

Public Folders Concepts and Applications with MDaemon 6.0

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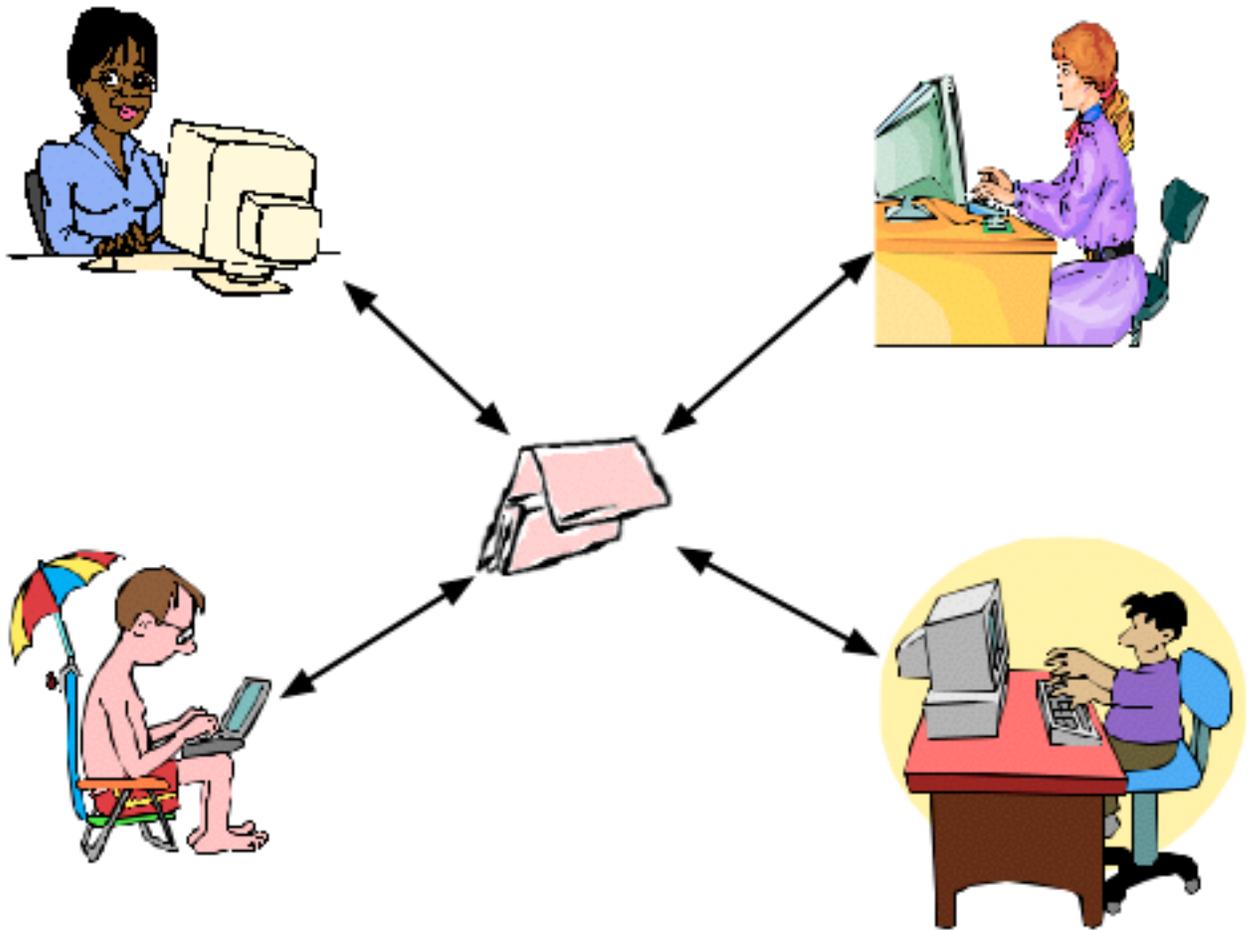
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Abstract

Email public folders promote and ease the centralized sharing of information. Discussion groups, announcements and work group inboxes can all be facilitated by email public folders. Public folders can be open to anyone with an account on the supporting mail server. Access can also be limited to smaller groups. Message status flags for public folders can be unique to each user or shared among all members of a group. The email administrator creates public folders and assigns access privileges. MDAemon supports public folders for email. When coupled with the InsightConnector, public folders can also be used for Outlook calendaring and direct document sharing. Public email is a feature of Internet Message Access Protocol (IMAP) servers.

Public Access Benefits

Public comment on people, places, things and ideas has often been encouraged at least since the Greeks and possibly before. Public discussion of information is an effective means of improvement, working for the common good. In modern times, the mass media contributes to the process of public submission and response. This method of idea exchange has also been adopted by software developers as the public beta tests for their products.



