

Introduction to Scalix

(by Jethro Carr)

These are the slides from a presentation I gave at the Wellington Linux User Group on the 19th of July.



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What is Scalix?

Scalix is a messaging environment which provides email, calendar, contacts and mobile phone access.

It's best described as a MS Exchange replacement for Linux, and is gaining popularity for exactly that reason.

Scalix's home page is www.scalix.com



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Web-based client

The AJAX web client is one of the greatest features of Scalix – it provides access to all the data (email, calendar, etc), in an easy-to-use AJAX interface compatible with Firefox, IE and possibly Safari (can't recall).

The web client is designed to provide all the features that the average outlook user would want, such as vacation, filter rules, searching and can even display multiple mailboxes.



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https://... - Scalix Web Access (James JethroDemo1) - Firefox

File Edit View Actions Tools Help

SCALIX™

New Reply Reply All Forward Send/Receive Search Mail Search

From	Subject	Date	Size
Jethro Carr	hi james	Mon, 7/16/2007 9:02pm	1 KB

From: Jethro Carr <jethro.carr@jethrocarr.com>
Date: Mon, 7/16/2007 9:02pm
To: James JethroDemo1 <james.jethrodemo1@...>
Subject: hi james

Attachment(s): signature.asc

wow,
look at this cool Scalix thing!

Linux 4 teh win!

see you at the lug,
--
Jethro Carr
www.jethrocarr.com www.jethrocarr.com/index.php?cms=blog

