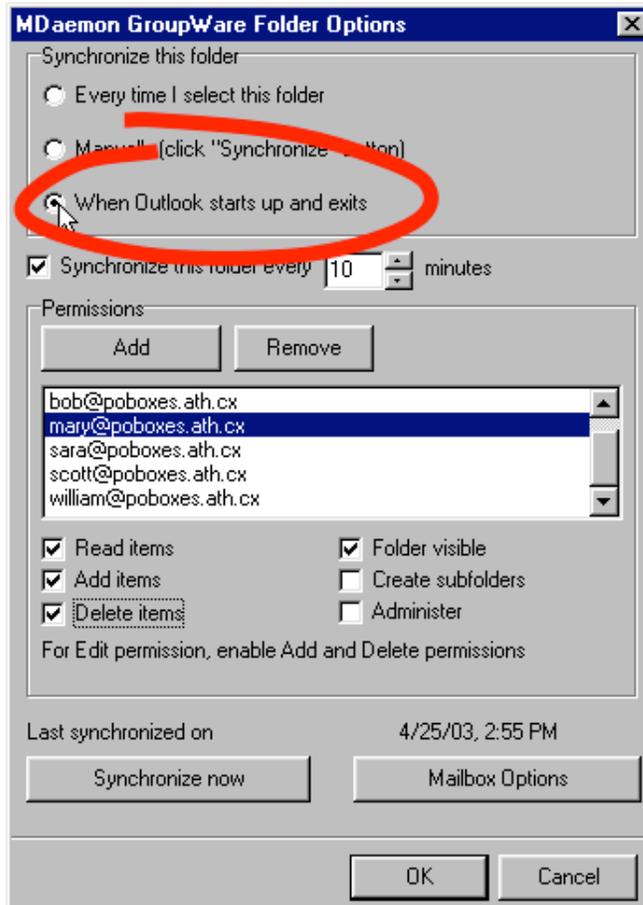

Mail folders are handled through the regular POP and IMAP processes of Outlook and MDaemon, not through GroupWare synchronization.

To set the synchronization schedule for a folder:

1. Select from the Folder List, the folder you want to schedule for synchronization.

2. Use the *Folder* command from the GroupWare toolbar. This displays the *Folder Options* dialog.

3. Choose a synchronization event from the *Synchronize this folder* radio buttons.

4. Optionally, set a timing schedule by activating the *Synchronize this folder every* check box and specifying the number of minutes between synchronizations.

5. Use the *OK* command button to save the settings and exit from the dialog.

Non-Mail Folder Sharing

Users can share any or all of their GroupWare folders with non-mail content. Different users can have different levels of sharing.
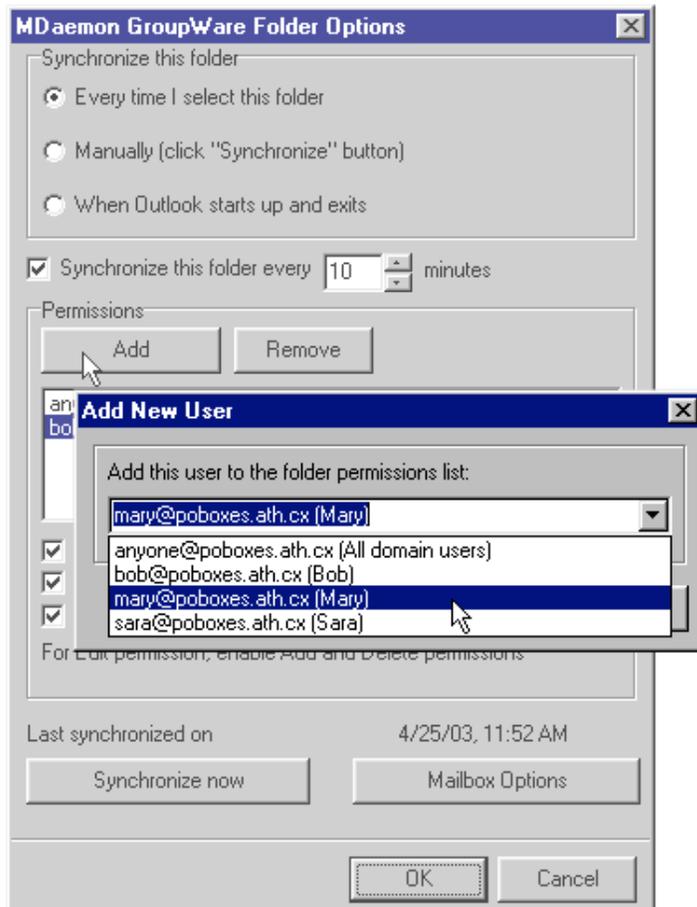
Note: The sharing of mail folders is handled through MDaemon administrator functions.

To share a folder:

1. Select from the *Folder List*, the folder you want to share. To see the *Folder List* use the *Folder List* command from the *View* menu.

2. Use the *Folder* command from the GroupWare toolbar. This displays the *Folder Options* dialog.

3. In the permissions part of the dialog, use the *Add* command button to display a dialog for entering the name of an email account needing access to the selected folder.

