

Open-source Z-push technology

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Mobile data synchronization is becoming increasingly important for many people, and various standards have arisen to perform this two-way copying 'over-the-air'. The most important platforms that can do wireless synchronisation are ActiveSync that is used to communicate with Exchange Server and Research-in-Motion's BlackBerry Enterprise Server (BES). Both solutions require proprietary server-side software from the vendor, therefore limiting the use of PIMs (personal information managers) to either wired synchronization or irritating 3rd-party synchronizers requiring the installation of client software on the PDA.

This is where Open source Z-Push comes in; it is an implementation of Microsoft's ActiveSync protocol which is used 'over-the-air' for multi platform active sync devices, including Windows Mobile and active sync used on Ericsson and Nokia phones. Open source Z-Push enables any PHP-based groupware package to become fully syncable with any ActiveSync-compliant device.

Being an opensource project under the GPL, it allows developers to add their own backend so that Z-Push can communicate with their groupware solution.

Currently, Z-Push is available with only two backends, one for maildir-like e-mail synchronisation, and one for the commercial Zarafa package which is sold by allowing full synchronization of E-mail, Calendar and Contacts. We expect that other backends arise in the near future as the opensource community gets to grips with the new possibilities.

Z-push is an implementation of the ActiveSync protocol, which is used 'over-the-air' for multi platform ActiveSync devices, including Windows Mobile, Ericsson and Nokia phones. With Z-push any groupware can be connected and synced with these devices.

The Z-Push protocol is HTTP based, and uses WBXML (WAP Binary XML) as a communication layer, which is used for bi-directional communication between the PDA/cellular phone and the Server.

To enable opensource mobile compatibility, Zarafa has created a breakthrough in Linux mailserver interoperability; Under the name Z-Push, Zarafa has released an Activesync-compatible server under the open source GPL license. Read here more about this release or for technically interested readers, see z-push.sourceforge.net