

Introduction to FollowMeEmail

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Acknowledgements

FollowMeEmail is based upon three open-source software packages: Fetchmail, by Eric Raymond et al, Procmail by Stephen R. Van der Berg et al., and the EMSD server agent by Neda Communications, Inc.

The NT port of FollowMeEmail would have been much more difficult (if not completely infeasible) without Cygnus Solutions' CygWin package. With CygWin we found it almost trivial to produce running versions of Fetchmail and Procmail on NT.

We're deeply grateful for the existence of all these tools and to all the people who've brought them into being.

For more information on Fetchmail, see the Fetchmail home page <http://www.tuxedo.org/~sr/fetchmail>.

Information on Procmail is available at <http://www.procmail.org>

CygWin information is at <http://www.cygnus.com/cygwin>.

More information on EMSD can be found at <http://www.emsd.org>.

1 FollowMeEmail

The FollowMeEmail system has the ability to watch over all incoming messages from your own desktop. Its continuous monitoring capability is able to track all of your messages, filter them, and manage them in the way you want it. Several advantages of having FollowMeEmail in the system are:

- Optionally filters the junk mail.
- Optionally combines multiple mailboxes.
- Filters and forwards important and urgent messages.
- Filters are web accessible
-

There are two modes of FollowMeEmail:

1. Completely Passive: this mode does not interfere with the user's main mail applications. This mode only uses FollowMeEmail as a tracking device in monitoring all the incoming messages.
2. Integrated with the mail user agent: this mode can use all of the optional features that are available in FollowMeEmail in addition to the user's main mail applications.

Figure 1 is the overview of FollowMeEmail. As you can see in Figure 1, you do not need to be at work or in front of your desktop all the time to receive important and urgent email. With FollowMeEmail, all of the important and urgent messages will be forwarded and delivered to your Palm device, pager, cellular phone, fax, etc.

Figure 2 shows the architecture of FollowMeEmail.

