

THE LAWYER'S PC[®]

A Newsletter for Lawyers Using Personal Computers

Volume 26, Number 10

Published by Thomson Reuters/West

February 15, 2009

E-MAIL MANAGEMENT

We Can Add Some Interesting Options to Outlook

By Daniel E. Harmon, Editor

Here's a different way of approaching your e-mail—a different way of managing it. Caelo's NEO Find software is a new add-in for Microsoft Outlook that's designed to give you a bit more control over your e-mail and, perhaps more notably, over your e-mailboxes. It's interesting. Caelo gave me a trial for review purposes, and I like it. Being an old fogey, I'm not as eager to change the way I do things (things like handling e-mail) as I was when I was 10, or 20 . . . or 30. But I just might make NEO Find a regular companion to Outlook at my workstation.

What happens is that once you've installed NEO Find, whenever you open Outlook to check your mail, NEO Find begins running in background. From its system tray perch, it indexes your mail—sent mail as well as received mail—into “correspondent” folders, which you can search and manage.

E-mail is (almost) free, but it can strangle lawyers and other professionals. Can third-party software help us better organize our “e-lives”?

Now, let's think about that. I don't know how you process your e-mail, but I process mine the way I've done it for the past decade. (I've always used Outlook, BTW.) I've created Outlook subfolders for people and topics relevant to my important e-mail correspondence. Many of these subfolders contain sub-subfolders, expanding as projects evolve. As new e-mail

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The Lawyer's PC (USPS 0001-333), (ISSN 0740-0942) is published twice monthly by Thomson Reuters/West, Aqueduct Building, 50 Broad St. East, Rochester, NY 14694; (800) 327-2665. Subscription price: \$354.96 a year. Periodicals postage paid at St. Paul, MN. For customer assistance call (800) 328-4880.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Lawyer's PC*, P.O. Box 64526, St. Paul, MN 55164-0526.

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arrives, I try to a) respond to it immediately, b) trash it or c) save it into an appropriate subfolder or sub-subfolder, figuring I'll deal with it later.

ASIDE: As I'm sure you suspect, I fail miserably at this. Certain items that come my way just can't be pigeon-holed, it seems. My main inbox is crowded with uncategorizable mail. I simply keep it all, stewing in its juices. My main inbox has "live" items dating to 2004. I don't know what to do with the darned things. To this day, I don't wanna deal with them—they're obviously unimportant, but for various reasons, I don't consider them trashable. I don't wanna throw them away, and it would be illogical to create sub-sub-folders for storing these singular items.

NEO Find wasn't developed to resolve my e-mail namby-pambying. It was developed to help users organize and find e-memos quickly. For that purpose, I think it's worth a try.

When you install and activate NEO Find, it creates a synchronized set of your Outlook folders and subfolders (and sub-subfolders, etc.)—in effect, your e-mail "catalog." This process takes awhile, up front. Thereafter, the program synchronizes your new and existing messages with its companion catalog. Each time you open Microsoft Outlook, your NEO Find catalog automatically opens and processes any new mail. Later, when you need to find an e-mail item, it might be easier and faster to locate it with NEO Find than with traditional Outlook search techniques.

You can handle your e-mail via Outlook directly or via NEO Find. The main advantage of using NEO Find "mode" is that you can have your e-mail sorted by correspondent; every item from or to a particular sender/recipient is placed in a folder with that person or company's name. Correspondent folders are displayed in alphabetical order.

Bear in mind these are not just the messages in your inbox; they're all the messages you've preserved in Outlook (including those five-year-old classics you've been unable to part with). The most recent memos are categorized as "new."

AN E-REVELATION

One of the first things NEO Find showed me was that I had correspondents from years ago—people I no longer remembered—still in my e-mail system. A lot of these were junk mailers. Their memos are now *e-history*. Others were past correspondents with whom I really wanted to reconnect, and I'm very grateful to NEO Find for resurrecting them. Sorting your e-mail by correspondents' names is an interesting exercise. You might be surprised who turns up.

Caelo Software (www.caelo.com) sells a more robust e-mail manager, NEO Pro (\$49.95). It's designed to make it easier to search meessages across all your data files—.PSTs and MS Exchange boxes. You can categorize your

e-mail for more effective viewing. A “hot” view window can contain the folders of correspondents with whom you communicate constantly. Optionally, you may prefer to display your folders by status (important, unread, to-do, etc.), date (today, yesterday, last week) or attachment file type (.pdf, .doc, .jpg, .mp3). A filtering system lets you find specific groups of messages. For example, you might want to see all the messages you’ve received from a certain correspondent during the past three days containing .pdf attachments, or review ongoing conversations on particular topics.

An interesting feature of NEO Pro is what Caelo terms “caller ID.” You can have a pop-up balloon notify you of incoming mail, and you can customize the program to alert you only to certain types of messages.

Long-time Outlook users who are satisfied with the way they process, organize and retrieve e-mail may derive only nominal benefit from an Outlook “enhancer.” However, a fresh approach to mail management may reveal unexpected possibilities.

Caelo says some its users report that NEO Pro saves them several hours a week. Those would be *really* heavy e-mail users. Several hours a week is about as much time as I want to spend handling e-mail or any other form of correspondence.

NEO Find (\$19.95) does not have all of the features of NEO Pro. It’s intended for users like me who have less e-mail to process. Unlike NEO Pro, NEO Find won’t provide you with category, date, attachment and status views. It won’t separate bulk mail for you (e-newsletters, discussion list correspondence, etc.). It also lacks spam blocking and the “caller ID” feature described above.

Caelo spokesman Terry Johnston notes, “Unlike NEO Pro, which is a complete e-mail interface that essentially replaces Outlook, NEO Find is more like a utility that users open when they want to find an e-mail.”

For users with only basic e-mail management needs, Caelo offers NEO Free. This scaled-down version of its e-mail organization technology is available for personal use at no cost. You can download and use either of the higher-end products on a trial basis for 90 days.

If you’re a long-time Outlook user and you’re satisfied with the way you process, organize and retrieve your e-mail, you may derive only nominal benefits from an Outlook “enhancer” like the programs developed by Caelo. You

might consider downloading a trial version of one of the products, though. A fresh view of your mailboxes and their overall structure could reveal unexpected possibilities. ❖

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