

31 January 2006

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[KDE Kontact: Get Organized!](#)

Because time is important

It is reasonable to say that most people need to get organized. That is why we have on our computers software that allows us to do just that, organize. For this purpose, KDE provides us with the KDE PIM project. Its goal is to provide an application suite to manage personal information. This includes mail, time, people and more. The result is KDE Kontact, and this is an article which should be read by GNOME fans too. Kontact is an application which is made up of several other individual components, which are still a part of the same project. These components will be explained one by one, below.

The Summary Component This component is especially made for KDE Kontact. It provides both an overview of the other components and a selection of information gathered from the Internet, such as weather info and news headlines. Any RDF feed can be added from the Internet, or you may choose some of the ones already included, by just adding them from the configure panel. I find it a very nice feature. Imagine that you arrive at the office and open Kontact. Now you have a display of Appointments, To-Do List, New Mail Messages and, of course, News. To get the courage to start doing some real work, maybe you should read some news. When you'll realize how many things are happening in the world, maybe the mood for working will come. All this information is displayed very nicely. When, let's say, an appointment is in progress, it becomes highlighted. The information has a link that opens a properties window. From here you can modify the progress of the work, the time of the appointment and so on.

The Mail Component The mail component is provided by KMail, the KDE mail client. Even though it's not too fancy, it is a straight forward mail client that comes with all the features you would expect. One thing I like about it is that it has spell checking (like most of the stuff in KDE). When a message arrives, KMail shows a colored bar indicating the type of message (Plain text / HTML / OpenPGP). There is also the possibility to import mail from other clients. The list is extensive and, to be honest, there isn't a client that I know of which is not supported. The developers of KMail claim that it has anti-spam functions, but I don't find it that useful since it is hard to effectively configure them. It is a wizard which uses tools that do spam detection and configures KMail to work with them. About a year ago I knew some such tools but at this moment I can't seem to remember any. Another thing that it takes time to get used to is the filter function, but if you receive piles of email and sometimes you need to dig hard to find an old one, filtering can really help you. When it comes to security, you should know that you can login with SSL, TSL or DIGEST-MD5 and it is also possible to encrypt e-mails using PGP or GnuPG. We can clearly say that security is pretty much covered in KMail. After the good side, I must say that not everything is perfect. If you need to send formatted e-mails you must tick "Formatting" in the options menu. Now the most common options appear and they are enough for the most of us. While playing with formatting I noticed that some fonts don't support the italic style correctly. Anyway it is not a big deal and I am sure it will be fixed sometime soon. I must mention one last thing about KMail. When a HTML message arrives, the program asks if you trust the sender and if you want to display it as HTML, because the email may contain malicious code. Viewing HTML messages as plain text also worked good for me. Overall, I must say that KMail is nice both for first time and for hardcore mail users. I wanted to say something about the looks of this application but I don't know what's to say... it's just user friendly... but not extremely good looking.

The Contacts Component Guess what: this component manages your valued contacts. The application providing this component is KAddressbook, a program that is deeply rooted into KDE. On the project site they say that it was integrated in KMail and KOrganizer even before the KDE Kontact project was started. For the home users I guess

that the nicest feature is that you can import and export to nearly every address book standard. This will help a lot to make the transition to Kontact and also from Kontact to another place (even PDAs). For enterprises, the best thing is that supports multiple LDAP servers and when the servers are well configured you'll be amazed how useful this feature is. No need for a special memo where you have written down tons of e-mail addresses, phone numbers, addresses, some notes about that person and whatever you can imagine it is required to know. Kontact remembers it all. If you really want to demonstrate that there is a feature missing in this component, you can't, because it has the option to add "custom fields". You may say something about Active Directory, but keep in mind that this is Linux applications we are talking about. However, I guess it's just a matter of time and, in a year or two, this will be also possible as well.

