

Creating Resource Mailboxes in Exchange 2000

Mark Fugatt

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Most companies have some form of resources that their employee's need to schedule, an example of certain resources would be conference rooms, company vehicles, computer labs etc. In this article we are going to look at how these can be created and managed with Exchange 2000 and how your users can schedule the use of these resources using the calendaring and scheduling feature within Outlook.


The main thing to remember with Exchange 2000 is that you cannot have a mailbox without having a corresponding Active Directory user account.

Creating the Mailboxes

The way I like to create resource accounts is to create a separate OU in Active Directory and store them in there; it just keeps them separate from our regular user account.

For this article we are going to create a resource for our "Computer Lab". So the first thing we need to do is to create an AD account and an Exchange 2000 mailbox.

1. Open Active Directory Users and Computers
2. Right click over the OU that you would like to create the account in, and select New > User from the menu.
3. Complete the fields as required (the figure below shows the settings for your Computer Lab account)



The screenshot shows the 'New Object - User' dialog box. At the top, it says 'Create in: exchangetrainer.com/Resource Accounts'. Below this, there are several input fields:


- First name: Computer
- Initials: (empty)
- Last name: Lab
- Full name: Computer Lab
- User logon name: clab (with a dropdown menu showing @exchangetrainer.com)
- User logon name (pre-Windows 2000): EXCHANGETRAINER\clab

At the bottom, there are three buttons: '< Back', 'Next >', and 'Cancel'.

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4. You will need to make sure that you create a mailbox for the resource account also.



The screenshot shows the 'New Object - User' dialog box. At the top, there is a user icon and the text 'Create n: exchangetrainer.com/Resource Accounts'. Below this, there is a checked checkbox labeled 'Create an Exchange mailbox'. Underneath the checkbox are three fields: 'Alias:' with the text 'clab', 'Server:' with a dropdown menu showing 'ExchangeTrainer/First Administrative Group/LONDON', and 'Mailbox Store:' with a dropdown menu showing 'First Storage Group/Mailbox Store (LONDON)'. At the bottom of the dialog are three buttons: '< Back', 'Next >', and 'Cancel'.

5. Now once we have created the new AD account and mailbox, leave it for around 10 minutes so Exchange can create the email addresses for this account. We will be unable to log on and open Outlook until the account has email addresses assigned to it.

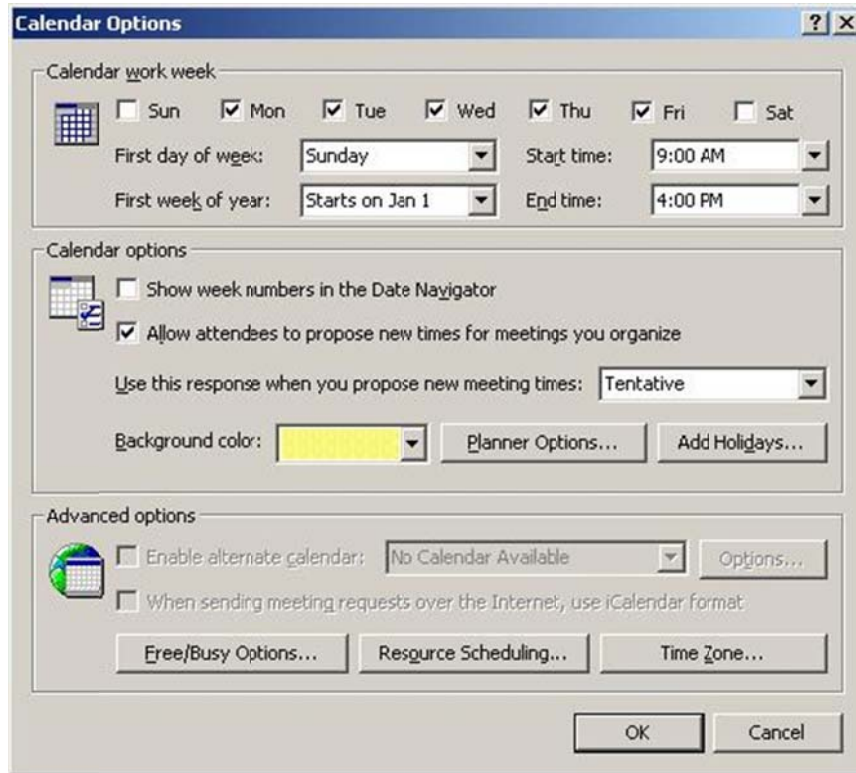
Configuring the Mailbox to process Scheduling Invitations

Now that we have the account and mailbox created for the resource, we will need to configure it to automatically process scheduling requests.

1. Log in using the AD account you created for this resource.
2. Configure Outlook for this account
3. Go to Tools > Options
4. In the Calendar section clear the "Default reminder" checkbox
5. Click on the "Calendar Options" button
6. Set the hours that this resource is available during the working week by using the "Calendar work week" section, our Computer Lab is available Mon – Fri 9am – 4pm.

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Now, because nobody is actually going to be logging in using the resource mailbox, we need to configure it so that it automatically processes scheduling requests.

