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Exchange 2007 is the new kid on the block, and it includes cool new features like unified messaging, improved spam filtering, and smart scheduling. But as with any upgrade, there are bound to be a few features that get left behind. Here are a few of the old familiar features in Exchange 2003 that will be sorely missed—at least by me.

1 Transparent support for POP3/POP3S and IMAP4/IMAP4S

POP3 is the most commonly used Internet e-mail protocol. Exchange 2003 fully exposed the POP3 protocol in the Exchange System Manager. All you had to do was enable the POP3 service and open the Exchange System Manager to locate the POP3 server and there you could configure all aspects of the protocol. This included not only the authentication methods but also support for POP3 over TLS. In Exchange 2007, there is no graphical support for POP3 and enabling POP3 over TLS using the command-line interface will quickly drive you to distraction.

IMAP4 is a popular protocol used to access Internet e-mail. Unlike POP3, where the entire message is usually downloaded, IMAP4 typically downloads only the mail headers; message bodies are downloaded when the message is selected. In Exchange 2003, it was simple to go into the Services MMC to enable the IMAP4 protocol and then open the Exchange System Manager to get into the detailed configuration of IMAP4.

In the ESM, you could configure authentication protocol support and certificate configuration for secure IMAP4 over TLS. You didn't have to remember a single command-line interface command. With Exchange 2007, you will quickly find that enabling IMAP4 and IMAP4S is not for the faint of heart, as you'll struggle to make the command shell do your bidding.

2 Transparent support for SMTP

One of the great things about Exchange 2003 was the utter transparency of its SMTP server. If you understood the IIS SMTP service, you understood the Exchange SMTP service. Need more virtual servers to support both SMTP and SMTP over TLS? Need to support authenticated SMTP too? No problem! Just create new virtual SMTP servers. Dozens of SMTP options were available and they were familiar, because you understood the IIS SMTP service.

In Exchange 2007, the SMTP service is hidden behind myriad connectors that are difficult to understand and that don't provide the flexibility and transparency of the SMTP service in Exchange 2003. Perhaps you can use the command shell to perform some of these configuration options, but who wants to make it an avocation to learn a new command-line interface?

3 Transparent view into user mailboxes

In the Exchange 2003 System Manager, you could easily view information about user logons, user mailbox sizes, and number of items in the user mailboxes. You could also get some interesting information about full text indexing status. When you check out the Exchange 2007 Management console, you'll find all this information absent. I've heard that you can access this information by using the command-line interface, but why should we have to do that when it was just a few easy clicks away in Exchange 2003?

4 Outlook Mobile Access

I can't tell you how many times Outlook Mobile Access has saved me. The Exchange ActiveSync client doesn't give you full access to all mail in your mailbox. Typically, you keep only the headers from the last day or two. But there have been many times when I've needed to use my Windows Mobile phone to access e-mail messages that may have been several months old. If I'd had only ActiveSync, I'd be stuck for sure!

Thank goodness for Outlook Mobile Access, which gives you full access to your entire mailbox store, including all subfolders created under the Inbox. Sure, Windows Mobile 6 promises to fix this problem. But we haven't all upgraded to it yet, and many existing mobile devices don't support it. OMA is also widely used by users who don't have Windows Mobile-enabled devices. Those poor souls will be locked out of their Exchange mailboxes with Exchange 2007.

5 A 32-bit version

I like to test software before installing and recommending it. I use VMware to test software. Unfortunately, my computer doesn't have a processor that supports 64-bit guests in a virtual machine. That means I have to use the 32-bit guest. I've found that using the 32-bit guest doesn't give full functionality. My experience has been that the SMTP service doesn't not work correctly and that for "some reason," the Hub Transport and the mail submission service don't work as well. That makes the 32-bit version just about worthless for testing. And what about all those companies that have large sunk costs in 32-bit hardware? Why should they be forced to upgrade perfectly good servers just to run 64-bit?

Someday, the transition to 64-bit computers will be inevitable, but right now there are too many problems getting drivers, and the 64-bit technology is nowhere near ubiquitous. Until it is, we need the option of a fully functional 32-bit edition.

6 Public Folder management

I use Public Folders, you use Public Folders, just about everyone uses Public Folders! In Exchange 2003, it was insanely easy to access your Public Folders from the Exchange System Manager. You could configure limits and permissions with a couple of easy clicks of the mouse. What do you get with the Exchange 2007 Management console? No reference to Public Folders at all. The solution? Keep an Exchange 2003 machine running.

7 Public Folder access for Outlook Web Access

Speaking of Public Folders, since we all use them so much, we'd like to have them accessible from whatever computer we're using. Outlook Web Access (OWA) is the most popular way to access Exchange Server resources from remote locations, and millions of us use OWA when on the road. In Exchange 2003, our Public Folders were right there in the OWA interface, ready for us to connect to them and get the information we need. If you have only Exchange 2007, kiss your Public Folder access from OWA goodbye.

8 Monthly calendar view in Outlook Web Access

Since we're on the subject of Outlook Web Access, how about the way you use the calendar? One of the more popular views in the Outlook Web Access calendar is the Month view. It gives you a birds-eye view of everything that's going on for the next few weeks, and you can drill down on appointments and make notes. But if you're using only Exchange 2007, you can say so long to Month view in OWA.

9 Intuitive certificate management for RPC/HTTP (Outlook Anywhere)

Configuring Outlook RPC/HTTP (now called Outlook Anywhere) using Exchange Server 2003 SP2 and above was simple. Even the certificate deployment issues for RPC/HTTP were a no-brainer, even when publishing from behind an ISA Firewall. Now RPC/HTTP has introduced strange new complexities, especially in the area of certificate deployment.

Exchange 2007 apparently depends on a number of subject alternative names. If you don't have your subject alternative names on your certificate in the correct order, and they don't match the correct common name on the same certificate, you can look forward to hours of troubleshooting Outlook Anywhere Access from Outlook 2007 clients. Oh, give us back the sheer simplicity of Exchange 2003 and RPC/HTTP.

10 Exchange account provisioning with new user accounts

It's time to add a new user to your Active Directory. Why not kill two birds with one stone and create an Exchange mailbox for that user at the same time? No problem with Exchange 2003 using the Exchange extensions to Active Directory Users And Computers. What happens with Exchange 2007? You get to use a separate interface on a different computer to create a mailbox for that user. So much for conservation of labor.

Summary

The new version of Exchange has some interesting enhancements, but unless you're a command-line guru, you're likely to feel that more has been taken away than given. Many of the changes are based on the premise that all administrators will swoon with joy over the opportunity to emulate the UNIX environment by using the PowerShell, but I'm not so sure that's the case. Many of us use Windows precisely because we *like* the graphic interface.

By all means, provide the improved command-line interface for those who want it. But it would be nice if it had been incorporated as an addition to, instead of a replacement for, our beloved GUI.

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Version history

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