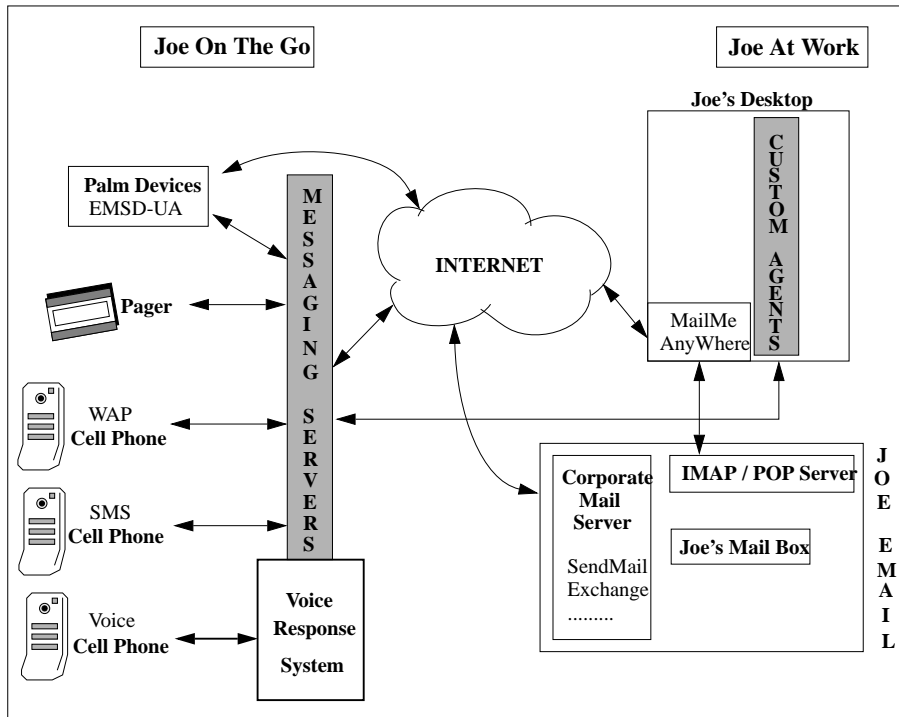


Figure 1: Overview of FollowMeEmail

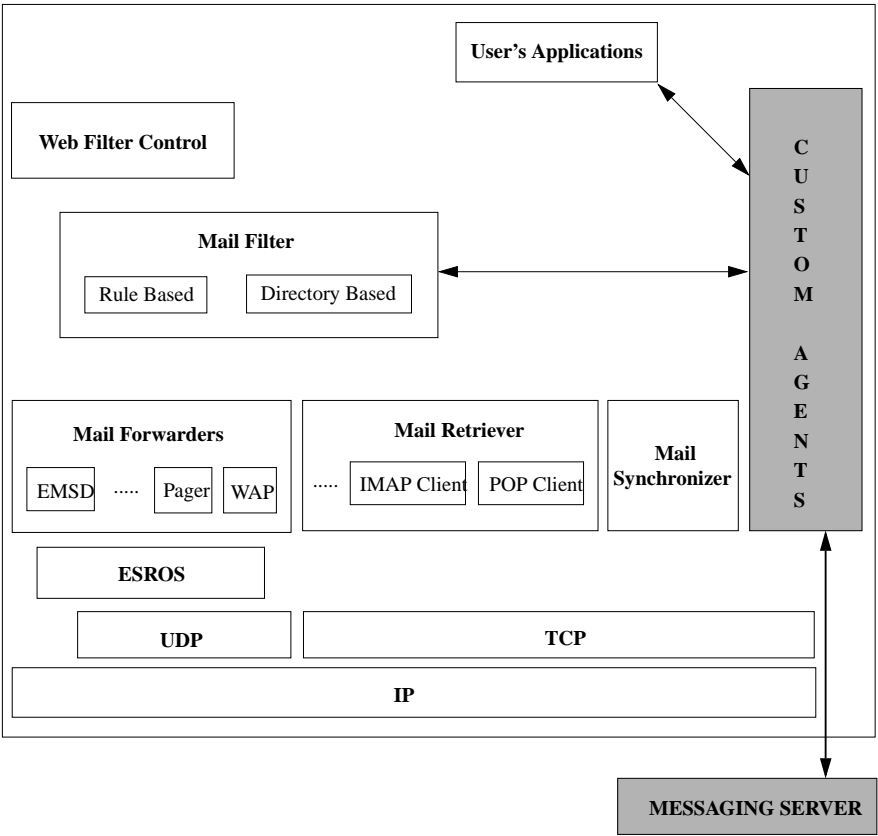


Figure 2: FollowMeEmail Architecture

1.1 FollowMeEmail is Open Source

More and more people are becoming “open-source” believer. The open-source community has proposed the use of open-source development model as one possible way to face many challenges in growing the business in today’s fast-moving and competitive industry environment.

- It gets us on the desktop more easily.
- They trust us.
- Based on other open-source and open protocols.

1.2 FollowMeEmail Architecture

FollowMeEmail is based upon two well-known open-source tools: fetchmail and procmail.

1.2.1 Fetchmail

Fetchmail is a mail-retrieval and forwarding utility. Fetchmail allows remote access to a user’s mail via any existing Internet mail-retrieval protocol, including any flavor of IMAP or POP. It can then forward the mail to any SMTP- or ESMTP-compliant mail server, or directly to a mail delivery agent like procmail. Some other useful tools of Fetchmail are:

- merge multiple mail streams into a single mailbox.
- peek at your home email from work while leaving it in its regular box for you to retrieve when you get home.

Fetchmail supports every email-related protocol known to humanity and can be run as a background daemon or from the command line. There’s also a GUI-based configuration tool available for its text-based command file.

For much more information, see the fetchmail home page at <http://www.tuxedo.org/~esr/fetchmail>.

1.2.2 Procmail

Procmail is a dazzlingly flexible mail filtering tool, which can split different mail into different folders (to sort mailing lists, for example), junk spam, run any program on receipt of any kind of mail, etc., etc.

Procmail is an unparalleled suite of email filtering tools, allowing you to do things like:

- filter and selectively forward (or discard) mail based upon arbitrary criteria.
- run different programs upon receipt of different kinds of mail (for example, to ring different kinds of bells when urgent and non-urgent messages arrive).
- generate automatic replies to mail.

There is an add-on package to Procmail called SmartList that’s our favorite for maintaining email mailing lists.

For more information on Procmail, see the procmail home page at <http://www.procmail.org>

1.2.3 Cygwin and the NT port

Both Fetchmail and Procmail were originally developed for Unix. Neither would have been easy (or perhaps even possible!) to port to NT without the help of CygWin, a tool from Cygnus Solutions that's designed to allow one to do just this sort of thing: port open-source Unix software to NT.

1.2.4 Web Interface

Both fetchmail and procmail are a bit complex to configure for the nontechnical user, so we provide a web interface to allow the user to manipulate both tools to accomplish common forwarding and filtering tasks.

Sophisticated users still have access to the raw configuration files and can make fetchmail and procmail sit up and beg should they wish.