

Zarafa extended

with real-time LDAP coupling

Zarafa, the Outlook sharing solution was successfully in various countries including Germany and Belgium. The company from Delft, The Netherlands has now extended their solution with an LDAP coupling. We investigated how it has been implemented and whether it is flexible or not.

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Zarafa integrates with a Linux MTA and provides Outlook sharing capabilities with an SQL storage engine. At the front-end, the user can use either Outlook or the Zarafa WebAccess, a web-based interface with the 'look and feel' of Outlook. Zarafa supports all the relevant features of an Exchange server like shared calendars, e-mail folders and contacts. From Zarafa version 4.20, server-based rules, quota and alternative clients (via IMAP and POP3) are supported. Laptop users can use Zarafa LiveSync for offline usage or connect through a HTTPS connection over the internet. Zarafa can be installed easily with RPM or DEB based packages.

Integration

To use workgroup solutions like zarafa in large environments, user management must usually be integrated into existing structures. Therefore, the use of LDAP user management is crucial for any workgroup solution. For Zarafa, the question is not as much as whether LDAP is supported, but more how the support has been integrated.

An application should be integrated as transparently as possible with existing OpenLDAP or other LDAP servers like Active Directory. In practice this means that existing LDAP attributes should be usable and securitywise this means that support for TLS (LDAPS) is a must-have.

Implementation

The LDAP support in Zarafa is very flexible. You can specify which attributes should be used and Zarafa automatically detects any additions or deletions to the user list in the LDAP directory. After a change has been detected, Zarafa performs any necessary actions needed to add or remove the user from the internal database. Every user receives a unique ID within the Zarafa system which is used for security, amongst others. Creation of the standard folders for a user (Inbox, Outbox, Calendar, etc), a set of scripts is used. These scripts are automatically started when a user is added or deleted and an administrator can add to these scripts if needed. With this structure, all the users from an LDAP database can be imported into the Zarafa system in one fell swoop and all of these users directly have access to their Outlook folders.

Synchronisation of users happens on-demand; the synchroniser starts automatically when a list of users is requested. The Zarafa server compares the list of users in the LDAP server with the list of current Zarafa users. This comparison is done based on a unique attribute, like the user ID (uid) in OpenLDAP. Zarafa uses this attribute to recognise users for synchronisation. This attribute can be specified in the configuration file as follows:

```
ldap_host = localhost
ldap_port = 389
ldap_protocol = ldap
ldap_bind_user = cn=admin,
dc=zarafa,dc=com
ldap_bind_passwd = password

ldap_user_search_base = ou=users,
dc=zarafa,dc=com

ldap_fullname_attribute = cn
ldap_loginname_attribute = uid
ldap_user_unique_attribute = uid
ldap_password_attribute =
userPassword
```

For integration with Microsoft Active Directory (AD) Server, this file must naturally be modified. Zarafa provides some example configurations and also a plugin for the AD server. With the plugin, Zarafa attributes like quota and e-mail addresses can easily be administered from the AD interface. A Linux-based MTA can also use the e-mail addresses from the AD to deliver e-mail.

More info: www.zarafa.com/ldap

Success

Just a few years ago, Zarafa primarily sold solutions to SME companies, but now larger organisations like the Dutch tennis association (www.knltb.nl), and many health services are migrating to Zarafa's solutions. It is interesting to see that a Dutch software company is active in Germany, Belgium, the UK and Italy. The fact that Zarafa is also expanding in Germany is illustrated by the fact that even German Linux pioneers Neuberger and Hughes (www.n-h.com) are part of the Zarafa effort from 15 September. In practice this means that Zarafa will be introduced to thousands of N-H customers. RedHat also supports this development and will be presenting Zarafa in seminars surrounding the release of RedHat 5.