

Product reviews

Upgrade your Outlook calendar

by Diane Poremsky

Have you ever been frustrated by Outlook and Exchange Server’s weak group- and calendaring-sharing options? Whatabout its lack of color-coding for appointments? Add-On Product’s Exchange Central makes up for these missing features, and more. Exchange Central is an add-on tool you can use to read calendar data from Exchange Server mailboxes and display it as one calendar.

It enables you to create HTML pages of your group’s calendar, color-code and filter appointments, export the appointments in a Word or Excel format, even save the group calendar as desktop wallpaper. You can add new appointments to user’s calendars, and send e-mail, tasks, or phone messages to the users.

Exchange Central operates in two modes; administrator or user. Setting different permissions for each user allows you to control who can add or change appointments for others. As long as users have access to the HTML pages, only those users who need to create appointments for others (such as receptionists or secretaries) need to run the Exchange Central software on their computers.

After installing Exchange Central, you need to connect your user’s calendars to Exchange Central. You can choose user mailboxes from the Global Address List and select public folder calendars for

features is its capability to export the calendar layouts in various formats. For example, you can create a Word document and include the calendar as a table. Other available formats include Excel, HTML, comma delimited text (CSV), and desktop wallpaper, either as bitmap object or an Active Desktop object. The HTML calendar isn’t as sharp as Outlook’s Save As Web Page version, but it offers batch updating and you can create your own templates.

Batch updating provides several preset actions, including saving a view as an HTML page and refreshing the calendar database from Exchange Server. You can schedule it to run daily, only on a specific day of the week, or continuously.

What would make Exchange Central the perfect program to complement Outlook? First, it should have right-click menus and keyboard shortcuts for all menu options. The Layout Selector should enable users to drag shortcuts to calendar databases and to drag views between databases. Another plus would be the capability to save multiple filters and an easy way to switch between them. Nevertheless, Exchange Central has a number of great features; if your business needs group calendaring and scheduling capabilities, Exchange Central might be just what you’re looking for.

Quick Facts

Exchange Central 2.0.4 (Pro Version)

Add-On Products

Web: www.ms-add-on.com

Phone: 45-79-44-70-00

Price: Contact vendor

Supports: Exchange 5.5 and Outlook (all versions)

Quick facts: A group calendaring application designed to display a central calendar.

Pros: Provides at-a-glance calendar views for everyone in your workgroup; color-codes appointments by category; publishes group calendar to Web with automatic updating.

Cons: No right-click context menus; few keyboard shortcuts.

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or workgroup can have separate calendar database and can switch easily between each calendar group.

Appointment information is cached in a database on each user’s computer and you’re able to set a batch-update continuously if Exchange Central is running in batch mode.

Exchange Central includes several predefined views (layouts) and you can create additional custom layouts. One of Exchange Central’s neatest

Daily View - Tuesday, May 2, 2000 (PCS-1)						
Name	Start	End	Subject	Notes	Busy?	Recurrence
Athena						
C&M	10:30	11:30	Planning meeting		Busy	Occurs ever
Calendar						
Colette						
Diane	10:30	11:30	Planning meeting		Busy	Occurs ever
	12:00	13:00	Review Due		Busy	
	16:00	18:30	Becky's Softball game - home		Busy	
	16:00	20:00	County Track meet		Busy	
Ken	10:30	11:30	Planning meeting		Busy	Occurs ever
	16:00	17:00	Conference call with Jake and Tom		Busy	
Mary	10:30	11:30	Planning meeting		Busy	Occurs ever
Philip						
PST Cal						

Make up for Outlook’s shortcomings. Exchange Central offers several features that aren’t available in Outlook, including the capility to create HTML pages of your groups’ calendar, export appointments in Word or Excel format, and color-code and filter appointments as shown here.