Private and Public Folders

Internet Message Access Protocol (IMAP) mail servers support the deployment of both private and public email folders. The concept of two types of folder access is also used on network file servers.

Private folders typically allow access only by their owners, plus anyone the owner chooses to authorize. On a file server, private folders might serve for personal backups or storage of confidential information. If the network is fast, users can work off their private folders as if they were local drives, physically on their computers. For email, a private folder contains messages for the email account holder. Users can also be given the ability to share their email private folders.

On a file server, public folders facilitate sharing of documents, applications and data. Access can be for everyone with a network login or for a small group of network users. Some users might have read-only access, others may have permission to both read and write. Email public folders also can be open to everyone with an email account or just to a smaller group of users. Public folders allow multiple users to simultaneously access messages and attachments. Access can be read only or read and write.

Public Folder Applications

As with many software features, public folders get applied in ways the designers may have never considered. Email administrators and users are very creative and make full use of public folders. Some applications combine public folders with other features such as content filtering and bad message handling. In part the uses of public folders include:

- Discussion Groups
- Announcements
- Group Inboxes
- Knowledge Base
- Device Driver Distribution
- Email Queue Monitoring
- Undeliverable FAX Monitoring

Discussion Groups & Mailing Lists

Discussion groups, also known as mailing lists, are electronic gatherings where people share information of common interests by using their email client software. Some groups revolve around very specific topics, such as a make, model and year of car. Others are more generic and cover cooking, politics or photography, as examples. Business related topics for an enterprise might cover the development of a single product. Users subscribe to the lists and participate in discussions. The host server can keep a copy of all messages in a public folder. These are read-write folders with every user being able to post mails to the public folder. Every group member can see the posts of every other member.

Announcements

Some mail lists are read-only with the administrator giving write privileges to only a few users. These users post announcements to the public folder. Users cannot respond to the announcements, but, if set up by configuration, can send a personal reply to the message poster.

Group Inboxes

Customer service organizations often use group inboxes to receive email requests. Everyone in the customer service group has read and write access to the collective incoming mailbox. In this manner, anyone in the group can respond to each incoming email.

Knowledge Base

A knowledge base is a collection of information and problem solutions arranged in a hierarchy. It can normally be searched. When using public folders for this type of application, content filters can be set up to route knowledge base topics into a public folder structure. Search capabilities are built-in to most IMAP email clients. You might call this a sophisticated knowledge base on the cheap.

File Distribution

Files, such as device drivers, for example, are attached to introductory messages and sent to public folders for access by users. While such an arrangement could also be setup through a LAN, remote personnel would need LAN access, not just email access, to obtain the files.

Engineering to Operations Communication

Engineering posts its configuration documentation to public folders, similar to a knowledge base. Operations posts its responses with comments, suggestions and corrections to the information in the public folder. As an alternative form of feedback, emails can go directly to engineering.

Email Queue Monitoring

The configuration for unknown and undeliverable messages routes the messages to their respective public folders. This allows the administrator to monitor mail queues without having the mail terminal running. This is especially useful for small businesses where email administration is an employee's secondary responsibility at best.

Undeliverable FAX Monitoring

Routing rules in RelayFAX send undeliverable incoming faxes to a public folder. Several administrators have access to the public folders and can manually route the faxes to the correct user.

Drag and Drop

Users with read and write access to public folders can drag and drop emails between folders.

Message Status Flags for Public Folders

Public folders use the standard IMAP message status flags to communicate several conditions for each message. For any folder, each message can have either one shared set of flags for all users combined or one unique set of flags for each user with access to the public folder.

The flags and their meanings are:

Seen	Message has been read.
Answered	Message has been answered.
Flagged	Message is flagged for urgent/special attention.
Deleted	Message is marked as deleted for later removal.
Draft	Message has not completed composition (marked as a draft).
Recent	Message is recently arrived in this mailbox.

Public Folders in MDAemon

Public folders can serve many purposes for MDAemon users and administrators. When thoughtfully designed, public folders can enhance communications within enterprises and among members of mailing lists. They can also ease the job of professional and amateur email administrators.

When combined with other MDAemon configuration options, public folders become very flexible.

Setting Up and Using Public Folders

There are three steps to setting up and using public folders:

- Enabling public folder creation
- Creating public folders
- Setting up public folder applications

Enabling Public Folder Creation

An email administrator can enable public folders through the **Shared Folders** tab on the **Shared IMAP Folders** dialog.



The **Setup Shared IMAP folders** command displays this dialog. Public folder processing must be enabled before IMAP users can post, view and delete messages through these shared resources. Public folders are disabled by default.