Upcoming Appointments

July 2007

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4

Done

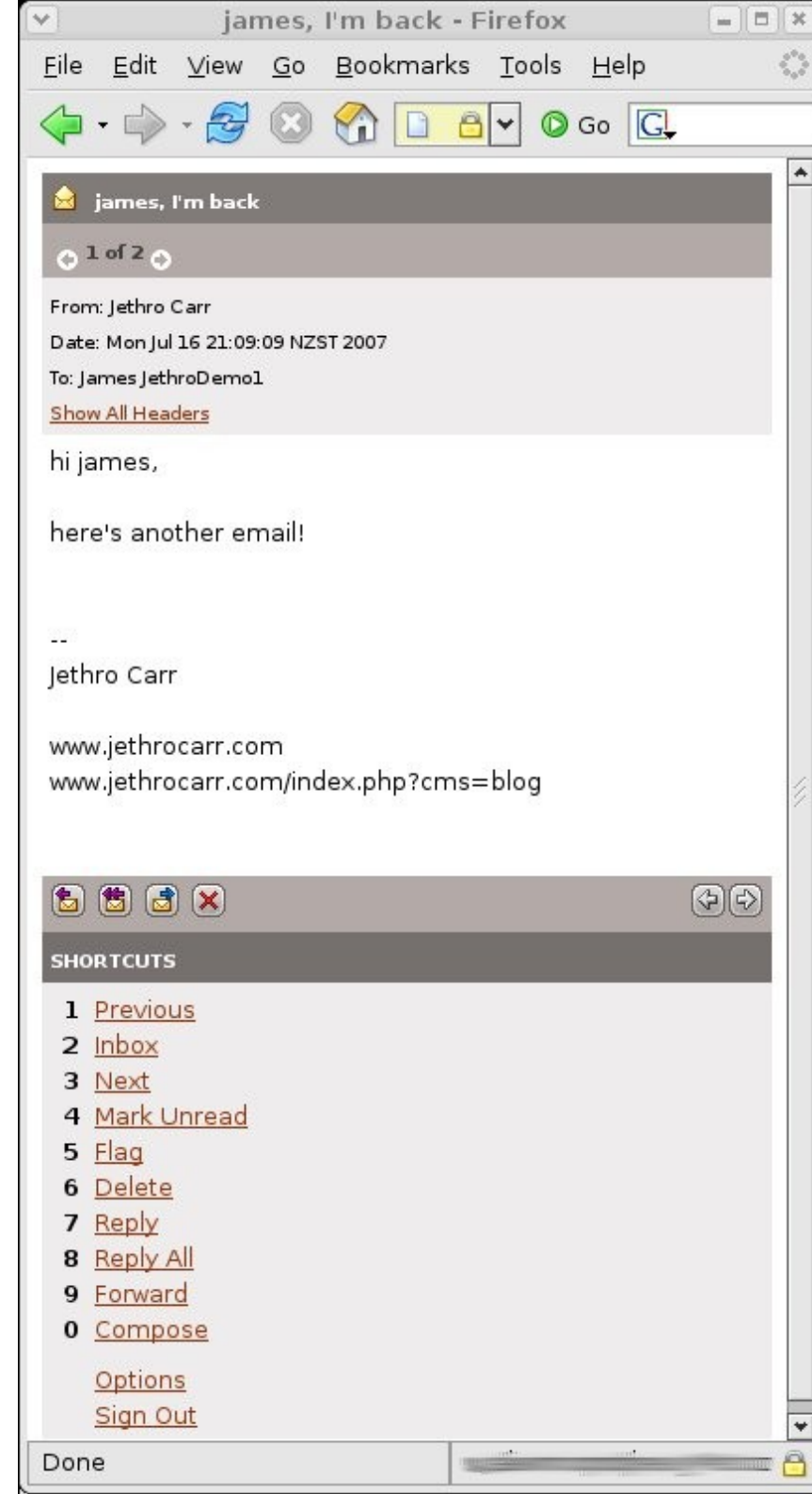
Mobile Phone Webmail

Scalix also has a special webmail interface designed to look good on mobiles or PDAs.

It's a very light-weight client in HTML, which is supported by most of the current phones available.

At this stage it only provides email for a single mailbox, so any additional mailboxes you have access to won't show.

If your device has it's own email client, you could also use that by connecting to Scalix via IMAP or POP3. (SSL support can be enabled for security).





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Outlook Integration

Scalix provides full Outlook integration – this is one of the greatest features, as clients can keep using Outlook with very little noticeable difference.

Scalix also has a feature called SmartCache – this allows outlook to work in offline mode with no size limitations.

Evolution Integration

An Open Source plug-in is available for Evolution, which provides access to all the data types. Offline access is supported.

MacOS Integration

MacOS users don't have the level of integration as Linux or Windows users yet, but there is an OSS project being developed with Scalix to provide this.

Scalix Administration Console (SAC)

To administrate users, and adjust a few settings of the server, you can use the AJAX SAC interface. Unfortunately, it is a bit limited, so some more non-typically setting adjustment needs to be done from the CLI.

The screenshot displays the Scalix Administration Console (SAC) interface. At the top, the header includes the Scalix logo, the text "ADMINISTRATION CONSOLE (version 11.0.3.31)", and the user "sxadmin" with a session ID "sxadmin@s...". A navigation bar contains icons for Users, Groups, Resources, Plugins, Server Info, Settings, and Help. On the right, there are "Refresh" and "Logout" buttons.

The main content area is divided into two sections. On the left, a "Filter users by:" section includes an "Edit Filters" button, a "Type:" dropdown menu set to "All users", and a "Name:" input field. Below this is a list of users: Bob Jones, James JethroDemo1 (highlighted in yellow), and several other users with obscured names. At the bottom left, there are "Create User(s)" and "Delete User(s)" buttons.

The right section shows the configuration for the selected user, "James JethroDemo1". It includes a "Never logged in scalixvm" status. Below the user name are tabs for "General", "Contact Info", "Member of", "Manager of", "Mail", and "Advanced". The "General" tab is active, showing fields for "First Name" (James), "Middle Initial" (empty), "Last Name" (JethroDemo1), and "Suffix" (empty). The "Display Name" field contains "James JethroDemo1".

The "Email Addresses" section contains a note: "If the user is a Scalix mail user, then these are all aliases for the user's mailbox. If the user is an external user, then only one external mail address should be provided." There is an "Add Address" button. Below this, an email address is entered: "James JethroDemo1" <James.JethroDemo1@...>. At the bottom right, there is a "Change Password" button.

At the bottom center, there are "Save Changes" and "Cancel" buttons.



