

Outlook for Mac needs an alternative to Autodiscover for Exchange account configuration

History:

Autodiscover does not work in all environments for a variety of reasons. Usually, the on premises Exchange administrator or Network Services administrator does not understand how to correctly configure his environment or is unwilling to make the necessary network changes.

Mac administrators are not usually the Exchange nor the Network Services administrator and cannot themselves correct this problem.

In 2008, I developed an AppleScript to assist Mac administrators with the automatic configuration of Exchange accounts in Entourage and later Outlook for Mac.

<https://github.com/talkingmoose/Outlook-Exchange-Setup/tree/4.5>

Problem:

Outlook for Mac 15 no longer includes Schedules, which launched the AppleScript the first time a user opened the application. The advantage the script provided was quick account setup without reliance on the user to know more than his password.

The script has been adopted and modified by Mac admins for their environment and become an important part of their administrative process. Without it, Mac administrators have no other means of assisting users with automatic Exchange account creation without relying on documentation. This is a hardship that will affect at least 150,000+ users in nearly 100 organizations according to a recent survey.

See remaining pages for supporting documentation gathered during a 2-month survey of users of this script. Contact information for respondents is available upon request.

Proposed solution:

Mac administrators could forego the AppleScript if Microsoft enabled the autoConfigDB.xml file to support Exchange account creation or devised an in-application method for configuring account settings based on locally stored information.

User count Comments

2500 I use this script primarily in initial setup of Outlook as auto-configuration, so all users need to do is supply their password and they will start seeing and using their email quickly and easily.

600 Autodiscover generally works fine in our environment however I have the script set up so that when a user logs on for the first time, Outlook (and other Office details) is already set up and ready to go. In an Enterprise environment, the user shouldn't have to be the one to set up their email.

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1000 I use this script in my environment to help provide an Outlook setup process that does not rely on users' passwords being known in advance. That allows our technicians to set up Outlook for our users before deploying a machine.

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1450 We used to have to setup email account by hand for all new users and any user that got a new computer or rebuilt setup. It was tedious and a PITA. This script has saved us hundreds of tech hours over the years. We even use it as part of a troubleshooting tool to rebuild a user's Outlook account if it is misbehaving. Run one simple script and the profile is moved aside, the new one is setup with this script, and the user is on their way.

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200 This script saves me and my staff loads of time.
We use it for every new Mac set up.

2000 We are a consultancy company and use the script for multiple sites

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600 I've been using your script, and am also on the beta, so I share your concern(s). I am hoping that they do put something in place, aside from auto discovery, that will allow us to help users setup their mail on first login.

1000 We do not use your script but we use AppleScript to set up an user account on MS Outlook 2011 and their signature. The process is fully automated with Active Directory.

250 Thanks for a great script

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We have a 2010 exchange, office 365 hybrid with 4 exchange endpoints & 12 email domains.

300 As such, we've used an adapted version of the script due to AutoDiscover being a pain in such a complicated environment.

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500 Thank you for bringing this to Microsofts attention. Please let them know that your script is a lifesaver and very useful. Oh and ask them what the hold up is they've had years to get things right.

40000 We use this tool and it is extremely helpful.
If this functionality is lost it will be a massive pain point for us

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220 I estimate around 220 users across a number of different organisations that I provide support for. I have provided my domain name as the identifier although I do not have 200+ users in my domain.

1120 Will affect all our Education/Corporate clients

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We have users all over the globe connecting to different exchange servers... Lots

2000 Without auto discover there is no way at all for me to have dozens of different set up scripts or have manual setups. Without auto discover in outlook we cannot run efficiently

2000 Without auto discover in outlook it will cause mayhem and we cannot have manual set up. We are a global company with exchange servers all over the globe without autodiscover this will cripple our business communications.

Pretty standard configuration, non kerberos auth.

I think I had set some domain values you tried to extrapolate via dscl, but other than that very heavily rely on your script.

Trying to help people configure outlook without it is a nightmare. I'd probably consider trying to migrate to apple mail if autoconf wasn't deliverable in as neat and tidy of a way as your script provides.

300 Happy to talk over email (which I included in this survey) if you require further info.

2000 It will impact us greatly as we used it in our SOE/MOE configuration for staff members to just enter password and email are autoconfigure to the university settings.

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We would also need a way to set or update RTF email signatures via AppleScript for a specific account. This does not work correctly right now.

2000 Also missing is the possibility to pre-fill the allowed domains for autodiscovery redirects. Currently the user has to explicitly allow redirects, which is confusing for them.

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This script was an invaluable tool during our entourage to outlook upgrade, and continues to make everyone's lives easier by automating outlook setup.

1200 Auto discover does not work in our environment for outlook setup.

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700 Thanks for making the script, it's been really helpful.

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3000 I use my own Applescript but I think there is a need for an auto-setup in the product

Hi William,

120 My colleagues in the other Scandinavian countries are using it as well, so
in total I think we're about 400 users.

20000 We use this because the mac doesn't autoconfigure microsoft accounts
on domain joined machines like the windows boxes do. Frankly this
should be part of the product.

1000 The script greatly helps us automate the installation of new macs. Its
much easier for the user to answer a few questions rather than go to a
web page and find the right settings. Would appreciate it if the script
could keep working.