In addition to starting the public folder processing, options on this tab:

- Determine if users with write access can set the Delete flag for messages in a public folder. With this option turned on, deleting a message within a public folder:
 - > Deletes the message from a folder if the folder is using one shared set of message status flags for all users. This is useful in work situations where multiple people read and process messages sent to a common mailbox.
 - > Hides the message from the user deleting the message if the folder is using one unique set of flags for each user with access to the public folder. Other users can still see the “deleted” message until they “delete” it.
- Set a name prefix for public folders. This prefix makes sure the public folders sort together in the user’s email client. For example, if the prefix is --, then a public folder named Documentation appears as **--Documentation** in the user mailbox list.
- Enable the sharing of personal IMAP folders with other IMAP users. This is sometimes helpful to both users and administrators. It allows users to share personal email content with a small group without administrator intervention, once this feature is enabled.

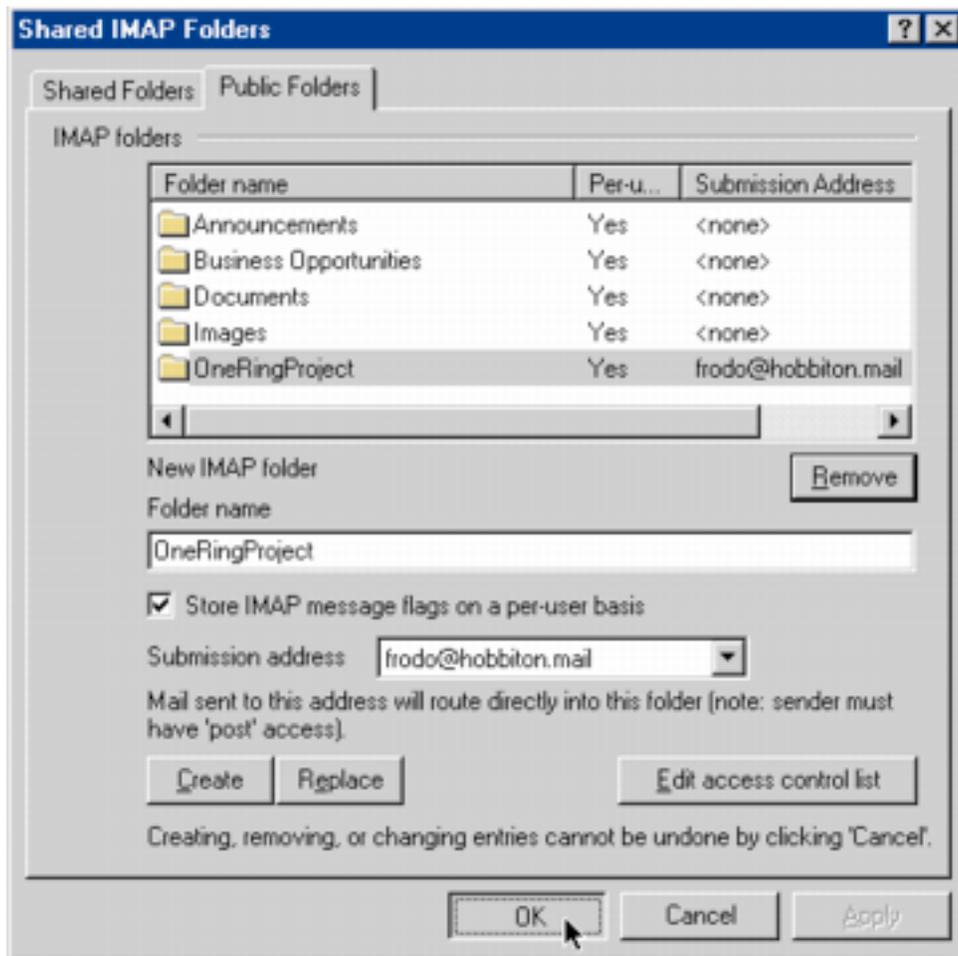
Creating Public Folders

After the ability to share is turned on, the administrator can set up public folders for various uses.

There are two places to set up public folders from within MDAemon:

- **Setup Shared IMAP folders** command.
- Lists commands in the **List** menu.

An administrator can create public folders through the **Public Folders** tab on the **Shared IMAP Folders** dialog.



The **Setup Shared IMAP folders** command displays this dialog. Options on this dialog provide for:

- Naming the folder, except for the prefix.
- Determining if the folder uses one collective set or multiple unique sets of message status flags.
- Setting an incoming email address as a route to the public mailbox. For example, entering any@mail.com for the **Black Bear** public folder, routes all incoming messages to any@mail.com the **Black Bear** folder.
- Creating and editing an access control list for the public folder. The control list determines who can see the public folder and what they can do with messages in the folder. The administrator can define default access for everyone then add exceptions by email address. Access options are:
 - > Lookup – Folder appears in the user’s email client.
 - > Read – User can open the folder and read its contents.
 - > Write – User can change message status flags for the individual or group status.
 - > Insert – User can drag and drop messages into this folder.
 - > Create – User can create sub-folders.