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Scalix Internals – Data Storage

Rather than storing all its mail inside mbox files, Scalix stores all data types inside a database structure.

The reasons for this, is that it allows almost indefinite scalability, whereas large mbox files can really hammer a server's performance.

I've had some pretty big – 8GB, 4000 emails per folder – users imported into Scalix, and the performance is very prompt. Scalix itself has been adopted by huge organisations (users in the 100,000s) and the enterprise version actually supports clustering and server failover.



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Scalix Internals – Search & Indexing

Scalix 11 (current release as of July 2007) introduced a new search indexing system.

Using postgres, Scalix builds a database of indexes, it then uses the indexes to quickly search through thousands of messages, which increases performance and reduces server load.



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Scalix Internals - API

Scalix 11 introduced a set of SOAP and REST APIs, which allow you to write software that interacts with Scalix via HTTP queries.

This means you could integrate software such as your CMS with Scalix – imagine updating the company's news page, by dragging emails into a certain folder for example.

Documentation about the API is available here:

http://www.scalix.com/documents/Scalix_API_Guide_11.0.1.pdf



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Scalix Editions:

There are various editions of Scalix. All of them have unlimited normal users, who are allowed to use IMAP, POP3 and Webmail. But there are only a limited number of premium users in each edition who get full Outlook/Evolution integration

- Community Edition – free as in beer:
Limited to 25 premium users.

- Small Business Edition – commercial - \$995 USD
Comes with 50 premium users. Additional packs can be purchased at \$1495 USD each pack.

- Enterprise Edition - commercial
\$60 USD per user, minimum 60 users.

More information about the editions is on the Scalix website:
<http://www.scalix.com/enterprise/editions/compare.php>



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Scalix – Isn't it OSS?

Yes, Scalix is **partially** OSS. The following parts are OSS:

- Mobile Webmail.
- Scalix Management Console.
- All the messaging internals.
- Installer.

And the following is proprietary:

- AJAX web client.
- MAPI integration with Outlook and Evolution.

You can learn more about what parts are OSS, and download the code here:

<http://www.scalix.com/community/opensource/>



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Migrating to Scalix

You can migrate to Scalix from any existing mail system by copying from the old system to Scalix via IMAP. This works fine if all you have is email, but if you have data like calendar information you're stuck.... or are you?

Scalix includes features which allow it to talk to an exchange server, and work with it, allowing you to gradually migrate the data across.

If you want to migrate data other than email from a non-exchange server, or if the data has been saved locally to user's Outlook clients (eg: ex-pop3 users), you can cheat by exporting all the data into a PST file using outlook. Then install the Scalix Connector for outlook, and import the PST file!

The above method can also be good for small exchange server installs, where you only have a few users (eg >10), rather than spending time making exchange co-existence work.



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Other Features

- Public folders & resource booking
- Allows users to share portions or all of their mailboxes with others.
- Can work with network authentication systems like active directory and Linux PAM.
- Can work with ClamAV and SpamAssassin.
- Will avoid installing it's own version of OSS programs like Apache, Sendmail, etc when the distribution has it's own packages.



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Scalix – the downsides

Scalix isn't perfect – there are some problems:

- Some old archaic commands (inherited from HP Open Mail)
- Has had a few bugs in the past – but is being improved and Scalix 11 is certainly mature enough to use in the enterprise.
- Hasn't been around that long – so hard to see how well developers respond to security issues as well as providing bug fixes for old releases.
- Not fully open source.
- Requires a bit of manual tweaking after being installed.
- Configuration files are nasty – and web-based control panel is quite limited in features.



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Who provides and works with Scalix in NZ?

The Scalix reseller in NZ is Dounsix:

<http://www.dounsix.co.nz/>

Prophecy Networks (my employer) is able to provide a range of Scalix and Linux services:

<http://www.prophecy.net.nz/>

Official Resources:

There is a huge amount of documentation, a wiki and a forum on the Scalix website.

My Resources:

I will be putting a page on my website soon with scripts I've developed for working with Scalix, along with various notes I've collected.