



## **Microsoft Outlook<sup>®</sup> and the Zimbra<sup>™</sup> Collaboration Suite**

The *Zimbra Collaboration Suite* (ZCS) enables the seamless use of Microsoft Outlook as a collaboration client, and provides multiple connectivity options to the ZCS server depending on the preferred Outlook usage model. For simple Outlook use as an email-only client, users can configure Outlook to connect to the ZCS server's IMAP or POP interfaces. For more complete Outlook functionality, the ZCS includes the *Zimbra Collaboration Suite Connector for Outlook* (ZCO), a full MAPI provider that leverages the Microsoft-standard MAPI interface for contacts, calendar, and other functionality not supported by IMAP or POP.

The majority of this paper will focus on the ZCO, which provides the broadest level of Outlook functionality with the ZCS server. In addition to using the widely-deployed MAPI interface (the standard interface used by enterprises and vendors for creating extensions and integrations to Outlook and Exchange<sup>®</sup>), the ZCO includes several advanced design elements that enable productive and cost effective use of Outlook within today's increasingly diverse, mobile, and security-conscious organizations.

### **Seamless Installation and Configuration**

The ZCO is provided as a Microsoft-standard MSI (Windows Installer) package, ensuring efficient integration into Microsoft Windows<sup>®</sup> environments. On the client side, MSI packaging enables the ZCO to leverage standard Windows-based installation and management utilities. On the server side, MSI packaging enables an administrator to optionally deploy the ZCO using Windows Group Policies, a standard method for centrally distributing software within a Windows domain environment. More benefits of Windows Installer packaging can be found at: [http://msdn.microsoft.com/library/default.asp?url=/library/en-us/msi/setup/overview\\_of\\_windows\\_installer.asp](http://msdn.microsoft.com/library/default.asp?url=/library/en-us/msi/setup/overview_of_windows_installer.asp).

In addition, as part of the ZCO installation process, an Outlook profile for the ZCS is automatically created, and set as the Outlook default if another profile was previously the default. Furthermore, the ZCS administrator can optionally pre-configure the server name and port associated with the Zimbra Outlook profile. These capabilities enable an Outlook user to immediately connect to the ZCS server the next time Outlook is launched, requiring only one-time submission of the user's ZCS username and password (subsequent uses of Outlook do not require username/password submission).

### **Offline Mode and Asynchronous Online Synchronization**

The ZCO includes an advanced synchronization architecture that enables maximum performance and productivity for Outlook users in both online and offline environments. Outlook users are never required to specify which "mode" they are in, as the ZCO automatically detects online connections, and when online, performs synchronizations as a background process. As a result, users' interactions with Outlook are identical whether online or offline, and online users are never required to "wait" for a server-side operation or synchronization process to complete.



To elaborate, Outlook users always interact directly with a local Outlook data store, in both offline and online environments. The local Outlook store is synchronized from the ZCS server upon first online use (like other synchronizations, this initial synchronization runs in the background, enabling full Outlook use immediately). By interacting with a local Outlook store, both offline and online users experience the performance advantages of working with local data. In addition, regardless of whether a user is offline or online, all Outlook operations are queued locally for the next online synchronization.

When an Outlook user is detected to be online, a continuous process bidirectionally synchronizes changes between Outlook and the ZCS server, *asynchronously* to the user's direct interaction with Outlook. For example, an Outlook user can request an expensive server-side operation such as sending a large email to many recipients, and then immediately proceed to another Outlook activity as the send operation is queued and asynchronously processed with the next synchronization event. This ensures both continuously updated data and optimal user performance and productivity, while also "preparing" for the user's next offline session as a byproduct of regularly refreshing the local Outlook data store.

### **Native Security and Network Compatibility**

Network communication between Outlook and the ZCS server is inherently secure, and compatible with most existing network configurations. Although the ZCO communicates with Outlook via MAPI, its corresponding communication with the ZCS server is via SOAP/HTTP (port 80) or SOAP/HTTPS (port 443), generally requiring no changes to existing firewall configurations. In addition, the HTTPS option natively encrypts all network traffic (via SSL/TLS) between the Outlook user's machine and the ZCS server, protecting sensitive information that may traverse outside the firewall -- *without* requiring additional security software such as a VPN. The ZCS also provides similar network security options for Outlook users in IMAP or POP mode.

### **Conclusion**

By enabling seamless integration with Microsoft Outlook, the *Zimbra Collaboration Suite* exemplifies its broader theme of efficient compatibility and integration with external messaging/collaboration systems, directory servers, business applications, and other IT infrastructure. Specifically, by providing the capabilities mentioned above, the ZCS enables diverse Outlook communities to function productively, cost effectively, and securely, while the underlying organization can also take advantage of the broader benefits that the *Zimbra Collaboration Suite* provides.