- > Delete – User can remove messages by hiding or deleting them.
- > Set Seen Flag – User can change the status of whether each message has been opened or not.
- > Administer – User can add, change and delete items in the Access Control list (ACL).
- > Post – User can post messages via email.

Setting up a mail list also provides a means for creating an optional public folder. When associated with a list, a public folder becomes the archive for the mailing list messages. The dialog for setting up a public folder for a list is available through either the **List New List** or **List Edit List** commands.

The Public Folder tab on this dialog allows the Administrator to select an existing public folder or create a new one. Creating a new one displays the same interface available through the **Setup Shared IMAP folders** command.

Setting Up Public Folder Applications

Once public folders are set up they can be applied to multiple uses. These outline descriptions show the general process for setting up:

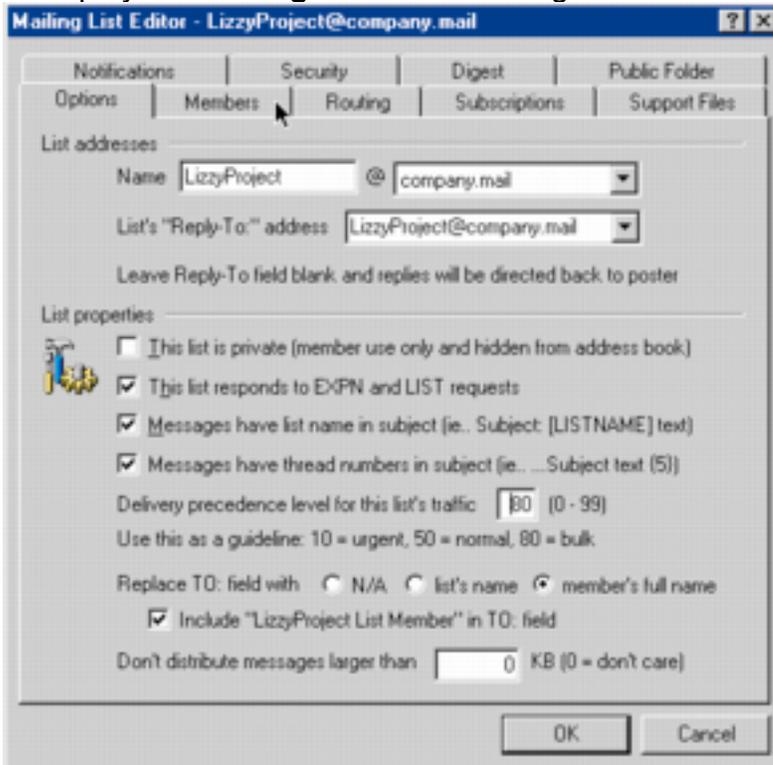
- Groups
- Knowledge bases
- Email queue monitors

The descriptions do not include all of the configuration details that may be necessary for fine tuning the public folder.

Groups

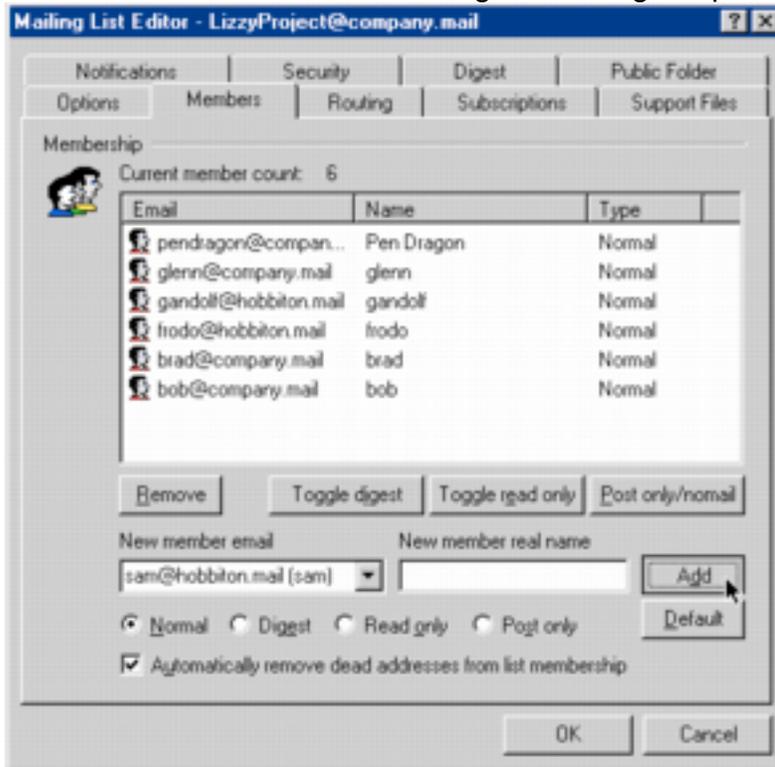
Groups can be used for discussions, announcements and inboxes, plus hundreds of other things not yet conceived.

