

Mailbox Management

In this article I will give you an overview of Exchange 2003 Mailbox Management. We will cover the following topics: Mailbox creation, Recipient Policies, Mailbox Management, and Mailbox Recovery.

You can create an Exchange Mailbox with the Active Directory Users and Computers SnapIn. The process is similar for creating a normal Active Directory User Account with some additional steps.

Attention:

You must install the Exchange System Manager on every system from where you want to administer Exchange Server. Without the installed Exchange System Manager no additional Exchange information will be visible in the Active Directory Users and Computers SnapIn.

Figure 1: User Account creation

Figure 2: Create an Exchange mailbox

If you have multiple Exchange Servers and Mailbox Stores you can select the Server and Mailbox Store on which the mailbox will be created. It is possible to move Mailboxes between different Servers and Mailboxes after Mailbox creation.

Note:

It is not possible to move Mailboxes between different administrative Groups in Exchange Mixed mode – except Exchange 5.5 Mailboxes when Exchange 2003 SP1 is installed and you must use the Exchange Server Site Consolidation tools.

After successful User Account and Mailbox creation, you will notice that the new account has no e-mail address and no Exchange information appears in the dialog box. This is normal. There is a process called Recipient Update Service which is responsible for updating the Exchange information in Active Directory. You have to wait a few minutes or manually push the Recipient Update Service (RUS).

Figure 3: Empty E-Mail addresses

Figure 4: E-Mail addresses after RUS has run

After successful creation of the Exchange Mailbox let's have a look at the Mailbox Store where we have created the Exchange Mailbox.

Start Exchange System Manager and navigate to Mailbox Store.

Note:

If you can't see the administrative and Routing Groups you have to enable the view. Go to the properties of the Exchange Organization (Northwind Traders (Exchange) in this example) and enable the settings to display Routing Groups and Administrative Groups.

Figure 5: There is no Mailbox in Exchange System Manager

But where is the Mailbox. It's a little bit tricky. You can see the Mailbox in ESM after the first successful Mailbox Login with the associated user or when this account has received its first e-mail.

We log onto the System with OWA (Outlook Web Access).

Figure 6: OWA Logon for newly created Mailbox

After the first logon go back to Exchange System Manager and right click Mailboxes and “Run Cleanup Agent”. After the Cleanup Agent has run it displays the Mailbox with information about “Last Logged on By”, “Size (KB)” and many more.

Figure 7: The Mailbox is displayed after the Cleanup Agent has run Recipient Policies

Every Exchange System has a System Policy called "Default Policy" which defines the creation of E-Mail addresses for Mailboxes, Public Folders, Contacts and many more.

Based on the defined e-mail addresses, every affected object gets this E-Mail address. The Default installation creates two default policies:

- A default Policy from type SMTP and
- A default policy from type X400.

It is not possible to deactivate the default X400 address type because it is possible that some old components like custom applications etc. use this address type.

It is possible to create the following proxy addresses:

- Custom
- X.400
- Microsoft Mail
- SMTP
- cc:Mail
- Lotus Notes
- Novell Group Wise

When you create a new address type or modify an existing one every new and existing object gets the new address type or address changes. This can be very time consuming so be patient when you run a address change through your Organization.

Figure 8: Exchange E-Mail Address Policy

The Recipient Update Service (RUS) is responsible for updating existing e-mail addresses and for creating new e-mail addresses. You can specify the Server which is responsible for the RUS and the Update interval.

Figure 9: RUS – Recipient Update Service

The RUS creates a recipient policy for every Windows 2003 Domain which has Exchange 2003 installed. If you have three Domains in your Active Directory Forest, you will see three RUS Configurations.

There is only one RUS per Forest/Exchange Organization called "Enterprise configuration";

The Enterprise Configuration is responsible for updating e-mail addresses for components in the Configuration Naming Context in Active Directory which is forest-wide available.

The Domain Configuration updates e-mail addresses for objects in the Domain Partition in Active Directory.

You have two options for updates: "Update" and "Rebuild". What is the difference between "Update" and "Rebuild";

Update:

RUS generates proxy e-mail addresses for new Accounts. Address Book properties will be updated.