The Calendar Component KOrganizer is the calendar component from this suite. It is coming from a very long period of development and now it has reached maturity. This feature-rich program is so easy to use and intuitive that you will quickly adopt it as your personal organizer. The only requirement is that you need it. Some users don't have anything close to a fixed schedule. For the others, this application can do miracles. According to your preferences, this application can discretely highlight the working hours for every day in your calendar. It has several views of the schedule allowing you to see only the current day, the working week days, the whole month and others. A new event can be easily added and it can be modified with the same ease. You can edit and move around events, print them or send them via e-mail to a colleague. You can setup reminders for each event and it can individually be configured to notify you a number of customizable minutes in advance. An attendees list is also available and for each one you can set a Role and a Status. Imagine that this list is synchronized with the Contacts component and you will have the option to select the name from a list. This is useful because the application automatically emails an invitation to them. KOrganizer can be extended with groupware functionality and it can boost the communication within every workgroup. The range of supported groupware servers is broad. Most of them have features for calendar, addressbook, free/busy status and e-mail. Microsoft Exchange is also supported but it only has the option to share the calendar. For the rest of features a codebase exists and is subject to further enhancement. If you would like to publish events, meetings or tasks on the Intranet or on the World Wide Web, it can easily be done because KOrganizer can export webpages. This makes it easy to let your colleagues know about upcoming meetings, publish events like lectures and football games or just let you access your calendar from everywhere where you have access to the Internet or Intranet. Other export options are iCalendar and vCalendar. The first one is an open standard for calendar data. Both standards are supported by a variety of other calendar programs and also some devices like mobile phones and PDAs. Speaking about this program could never end but I'll have to let you discover the rest by yourself.

The To-Do List Component Are you that type of person that never forgets what they have to do and when? If this is the case, then just skip this section. For those of you who are not that perfect, KOrganizer provides a To-Do list which helps to organize the things you have to do. You can assign priorities, set due dates, invite attendees, define categories of to-do's, arrange tasks that depend on each other in hierarchical lists. While completing some of the work you can set the percentage of the work done. If it is not ready until the due date, it becomes highlighted in red (life is not always easy). Once completed, you can check and remove the To-Dos with a single click of the mouse.

The Notes Component This is some sort of a post-it program. It is very user friendly - just right click and add a new note. You should be able stick them on your desktop and they should stay visible even after closing KDE Kontact. On my 0.5 version of Notes, I can't figure why the notes are not saved and aren't displayed on my desktop. This might be a bug that only appears on my computer, but I would really like to use it because sometimes I need to write down some random stuff and the pencil is outdated.

The Journal Components Take a wild guess! Yes, it facilitates the writing of journals. It is so easy, that the only knowledge required it is to know how to write. You will just have to click a link and

you can begin to write. I feel that this component still needs some work, though as it doesn't have spell checking support and I don't think it has any type of export options. It can be very frustrating if you write a year of your experiences and then everything just gets lost. Maybe in the future this component will be a little more advanced.

The Feeds ComponentThe feed reader is actually Akregator. It allows you to browse through thousands of Internet feeds without the hassle of using a web browser. Instead of checking all your favorite web sites manually for updates, Akregator collects the content for you. What I like the most about Akregator is that it imports feeds in a very simple manner. When I browse a website that supports RSS with Konqueror an icon appears in the down-right corner and clicking it allows me to import the feed directly into Akregator. I also have the possibility to view the articles in a separate tab. Unfortunately, a bug is "available" here too: if Akregator is already running in the system tray, trying to automatically import feeds doesn't bring it in the foreground.

The Sync ComponentI can't say much about this component because I don't have a PDA or a high tech mobile phone (but this day will hopefully come for me too). On Kontact's homepage is stated that "KitchenSync, KDE's universal syncing application provides a framework for syncing with all kinds of devices. On one side it will have a plugin based interface with your mobile devices, like: PDA's and smart phones. On the other side it has conduits for connecting with other KDE Kontact components and external applications. The Sync component, provided by KitchenSync, is currently being implemented, therefore KitchenSync is not yet considered to be stable. Till the day that KitchenSync takes over we have two very nice applications that seamlessly integrate with KDE Kontact: KPilot for syncing with Palm compatible devices and Kandy for syncing with several mobile phone types. Eventually, KitchenSync will become a universal syncing framework."

The GoodI think that Kontact's best part is the calendar component. I find it awesome from the point of functionality and ease of use. It is also very good looking. I think that the developers of Kontact did a very nice job because they managed to integrate all these applications very well.

The BadSometimes you can't have it all. Some bugs are still present. This kind of drives some of the away users from using Kontact. Some components, such as the Journal and Notes are not in their top shape either.

The TruthKontact can be used both by home users and by companies and it will definitely increase productivity. The only requirement is to get used with it and you will the benefits if getting organized. I strongly advise you to take an hour or two to give it a try and see what it is capable of.