1. Setting up a group starts by using the **New List** command from the **List** menu to display the **Mailing List Editor** dialog.

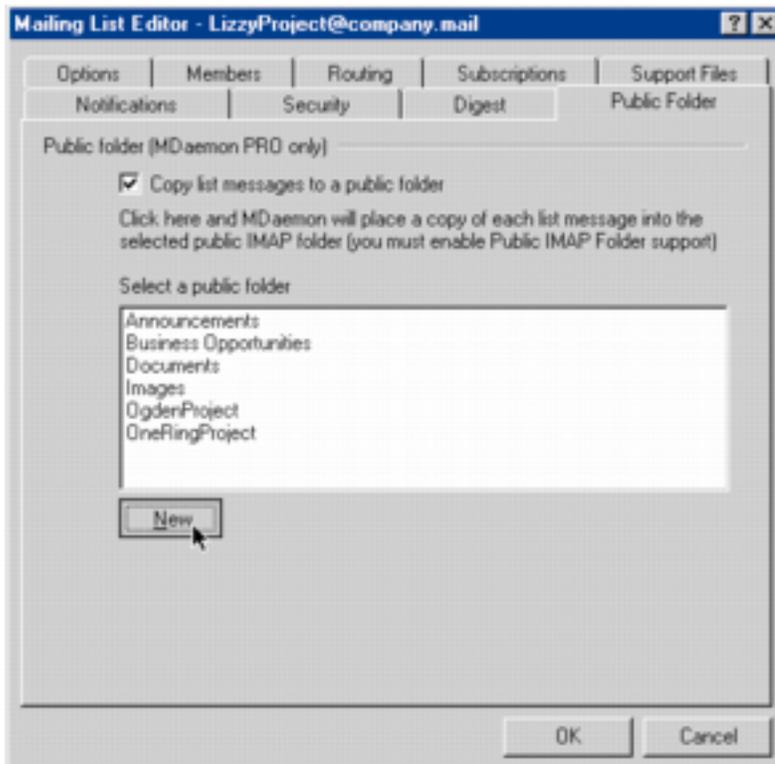


2. Enter a *name* in the **Name** text box and a *reply to* address.

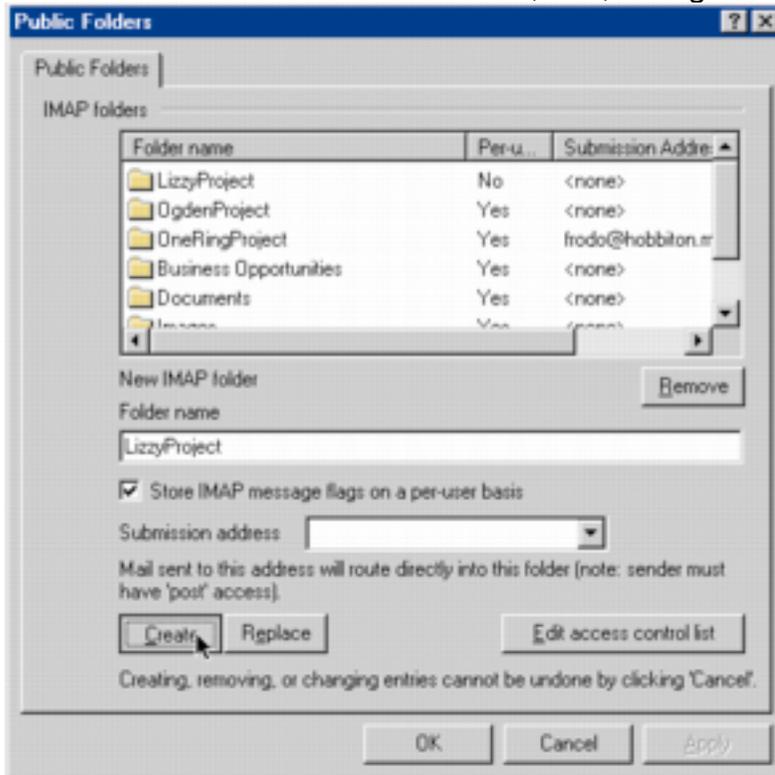
3. Optionally, select the **Members** tab and add *users* to receive mail in their personal mail boxes. Without this, messages go only to the public folder. Discussion groups have members. Announcements and inbox groups do not have members, that is the messages do not go to personal mail boxes.



