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Oct. 01, 2006

From the Oct. 2006 Issue

Microsoft developers have been busy, and the upcoming blitz of new versions of both desktop and server products is the result. I've previously written about the upcoming release of the Office Suite, and slated to support this release of knowledge worker tools is a new version of Exchange. For those readers who may not know, Exchange is the mail server that supports the e-mail capabilities of Outlook.

The new version incorporates many of the technologies recently purchased and enhanced by Microsoft, including the following:

● **Anti-spam** — An integrated, IP-based block-and-allow list based on sender reputation. Lists are automatically updated as new versions become available. The block-and-allow list can be customized by Administrators as needed.
● **Anti-virus** — Forefront Security (FrontBridge) for Exchange uses five anti-virus engines to filter viruses and worms while also providing protection against phishing attacks.
● **Search** — Using the Microsoft standard search technology, content in Exchange Server 2007 mailboxes is fully indexed and searchable using a variety of criteria. Administrators have the ability to search across multiple mailboxes using a single query if compliance or legal requirements require information discovery.

Additionally, new mobile capabilities have been added to the server that allow

Protocol (SMTP) routing, provides anti-spam filtering technologies and support for anti-virus scanning.

Another feature set that should make the new version worth looking at is the promised Unified messaging capabilities. This supports the overall theme of Anywhere Access. Microsoft recently provided its definition of unified communications:

"You are one person, but you end up having multiple identities because of the devices, and that leads to communications islands. Some research that we reviewed indicated that the average organization has 6.4 different types of communications devices and 4.8 different communications applications per user. And this leads to one of the key problems, communication is inconvenient, it's not connected."

Microsoft plans to build unified communications into Exchange Server 2007, along with several other products, to make this long emerging technology more mainstream. In Exchange, Microsoft will combine voicemail and fax into e-mail inboxes to give users a single location to check all messages. The server will also feature speech-based auto attendant capabilities so users can phone their Exchange server to have e-mail and calendar items read to them or have voicemail played.

How will this all work? Megan Kidd, group product manager for Exchange, says there will be only one main requirement beyond Exchange for those capabilities.

"If you have an IP-PBX, it would hook directly to your server. If you have just a PBX, you'll have to buy one of the third-party gateways that is being developed for Exchange 2007," Kidd says.

A tidbit that addresses one of my personal pet peeves is the out-of-office

functionality for a mailbox, and this can be set or unset from a mobile device.

I'm looking forward to continued testing of these promised new features. Whether I really want to trust Microsoft to completely provide security for my e-mail is still debatable, but I'm going to keep an open mind. □

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Technology

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