



Open-Xchange Outlook OXtender

Functionality

v1.00

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1. Introduction

This document gives a brief overview of the functionality of Open-Xchange Outlook OXtender.

It describes the basic functions and shows the differences between Outlook with MS Exchange and Open-Xchange Server.

2. Architecture and Functionality

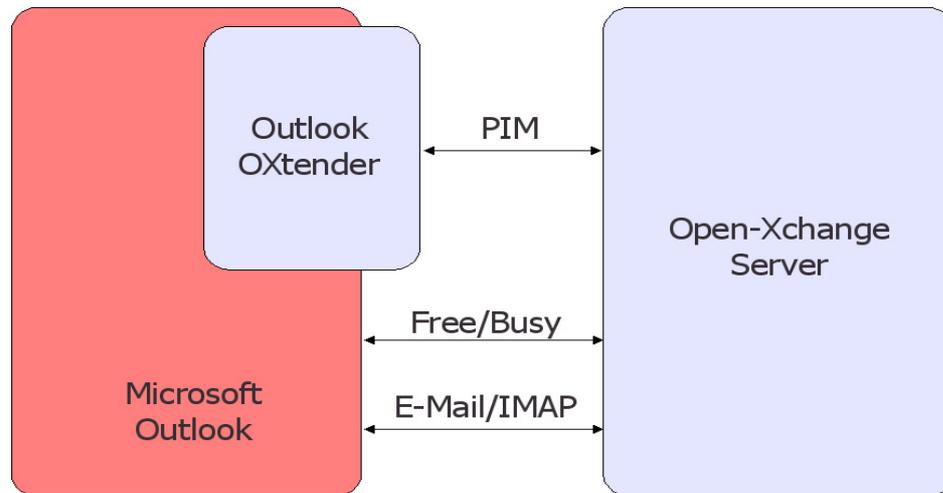
Outlook OXtender is a program (library) that is embedded in Outlook via the plugin interface (Exchange Client Extensions, Extended MAPI). It does not replace Outlook interface functions, but the transport mechanism and the local data storage. The Outlook interface remains the same except for the addition of OXtender utilities in the dropdown Tools menu. The Outlook OXtender captures events from the user through the mentioned MAPI plugin interface and processes the given data.

Data are exchanged between Outlook OXtender and Open-Xchange Server by using the WebDAV/XML interface. The data are locally stored on the client machine as .PST file. That means all data are automatically available in off-line mode. Local cache is synchronized with the Open-Xchange server when the OXtender is connected to the network.

Only Open-Xchange functions that are Outlook native implementations will be available in Outlook, i.e., folders and Personal Information Manager (PIM) functions like calendar, contacts, and tasks. Additionally, there are some new Open-Xchange functions which enable the user to configure server based filter rules for email and vacation note (XML-RPC).

Installation of Outlook OXtender does not fix any Outlook bugs.

The OXtender synchronizes calendar, contacts, tasks, and folders. Email is synchronized using the native Outlook SMTP/IMAP/POP3 account feature. Equally, the free/busy mechanism uses the Outlook native feature. The Open-Xchange Server offers the respective server interface to the free/busy functionality in native Outlook.



2.1. Functions/Modules

Following functions will be supported by Outlook OXTender:

PIM-Funktionalität:

- Calendar
- Contacts
- Tasks

Folder management:

- Permissions
- Shared Folder
- Public Folder

Open-Xchange XML-RPC:

- Personal settings (user profile)
- IMAP mail filter
- Change server password
- Vacation mail
- SPAM configuration

2.2. Versus Outlook with MS Exchange

Due to the architecture Outlook with an Open-Xchange Server partly differs from Outlook with an MS Exchange Server.

Open-Xchange Server also embeds additional OX Public, Shared, and System Folders in the Outlook Folder view. These additional folders can be used to seamlessly access information stored on the server, for example shared contact lists.

2.2.1. Separating email/PIM

The biggest difference between Outlook with MS Exchange and Outlook with OXtender lies in the fact that the OXtender exclusively synchronizes data for the mentioned PIM modules. For email access the Outlook native IMAP/POP/SMTP implementation will be used.

Using the open IMAP/POP3/SMTP interface standard results in some cosmetic changes in the way Outlook organizes and displays information. All email are not automatically stored in a single Inbox. Email stores can be maintained separately or combined using the Rules and Alerts feature in Outlook.

As result, the groupware folders will be shown separately from the email folders.

2.2.2. Free/Busy

Both MS-Exchange and Open-Xchange manage Free/Busy functionality at the server. With Outlook OXtender this functionality works out of the box if the server is accessed via http:.

For secure access, using https:, Outlook (in fact the underlying Windows OS) has to accept the server certificate as trustworthy. That means the server certificate has to be created by an external and known Certification Authority (CA) or the CA certificate used in the Open-Xchange server has to be imported into Windows.

2.2.3. Not Supported Functions

Following Outlook functions will not be synchronized:

Journal

Notes

Linked contacts

Repeated tasks

It is not possible to accept or refuse appointments directly from within the email. This function will be available in the calendar module. The private flag function is still under development and will be implemented by the end of this year.

2.3. Push vs. Pull

Data can be synchronized by Outlook OXtender in two modi:

2.3.1. Push

The Push mechanism is used in case the network connection allows UDP package transport (port UDP:44335) from server to client. That means the server sends all changes to the client without delay. The advantages:

No unnecessary server load due to frequent client requests
Changes will be sent to the user without interaction

2.3.2. Pull

In case the network connection does not allow sending and receiving UDP packages the client connects to the server via a http/s connection (port TCP:80/443) that subsequently is also possible via proxy.

This results in possible changes on the server not being accessible to the user immediately. The data respectively will be updated when the user e. g. switches to another folder.

3. Further Components

Described below are further components/features offering additional functions for Outlook OXtender.

3.1. Debugger

There is a debugging tool that can be launched manually. It logs every Oxtender action and provides a log file.

3.2. Stack Trace

If Outlook OXtender crashes a stack trace will be created that can be saved and sent as file.

3.3. Cleaner/De-installation

There is a tool that can be used to empty the Outlook folders or remove the Open-Xchange-specific flags from the data.

3.4. Update Mechanism

There is an update mechanism for automatically loading and installing new program files.

4. Installation and Configuration

Outlook OXtender comes with a Installer that reads the relevant configuration data during installation.

The Installer will do the following:

Copying program files

Embedding the plugin in Outlook

Entering the configuration data in the user registry

4.1. Configuration Data

User/synchronization-specific data will be entered in the HKEY_CURRENT_USER registry. There are no configuration files on the system.

4.2. Email

The email account (IMAP) has to be configured in Outlook. This will not be done by the installer.