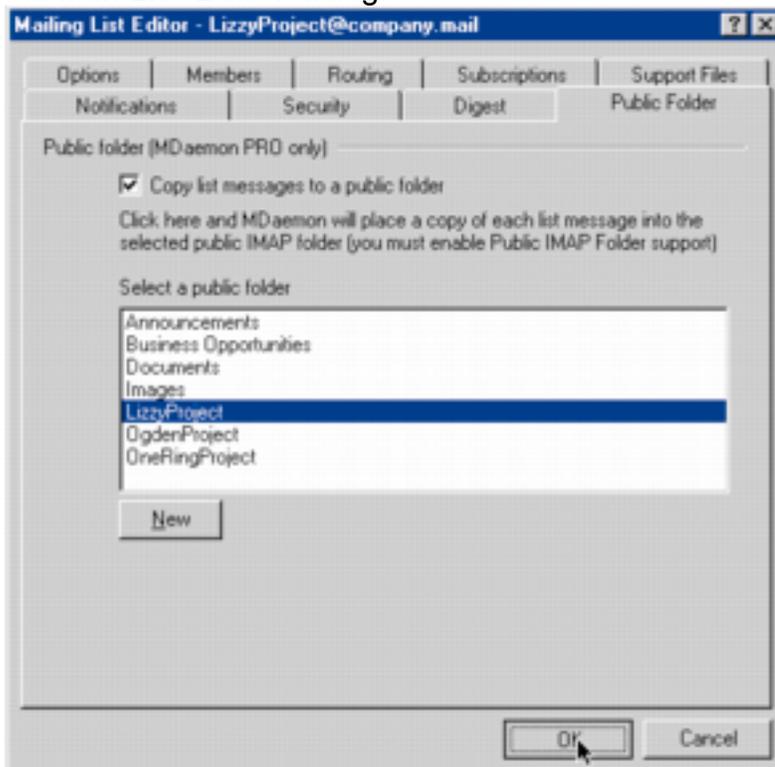
4. Select the **Public Folder** tab and check the **Copy list messages to a public folder** check box.



5. Use the **New** command button to display the **Public Folder** dialog.
6. Enter a *name* for the list. Optionally use the **Edit access control list** command button to limit who can see, add, change and delete messages.



7. Use the **Create** command button, then the **OK** command button to return to the **Mail List Editor** dialog.

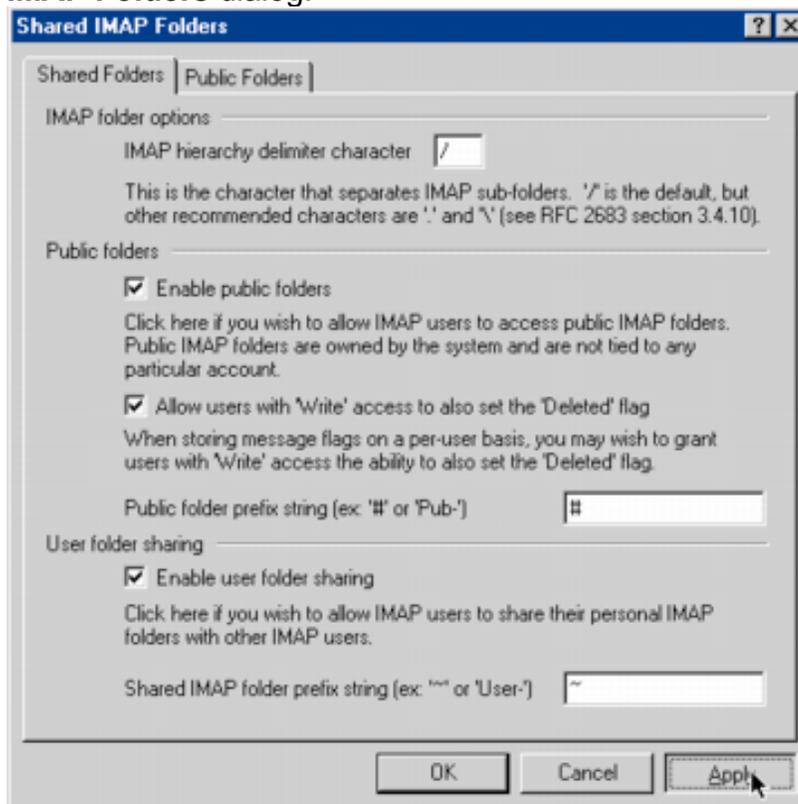


8. Select the *name of the public folder* you just created.
9. Use the **OK** command button to complete the list and exit.