Rebuild:

RUS generates proxy e-mail addresses for new Accounts. Address Book properties will be updated and all Address Book properties will be verified. Note that this can be very time consuming in large and distributed Exchange Organizations. Mailbox Management

As an Exchange Administrator you are responsible for effective Mailbox Management. You can use the Exchange System Manager and Active Directory Users and Computers for Mailbox Management.

The following pictures show the properties of a mailbox activated user Object in the Active Directory Users and Computers SnapIn:

Figure 10: Exchange Features

Figure 11: Exchange General

Figure 12: Exchange Advanced

To move or delete an Exchange Mailbox, to configure Exchange Features or to remove Exchange Attributes, right click the Active Directory User Account in Active Directory Users and Computers and select "Exchange Tasks".

Figure 13: Exchange Tasks

Figure 14: Delete a Exchange Mailbox

To control the Mailbox size and content you can define Mailbox limits in Exchange System Manager.

Figure 15: Mailbox limits at Exchange store

To control the content of Exchange mailboxes by aged items, size of objects and much more, it is possible to create a Mailbox Manager Settings Policy in Exchange System Manager.

Go to Recipients – Recipient Policies and click New - Recipient Policy and choose "Mailbox Manager Settings".

Figure 16: Mailbox Manager Settings

In "General" you must define a "Filter Rule" to which objects this policy should apply. You define on which objects the policy is active and what to do when processing a mailbox.

Be very patient with the processing policy because it can be very frustrating for users when they search for items in their mailboxes that you (the Mailbox Policy) have deleted. It is important to inform your users before you activate this feature.

Figure 17: Filter Rules

Figure 18: Define settingsMinimum Permissions for Mailbox Stores and Public Folder Stores

If you modify the default permissions on mailbox stores and public folder stores in Exchange 2000 Server or in Exchange Server 2003, make sure that you maintain the following minimum permissions:

Administrators group:	Full Control
Authenticated Users group:	Read and Execute, List Folder Contents, and Read
Creator Owner:	None
Server Operators group:	Modify, Read and Execute, List Folder Contents, Read, and Write
System account:	Full ControlMailbox Recovery

What happens when a user deletes some e-mails or you lose a mailbox or more through a hardware failure or a disaster like a fire or water damage?

Exchange 2003 has some nice features to prevent damage from a disaster or to recover Mailbox items and mailboxes. Some of these features are:

- Deleted item Recovery in Outlook
- Mailbox Recovery through Mailbox Recovery Storage Group
- Mailbox Recovery through Keep Deleted Mailbox for XX days
- Mailbox Recovery Center

Deleted item Recovery in Outlook

If you delete an object in Outlook, it is usually moved to the "deleted items" container in Outlook. Be sure that you don't activate the deletion of Objects from the deleted items container when you close Outlook (you can configure this setting in Outlook under "Options").

Note:

It is possible to recover deleted items from other folders and under other circumstances when you patch the registry of your clients and deleted item retention is configured on the Exchange Server. For more information click the following link:

<http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=http://support.microsoft.com:80/support/kb/articles/Q178/6/30.ASP&NoWebContent=1>

Mailbox Recovery through Keep Deleted Mailbox for XX days

When you accidentally delete a Mailbox from Exchange, you can easily recovery the Mailbox when you have the "Keep Deleted Mailboxes for XX days" configured. The default value is 30 (days).

Figure 19: Keep deleted Mailboxes for (days) setting

Go to "Mailboxes" and right click "Run Cleanup Agent". After the process has finished the deleted mailbox will be displayed with a red button. When you right click the Mailbox you can select "Reconnect" or "Purge" from the context menu. You can reconnect the deleted mailbox with the old Active Directory user account or with another account. This feature is nice when an employee leaves the company and you would like to connect the mailbox content to another employee.

When you click "Purge" the Mailbox will be deleted. To recover a purged mailbox you need a Backup on Tape or other location.

Figure 20: reconnect or purge a deleted Mailbox

Mailbox Recovery Center

The Mailbox Recovery Center is the weapon of choice when you accidentally delete a lot of Mailboxes.

You simply add the Mailbox store in which you have deleted the mailboxes to the Mailbox Recovery Center and after the process has finished, you can see the deleted Mailboxes.

Figure 21: Mailbox Recovery Center