

Outlook 2007 and SharePoint Synchronization: How It Really Works

I recently had an excellent discussion with Dominique Parris, a reader of this column, about how Microsoft Office Outlook 2007 synchronizes with SharePoint—which is different from what we're used to when using Outlook 2007 to download email, and from how Outlook 2003 synchronizes with Windows SharePoint Services 2.0. We discovered some very interesting details and insights that I'd like to share with you.

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- when you open Outlook
- when you click on Send/Receive All (or press F9)A synchronization of the current list or folder takes place
- when you click on a list or document library to view it
- when you create, modify, or delete an item in Outlook
- when you enable shared content (e.g., Calendar, Contacts)You'll see the Send/Receive status on the lower right corner of the Outlook window as it synchronizes. If you open the Send/Receive Progress window (Tools, Send/Receive, Send/Receive Settings, Show Progress), you'll see the SharePoint sync displayed on the Tasks tab. It's important to remember that Outlook 2007 doesn't use your established synchronization cycle for downloading SharePoint content. I assume the basic logic for this sync strategy is that synchronization takes place only when you first log on and when you access a folder; if you don't access something, no sync is triggered. This strategy makes sense because if you've integrated many SharePoint lists from different SharePoint sites, synchronizing all of them every Send/Receive cycle could cause network congestion and would also reduce SharePoint's performance. But it can be a little irritating because the process is different from what you expect. As Dominique put it, "The current behavior does seem logical. Why change anything if nothing's been changed?"