Knowledge Base

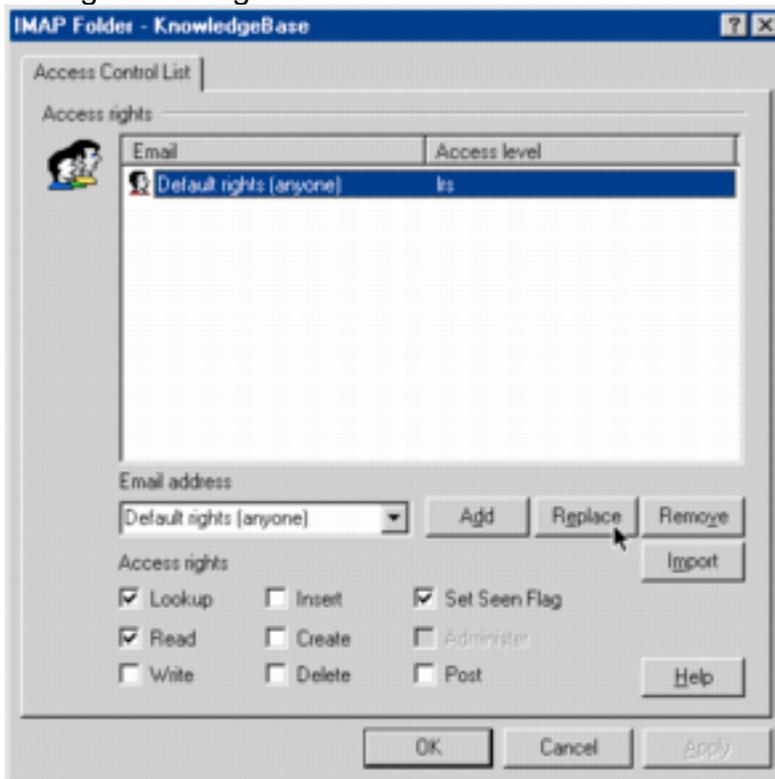
A knowledge base might consist of public folders containing subfolders for customer support and technical support emails. The emails include documentation outlining features, configurations and troubleshooting procedures. Mail can be routed to subfolders via associated email addresses or manually. Users can search the KB using their IMAP email clients.

1. Setting up a knowledge base starts by using the **Setup Shared IMAP folders** command to create a knowledge base public folder. This displays the **Shared IMAP Folders** dialog.



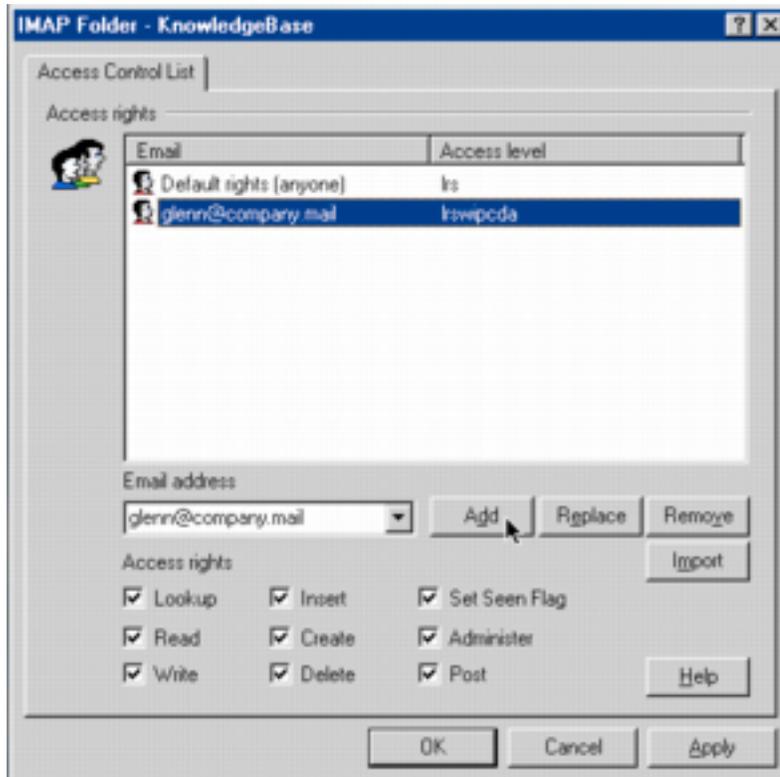
2. Check the **Enable public folders** check box on the **Shared Folders** tab, if it is not already enabled, and select the **Public Folders** tab.
3. Enter **KnowledgeBase** or some similar name in the **Folder name** text box and use the **Create** command button.

4. Select **KnowledgeBase** (or the name you used) from the IMAP folder list and use the **Edit access control list** command button to display a dialog for setting access rights.



5. Select **Default rights (anyone)** from the **Access rights** list and check only **Lookup**, **Read** and **Set Seen Flag** in the **Access rights** check boxes. Use the **Replace** command button to update the default rights.

- Choose from the **Email address** drop down list, the email address of someone who can update the knowledge base. Select *all* of the **Access Rights** check boxes. Use the **Add** command button to place the email address in the **Access rights** list. Repeat this for others with update access, then use the **OK** command button.



Subfolders can be added through the **Setup Shared IMAP folders**¹ command or by users with full rights using an email client. Mail can be routed to the folders manually, by setting up email account² for each folder or by content filters based on the *from* and *subject* email headings, for example.