4. Enter the account name, such as *aname@whatever.net* and use the *OK* command button. This exits from the dialog and displays the account name in the list box.

5. Select the account name from the list and enable the appropriate sharing check boxes:

> **Read items** — User can open the folder and read its contents.

Add items — User can drag and drop messages into this folder.

Edit items — User can change message status flags for the individual or group status.

Delete items — User can remove messages by hiding or deleting them.

Folder Visible — User can see the folder.

Create Subfolders — User can create folders within this folder.

Administer — User can add, change and delete items in the Access Control list (ACL).

6. Use the *OK* command button to save the settings and exit from the dialog.

Viewing Outlook Calendars with WorldClient

Anyone with read access to any Outlook calendar can view that calendar through WorldClient, MDaemon's webmail application. Through WorldClient you can view the Outlook calendar, but not update it. Updating must come through Outlook.

The illustration shows the Outlook calendar in the background with the WorldClient view of the monthly calendar, plus the daily details, in the foreground.
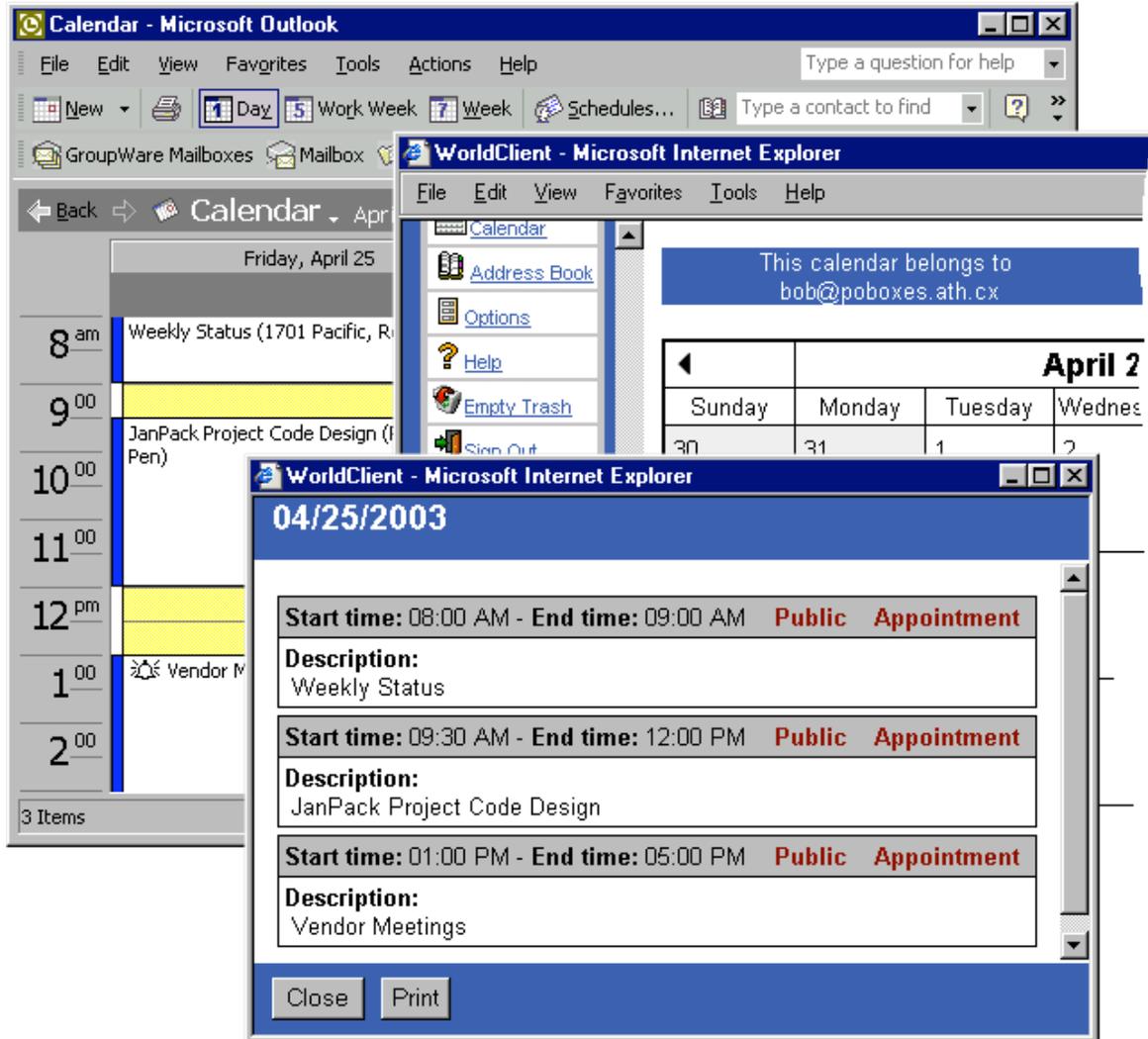
When you have access to view anther person's calendar, a calendar folder for that person appears in your list of WorldClient folders. You view a calendar by selecting the calendar folder.