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Keeping end users happy

[Novell's GroupWise 6 is No. 1 with a bullet
How we did it](#)

By Travis Berkley

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Improving the server software is great, but if your end users aren't happy you'll never hear the end of it. Novell listened, and made many improvements to the client side of GroupWise 6.

Wouldn't it be nice if the user could help out? If you're laughing out loud, saying "yeah, I wish," this feature is for you. With quotas enabled, the GroupWise client shows what percentage of your limit you are at. If you get low on space, an indicator will turn red, drawing more attention to the meter. If a user clicks on the meter, it pops up a nice interface that makes it very easy to find which folders have the most mail or how large some of them are. So right after the holidays, everyone can quickly go through their mailbox and find the 30 copies of the latest animated greeting card, and delete them. Space restrictions are updated in real time.

Some other things have changed in the Windows client, but it has an almost identical look and feel to it. A new caching "mode" has been added, and the remote mode has been refined. Both have their trade-offs, but can boost performance if used properly. Remote mode is for laptop users who sometimes completely disconnect from the network, but still want to use GroupWise as if they were sitting in the office.

When you switch to remote mode, it downloads a copy of the address book and retrieves your Post Office box to your local disk. It queues any new items to be delivered until you are connected again. Once you return to your office, you can easily switch the client to "online" mode again. Everything will resynchronize, and you are back working as before.

Caching mode combines the online and remote modes. It also moves the contents of your Post Office box locally, but items that are created are sent immediately. The client still polls for new items as before. However, putting the mailbox on the machine can reduce Post Office Agent (POA) requests by up to 90%. That's a significant performance savings, one that could let you pack many more users on a Post Office. Combine this with the new performance boost in the new POA and you can double, and in some cases quadruple, the size of your Post Offices.

Put on a happy face

The biggest improvements directly visible to the users would be to the Web Access module, which got a complete facelift. Many features previously available only on the desktop were added to Web Access. These include the ability to "read later," and toggle the message back to "unread," delegating items, empty or remove items from the trash, and a more functional address book, including an LDAP interface. The calendar views have received a makeover, adding day, week and month views. The options menu now has access to modify the signature attached to messages, as well as manage the rules. A vacation rule was finally added, replying only once to e-mail as it comes in.

Another new feature lets you define a time zone for the Web Access client. This makes it easy to create and manage appointments as if you were sitting at your desk in New York, even though you may be using Web Access in San Francisco. To use the new version of Web Access, your Post Office must be upgraded to GroupWise 6.

Where's the Mac client?

If you're wondering about native clients for the Macintosh, wonder no more. There aren't any. When Novell says that GroupWise 6 works with Macintosh, they mean through a browser, running the Web Access module. We did make sure that the old 5.2.3 client still works. Unless the Mac starts to suddenly gobble up market share in the corporate sector, don't expect Novell to develop the Mac client any further. To borrow a phrase, "it's dead, Jim."

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