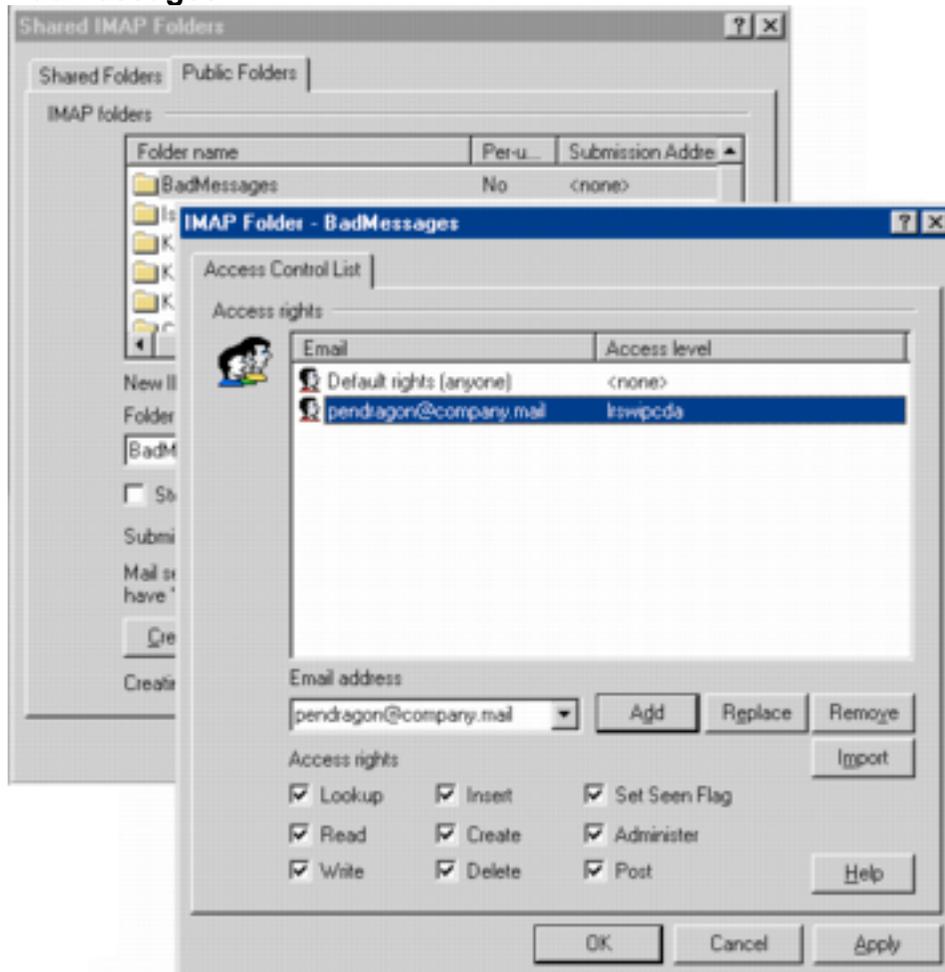
¹ To enter a subfolder, type the name of the public folder followed by the hierarchy delimiter characters specified on the Shared Folders tab followed the subfolder name. For example **KnowledgeBase/Network** creates the subfolder Network in the KnowledgeBase public folder. In the example, the slash character “/” is the hierarchy delimiter.

² Use the Submission address dropdown list to select the submission.

Email Queue Monitoring

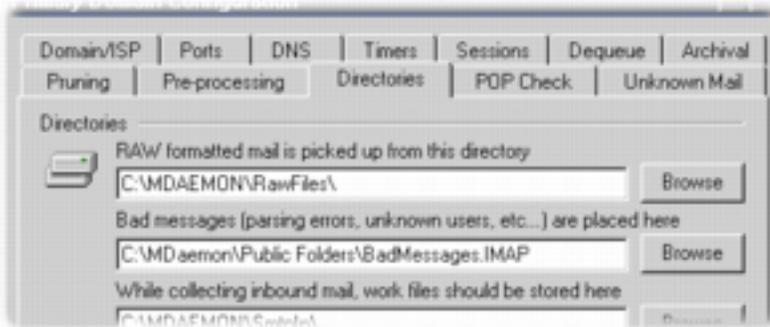
By default MDAemon keeps its queues in subfolders of the \MDaemon folder. For examples bad messages are routed to the \MDaemon\Badmsgs\ folder. These could just as easily be kept in public folders accessible by the system admin. In this way the admin could monitor bad messages, for example, from an email client, rather than from the MDAemon terminal.

1. Setting up a message email queue monitor involves using the **Setup Shared IMAP folders** command to create a public folder, in this example, **BadMessages**.



2. After creating the public folder, set the **Access Control list** to no access rights for **Default rights (anyone)** and all access rights to the users who monitor the queue.

3. Then use the **Directories** tab of the **Setup Primary Domain** command to set the queue directory to the newly created public folder.



4. Authorized users can now monitor the queue using any IMAP email client running on any operating system.

