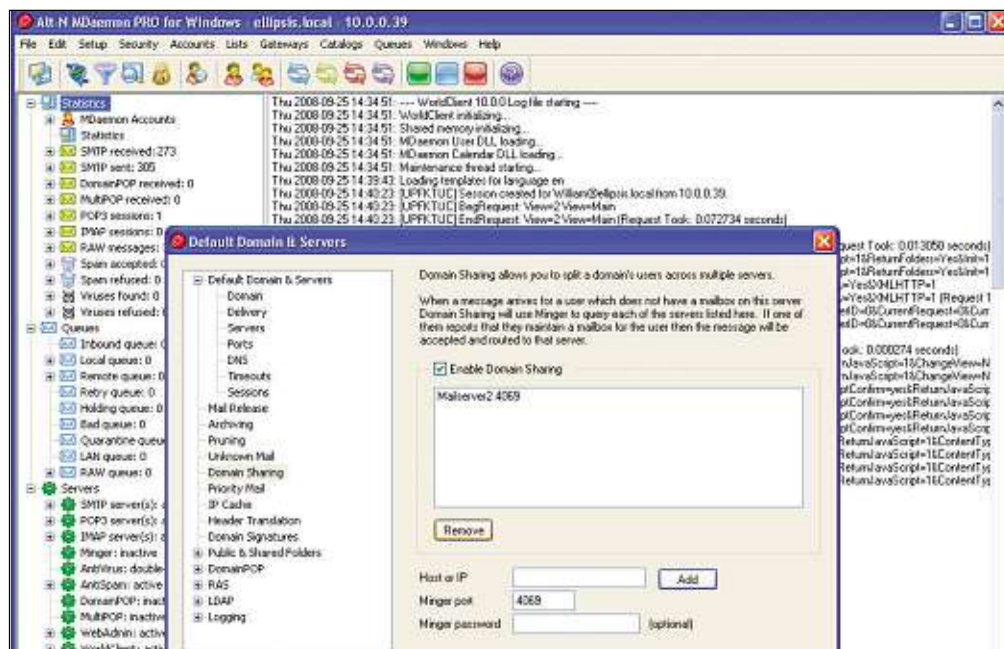


EMAIL SERVER

Alt-N MDAemon Pro 10

A new look for this popular Exchange alternative



A colourful and less cluttered management interface and support for domain sharing are among the enhancements in MDAemon Pro 10

Market-leading alternative to Microsoft's Exchange email server, MDAemon from Alt-N is not only cheaper, but also simpler for small businesses with limited technical resources to manage. It compares well on features, both in terms of message handling and groupware functionality, and, with the release of version 10, it's even easier to use.

You don't need a high-end server to run MDAemon, but the vendors cite Windows XP Pro as their preferred platform. However, to support more than a handful of users, a Windows server with lots of Ram and fast disk storage is worth having, especially if you want to store mailboxes on the server and take advantage of the information-sharing facilities provided.

We've tested it on numerous occasions and always found MDAemon to be a rock-solid message server – particularly well specified when it comes to security, with basic anti-spam, plus a variety of sender-authentication and content-screening tools included.

However, for full protection most companies will need to purchase Securityplus (from £68.68 for six users), which adds anti-virus and more advanced anti-spam and phishing tools to the security arsenal.

Installation takes only a few minutes, during which all you have to supply is the name of your email domain and an administrator name and password. You can also run MDAemon as a background service, starting automatically every time the host system boots.

Given its long history, it's not surprising to discover that most of what's new in MDAemon 10 is behind the scenes. That said, the management interface does get a more colourful look, new icons and revised toolbars, making it far less cluttered and easier to navigate.

Some of the tools have also been renamed and/or relocated, although there are no radical changes and upgraders should have few problems adapting.

A new domain-sharing facility has also been added, enabling a single email domain to be hosted on multiple servers (for example, in distributed branch offices), each handling mail for its own complement of local users.

Just as with Exchange, those users can use Outlook to access their mailboxes, with support for both Pop3 retrieval and server-based Imap4 access protocols. There's also an optional Outlook Connector (from £65.93 for six users), which gives a more seamless, Exchange-like, experience, including access to shared folders, calendars and other groupware options.

Exchange users, of course, can access their mailbox from a browser using Outlook Web Access, and there's a similar option in MDAemon called World Client. This too has been updated in version 10 to enable the display theme and language to be selected when logging on. The most popular Lookout theme also gets a revamp with a new threaded message view, the ability to customise columns, and improvements to both messaging and contacts windows.

A number of browser-specific issues have also been addressed in this release, while MDAemon's instant messaging client, Comagent, has been enhanced with a more modern look and an email notification option.

Finally, there's a new free edition of MDAemon in version 10. Restricted to just five users and lacking many of the more advanced features of the full Pro package, it will, nonetheless, be of interest to smaller companies and home users, so we'll be looking at what it has to offer in more detail in the Hands On Networks section of the magazine.

Alan Stevens

Verdict

Pros Minimal hardware requirements; management interface simplified; domain sharing; enhancements to browser-based World Client

Cons Securityplus add-on needed for anti-virus scanning

Overall Still one of the best Exchange alternatives around and a good small-business buy

Features ★★★★★

Ease of use ★★★★★

Value for money ★★★★★

Overall ★★★★★

Price From £403.51 (£343.41 ex Vat) for six users

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System requirements 2.4GHz Pentium 4 or higher • 1GB memory • 100MB disk space, plus additional space for mail storage (fast hard disk recommended for maximum performance) • Microsoft Windows XP/2000/2003/2008 (32-bit or 64-bit) • Internet Explorer 5.5 or later