1 I am the Mac Admin for the Medical Center side of [redacted]. My current
production tasks are for dumb terminals that primarily import various
radiology studies and thusly do not include Office for Mac. However, I
have also been building the Service Level Agreements, infrastructure and
back end to also support Macs as standard, managed desktops for the
medical community. I have for months followed your postings on various
forums and although I have not used any of your build/setup scripts
beyond my testing and Proof-of-Concept environments, I do plan on
implementing them for 100+ desktops in the near future. Have not found
any rubber chickens.

25 I use these scripts because autodiscover for Outlook 2011 for Mac does
not work the same as the Windows version. My users are required to
enter more information.

80 Without this fantastic script I would be inundated with support requests
from users wanting to set up Outlook! No thank you!

Please reference my JAMFNation article.

3500 <https://jamfnation.jamfsoftware.com/discussion.html?id=11673>

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110 The script has saved me countless hours setting up new users/new
equipment.

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Our AD environment is pretty wonky (read: our IT people don't know how to set up AD/Exchange, and have no intent of paying attention to anyone who isn't in IT), so our desktop support people use your script to set up every new Mac against our Exchange server. The latest numbers that I've heard is that we're 1/3 Macs internally, and we're officially now all Exchange (currently Exchange 2013, planned to transition to Office 365 in Q4).

We're not actually using your script but we are using AppleScript to configure the users Exchange account so I presume we will also be effected.

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The script works great. We launch Outlook and then just run the script. It completely configures Outlook 2011 for Mac in our environment.

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We have several email extensions in our environment and without this script, we are doomed to manually configure each and every client across the chain. This Script is CRUCIAL in our environment and without such functionality, we will be going backwards in time when configuring Outlook.

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Automatic account creation is employed for both our staff and students. If we're no longer able to provide this functionality (even though OWA access is available for users, with manual creation for staff macs) we're more than likely going to have to move towards Apple Mail - which for multiple reasons is a less than ideal solution.

This script is absolutely vital to us now, and going into the future if possible, but if a built-in facility was made available that would be fantastic.

Automatic configuration is vital for us and auto-discovery is not very
1500 reliable in our organization.

After coming from the education world for 10+ years back into corporate, I was completely shocked to see that Microsoft still hadn't included any method of managing end user client configuration be it plist/mcx (and now profiles), out side of AppleScript. Prior to using William's script, and my arrival; deploying a machine would take about 10-15 minutes, and require the user to be present, causing a lot of delays especially if a tier one staff member skipped a step.

After deploying your (William's) script, our deployment times have been reduced ten fold, as I can confidently trust the environment will be configured for the user properly each and every time. I implore Microsoft to bring Office up with current management standards for the platform with out the need to reinvent the wheel [Installers/Wrappers/Cloud ring of fire gauntlet] ala Adobe. It just makes our jobs as system administrators a living hell, especially knowing what your product does on your own platform.

William,
my hat is off to you for everything you continue to do for the Apple
70 community. Keep up the great work!!

Being able to automate this on the command line or another method to auto deploy outlook profiles is something that Outlook for Mac has been missing for a long time.

300 Good luck. Your doing gods work for the community :)

Today, more than ever, it's all about working smarter and more efficient. In so many different levels, any type of automation helps with this goal!

Microsoft should keep this form of automatic account creation and provide seamlessly setup and automated capabilities for OS X, just as they do for Windows. After all, this is how a good/great product should work - easy, flexible, and that it simply works. Without automatic account creation/possibilities, I don't see that.

1500 Thank you talkingmoose for leading the way on this endeavor!

We use the script to configure Outlook accounts on all of our machines - lots of these machines are 'hotdesk' type machines where multiple/new users log in and pull down their mail through OL every day. Multiple domain names exist in our environment and I'm am not confident Autodiscover would work every time for all of them. Your script gets rid of that worry and no doubt saves on countless support calls.

Thanks for publishing it and I hope Microsoft leave in some way of configuring future releases of OL through script (though preferably not Applescript in future!).

1000 Mike

300 Keep up the good work!

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We have only just started using this script for our new Mac management project. It is great for those ex-Windows users who are used to Outlook "just working" with their University account. The usual comments have been "why must I enter all this stuff just to use my Mail" (We know it is only for the first time, but they still complain!)

350 Thanks for all your work.

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I want to use the script because while autodiscover works, the first name and last name are flipped. If i had 5 minutes to look into it further, I believe I could use your script to fix that.

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A great script, this has helped our users out with the complexity of setting our exchange and DC search base.

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would love as much automation as possible with outlook for mac.
100 particularly user configuration and opening shared resources.

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Scriptability to set up and/or change account settings in Outlook is critical. My organization went through a major email migration project earlier this year, and if I hadn't been able to write an Applescript to detect when a user had been migrated and change their Outlook settings accordingly, it would have been a HUGE hassle. There were readily available tools to do this for the users on Windows machines, but there was nothing for the Mac, and I had to figure it all out by myself.

If I had not been able to script the changes, we would have had to give users detailed documentation on what to do, and then send local techs to the ones who ran into trouble or just plain couldn't be bothered to read and follow directions and lost their email capabilities.

We also use the Lync setup script so not sure if this issue also breaks but assuming it does will expand the issue that much further.

Additional online references and comments

These links refer to online discussions after posting announcements for my survey. Many Mac admins responded with feedback in these online forums.

Responses needed: Outlook for Mac Exchange Setup Script Survey

<https://jamfnation.jamfsoftware.com/discussion.html?id=11675>

Responses needed: Outlook for Mac Exchange Setup Script Survey

<https://groups.google.com/forum/#!searchin/macenterprise/outlook/macenterprise/IXeXvhNz7Lc/TPLZTHQ3UgAJ>