

Kolab: Solution by Interoperability

The Kolab Groupware Solution was initially developed under contract for the Federal Office for Information Security (BSI) of the German government in order to provide an auditable, secure and interoperable solution for Personal Information Management (PIM) fully as Free Software/Open Source. The consortium tasked with that development approached the issue by choosing the best existing technologies available, incorporating them into the solution, and tying them together by unique, award-winning design. Standards that allowed the creation of the solution include:

The **Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP)** is an Open Standard for directory services and authentication that is widely used by many existing solutions and is also used to tie together the various components of the Kolab Groupware Server. **The Simple Authentication and Security Layer (SASL)** is used by all the components and by default uses OpenLDAP as the store for Authentication information.

The **Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP)** is an Internet standard for electronic mail (e-mail) transmission across Internet Protocol (IP) networks. The **Internet Message Access Protocol (IMAP)** is one of the two most prevalent Internet standard protocols for e-mail retrieval, the other being the **Post Office Protocol (POP)**, which is also used by the Kolab Groupware Solution. Kolab uses the IMAP protocol for storage of all kinds of groupware data, including calendar, address book, task and other information through an open **Extensible Markup Language (XML)** based storage format.

OpenPGP and **Secure/Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions (S/MIME)** are used for highly secure end-to-end cryptography and digital email signatures.

These are just some of the many Open Standards used in the assembly and interworking of the different components. The result is a supermodular solution where even core components can be replaced against other solutions of functional equivalence, e.g. OpenLDAP could be replaced against the 389 Directory Server, or the Cyrus IMAP Server could be replaced against Dovecot.

Because it is assembled purely from some of the best Free Software solutions used in many different scenarios, standards compliance is actively being monitored, and interoperability is continuously tested and assured on a practical level. As a result, the Kolab Groupware Solution can be fully integrated into virtually any existing infrastructure and users retain their full ability to interoperate, migrate and integrate to meet their future needs.

It is this focus on interoperability that allows users of the Kolab Groupware Solution to choose virtually any hard- and software platform for their client side needs. Just the primary Kolab Smart Client based on KDE/Kontact is available on GNU/Linux, Windows, Mac OS, as well as Maemo/MeeGo or Windows Mobile based phones and touchscreen/tablet devices.

So while standardization and interoperability are often understood to reduce the pace of innovation, it is important to understand they also enable it - as demonstrated in this example. That is why it is essential to demand and protect non-discriminating interoperability for all.

Contact

Kolab Systems AG with its parent companies KDAB and Intevation GmbH as well as the growing network of the Kolab Enterprise Community provides you with a strong partner for the development, migration planning, deployment and operation of the Kolab Groupware Solution.