1. Whilst in Tools > Options > Calendar Options
2. Click on Resource Scheduling
3. Check the “Automatically accept meeting requests and process cancellations” and “Automatically decline conflicting meeting requests” checkboxes



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4. Click OK. A second dialog box will appear, asking to set standard permissions for all users, click OK.



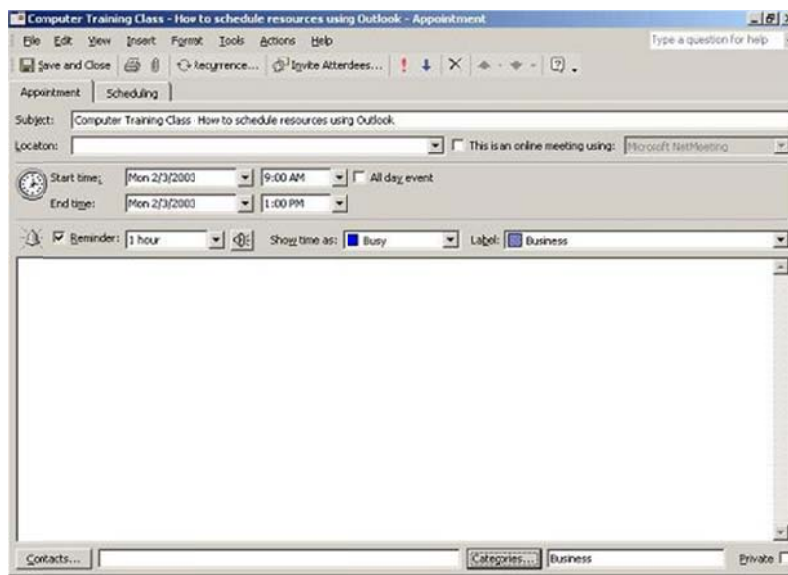
We have now configured our resource mailbox, to process both meeting requests and cancellations.

What to teach your users

It is important that you teach your users how to book meetings correctly if you want to get the best out of your system.

Booking a meeting

1. In Outlook, click on the Calendar container
2. Click New from the Toolbar, you will now be presented with the "Appointment" dialog box
3. We are going to book a 4 hour training class for Feb 3rd 2003 starting at 9am, we also need to book the Computer Lab for this and need one of our users (Fred Smith) to be there to help as well.
4. On the "Appointment" tab complete the title of the appointment, the start and end date, start and end time, and any other information that you think would help you.

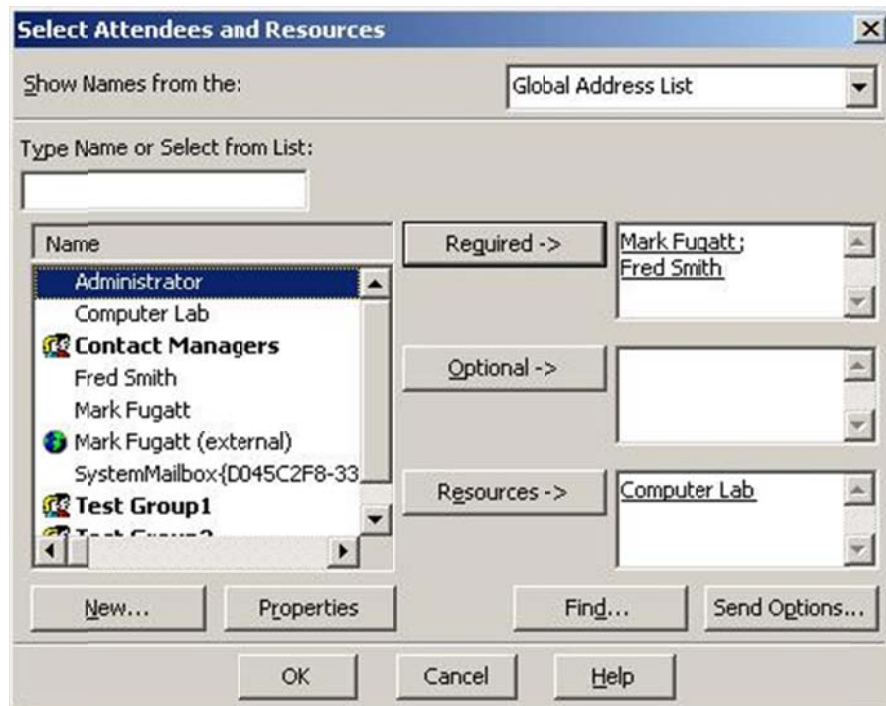


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Now the important part, because we are going to need the Computer Lab and Fred Smith, we need to schedule this. The Computer Lab is going to be a Resource.

1. Click on the Scheduling tab
2. Click on the "Add others" button at the bottom of the page
3. Select "Add from address book"
4. The "Select Attendees and Resources" dialog box will now be displayed.
5. Click on the resource, in our example "Computer Lab" and then click on "Resources ->" button. This will now add the Computer Lab as a resource for our meeting.
6. We also require that Fred Smith be at this meeting, click on Fred Smith and then click on "Required ->". We could have also selected the "Optional ->" button for Fred if it was not a requirement that he attend.



IMPORTANT: It is very important that users ensure they schedule resources in the Resources section when inviting them to a meeting.