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## Novell's GroupWise 6 is No. 1 with a bullet

**Web monitoring interface is enhanced and wireless support is included.**

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Network World, 06/04/01

After an extremely smooth and ahead-of-schedule beta-test cycle, Novell has released the next version of its collaboration and groupware software, GroupWise. Version 6 was code-named bulletproof, reflecting Novell's desire to improve reliability and stability of the groupware platform. And Novell managed to add some nice goodies along the way. When it comes to features, GroupWise can go toe-to-toe with Exchange anytime.

### What's new?

Most of the improvements to GroupWise 6 will affect system administrators, who will have to undergo the biggest adjustments. We'll document those here. Click [here](#) for a discussion of the new features for the GroupWise 6 client software.

GroupWise 6 is even more tightly integrated with Novell Directory Services, and is now completely managed from within ConsoleOne. Another big adjustment is that you need to install GroupWise 6 on NetWare 5 or newer. The agents ran extremely well on our NetWare 5.1 servers. We had equally good luck running the agents on Windows NT 4.0 and Windows 2000.

The architecture itself hasn't changed from Version 5.5. The system is still divided into domains, run by Message Transfer Agents (MTA), with Post Offices contained within, each serviced by Post Office Agents (POA.) What has changed is how much better the agents perform.

One addition first appeared for some agents in the Enhancement Pack for GroupWise 5.5. Novell added a Web monitoring interface that would let an administrator connect a browser to a POA or MTA. Through this interface, statistics could be collected and any configuration changes could be recommended. The interface has been expanded to include the Web Access and Internet Agents. If you prefer, there is a stand-alone GroupWise Monitor for Windows NT or 2000 that uses SNMP and/or HTTP to run on Windows 2000.

The new GroupWise 6 agents can run on NetWare 5 or Windows NT and 2000. Under NetWare, they can be tuned to take advantage of Novell's clustering services, to boost your fault tolerances. If running on NetWare 5, the agents can run in a protected address space. If problems are detected, the address space can be restarted without affecting the rest of the server. This is particularly handy for smaller shops that use their servers for file and print services as well as GroupWise.

Another nice feature added to POAs that will save you time is the addition of multithreaded processing. Running a database check previously required stepping through each database one at a time. Now POAs can work on multiple databases simultaneously, dramatically cutting check times. As with all of the agents, you can set the thread levels to your needs. If you've got memory to burn and a good CPU, crank up the number of threads and watch your check times drop. This multithreading capability was also added to the stand-alone version.

MTAs also received some attention. Since MTAs often communicate over WAN links, the ability to better recover from disconnects was added. A file transfer can be resumed in the middle, instead of having to start over, which can really save your bandwidth.

If you frequently move users around, you will be glad to see the process streamlined a bit. Live Move immediately updates address books to show the new address, and transferring a user's database takes less time.

To aid in backing up data, Novell added a Target Service Agent specifically for GroupWise databases. Using the GroupWise Target Service Agent, the databases can be backed up even if they're open. The Target Service Agent also lets you restore individual items back into a database. Any back-up solution that is fully Storage Management System (SMS)-compliant can take advantage of the new Target Service Agent.

Another crown jewel in the new feature set relates to limiting the mailbox sizes. These limits can be imposed at the Post Office level or at the user level. An administrator can quickly see who is using how much disk space. Messages sent to multiple people are tabulated in each recipient's count. This means the sum of the parts will be greater than the whole, so to speak.

## **E-mail in the taxi?**

Finally, GroupWise 6 added a feature set that no other groupware vendor has out of the box. GroupWise Wireless supports WAP-enabled devices that use Handheld Device Markup Language 3.0 or Wireless Markup Language 1.1 microbrowsers. Our Sanyo SCP-4500 phone,

running on the Sprint PCS network, could log on to GroupWise and gain access to most of the items that were available from the desktop. In general, anything that is text can be viewed over a wireless connection. However, attachments, even text attachments, cannot be displayed.

Just as important is the ability to create items. The method of text entry depends on your device. However, you can create mail, tasks, appointments and notes via the GroupWise Wireless server and can use the same address books. It will even pull phone numbers from the address books if you'd rather give someone a call. If you have a large number of phone users, this provides a very easy way for them to check for new messages and send quick replies if needed.

## **Documentation and installation**

GroupWise 6 gets high marks for documentation and installation. All GroupWise documentation is now on a CD-ROM. Documentation comes in five languages: English, Portuguese, German, French and Spanish. GroupWise itself can be installed in any of 21 languages. Aside from a brief "read me" text file, the bulk of the documentation uses PDF files. Also included are planning guides, which detail how to plan for a new system or a step-by-step guide for upgrading. It makes it very easy for you to lay out a timeline catered to your own installation.

Once you're ready, upgrading from older versions to GroupWise 6 is very straightforward. GroupWise 6 can pass messages back and forth between older versions. The primary domain must be upgraded first. Then, other domains and Post Offices can be upgraded on your schedule. As before, newer POAs can communicate with older clients, but not vice versa. This lets you upgrade clients as time permits.

## **Conclusion**

If you are a current GroupWise user, this upgrade will be a good one. We would recommend it for the enhancements to Web Access and the Wireless Server alone. If you've already upgraded to NetWare 5, there's nothing stopping you. And if you're running your agents on Windows NT or 2000, you had nothing to worry about anyway.

Can GroupWise finally chip away at the dominance held by Exchange? The features, cross-platform support and scalability all seem to be positive indicators. Novell has built it, will the users come?