

Hidden Tools and Tips for Outlook E-mail

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Since e-mail integration was introduced in 1999, ACT! and Outlook continue to play well together, especially for sending eye-grabbing HTML e-mail. Occasionally one encounters problems with the e-mail portions of Outlook. This article offers some tips and tools for Outlook users to keep the e-communicés flowing.

The maintenance tips described in this article are easy and strongly recommended for all users. With the exception of *Detect and Repair*, the repair tools described here are more suitable for advanced users. If your company is running an Outlook client to Microsoft Exchange Server, check with your Network Administrator — some of these tips may not be right for you.

It's impossible to discuss these tips and tools without first considering backing up. As much as we'd like to presume that these methods are foolproof, it's better to be skeptical about the possibility of corrupted data. Remember: Clean up before you back up. Some users are burdened with too much spam; others hold on to their e-mail for legal reasons. Some users forget to empty their *Deleted Items* folder. All of these users could use a little prompting for a thorough cleaning. The main point is to regularly tidy up before backing up.

Outlook e-mails are stored in a file called a Personal Folder File (.pst, for "Personal STore"). This native Outlook data file is multifaceted, collecting individual e-mails, tasks, notes, other servic-

es, and address book information. Earlier versions have an upward size limitation of 2GB, while Outlook 2003 has been expanded to 20GB. If you have an earlier version of Outlook, it becomes more important to clean up unnecessary e-mails regularly before it gets too big.

Offline Storage Files (.ost) are important for laptop users. The .ost can be a resource for recovery. These files reside on the Outlook client computer and hold

Remember: Clean up before you back up, and back up before you tune up.

e-mails, contacts, tasks, and other items from the original mail account.

Outlook definitely has a few quirks. You may find it curious that Microsoft doesn't provide a backup function by default within Outlook. Use a workaround: **File | Export**. Or download Microsoft's Personal Folders Backup Add-in (which, by the way, was a tricky installation for me). Consider also the technique of putting the .pst in a location that will be regularly backed up by Scheduled Tasks. In the April 2004 issue of *ACT! Extra*, Editor Doug Wolf wrote an important article about archiving and exporting your .pst.

Tune-up Tips

Regularly tune up your Outlook by doing the following:

Compact/Compress

Even if you're very good about deleting unnecessary e-mail, you may not realize that deleting e-mails leaves gaps in your .pst. Over time, these empty spaces build up and can really slow down what looks like an otherwise tidy Personal Folder. (Parallel aside: The same thing happens with ACT! databases — see ACT! Help to learn how to compress ACT!.) Here are the instructions to compact your Outlook .pst:

- 1 Open Outlook.
- 2 Go to **Tools | Services**, or for Outlook XP or 2003 look in **Data Management Services**.
- 3 Click on the **Personal Folder** to highlight it.
- 4 Click on **Properties**.
- 5 Select **Compact Now**. This will optimize your e-mail folder.

Update Outlook

Certainly most of us update Windows frequently, especially upon news of a worm or virus. But some of the most diligent of users forget to update Office/Outlook at the same time. The easiest way is to visit the Windows Office site and use the automatic Office Update. To update Outlook:

- 1 Open your browser window.
- 2 Go to <http://office.microsoft.com/OfficeUpdate/default.aspx>.

3 Click on **Office Update – Check for free updates that improve Office’s stability and security.**

Congratulations! You’ve cleaned up, backed up, and run maintenance on your valuable files. You may not have to resort to the repair tools. But if you have an emergency, it’s good to know that you have a parachute.

Hidden Tools for Worst-Case Scenarios

We’ve all had that *uh-oh* feeling. You may be able to restore Outlook to a working state by using these tools. The first tool is simplicity itself. Use these repairs, for example, when items get stuck in the Outbox, when an e-mail error message won’t resolve itself, or perhaps when Outlook freezes or closes when you try to send an e-mail.

Detect and Repair

This utility first became available with Outlook 2000. *Detect and Repair* requires the original installation Office CD.

- 1 Open Outlook.
- 2 Go to **Help | Detect and Repair**, and click to initiate.
- 3 Upon completion, it’s recommended that you restart your computer.

Scanpst.exe

This repair utility is also known as *Inbox Repair Tool*. It’s available on your computer but isn’t accessed from within Outlook. This tool performs tests and more or less re-indexes the .pst or .ost by checking file consistency and validations, and looks for orphaned items. It offers a logging option with a status report. If it finds any errors, it will create a backup before attempting a repair.

The first challenge is to find the tool, Scanpst. Its location depends on your operating system, as the location of the program has changed over time with the

various versions of Microsoft Office. You may need to use the Windows Search/Find utility to look for it. Alternatively, you can grab it (copy it onto your hard drive) from your installation media. Once you find the program, you can double-click on it to keep the program running while you find the .pst file (this reminds me of warming up the car on a frigid day). You’ll notice that you’ll have to provide the path and file name of the .pst file that you want to repair. You’ll also need to know the name and location of your .pst file.

Start another Find/Search to find the location of the file that you want to repair. You’ll need to be sure to set Explorer’s Folder Options to make Hidden Folders and System Folders visible. Details like Date Modified will help you determine the specific .pst or .ost. Keep in mind that mailbox.pst and Outlook.pst are default names. You might want to keep this window open to reference the path to the .pst file location.

The default .pst locations for Windows 2000 and XP are as follows: C:\Documents

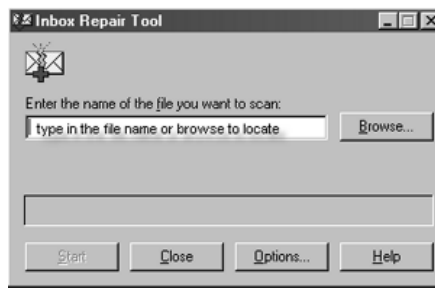


Figure 1. Initiating the Scanpst tool.

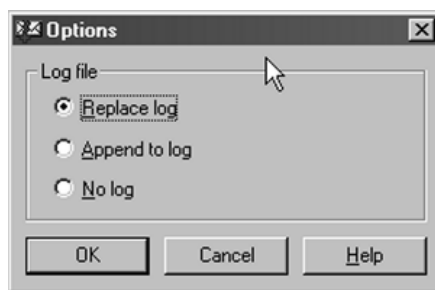


Figure 2. Log options.

and Settings\

To initiate Scanpst.exe:

- 1 Click on Scanpst.exe to initiate the tool (see Figure 1).
- 2 Specify the name of the .pst file to be repaired. Either type in the path and name, or browse to the .pst file you want to repair.
- 3 Select the desired log option (see Figure 2).
- 4 If *Scan the Inbox Repair Tool* reports errors, verify that the backup box is checked and browse to the desired location for your backup. Click **Repair** to initiate both the backup and the repair (see Figure 3).

For seriously corrupted .pst files, try running Scandisk.exe first, then Scanpst.exe, repeating three or four times until neither program returns an error. If you run Scanpst.exe on a .pst file that Outlook 2003 created for a local copy of Windows SharePoint Services events and contacts lists, you’ll get an error message that you can ignore.

Pst2GB.exe

Consider this tool for Outlook’s .pst. But be aware that it’s a tool only loosely speaking; it’s really more like a Neanderthal’s club. It’s used to truncate

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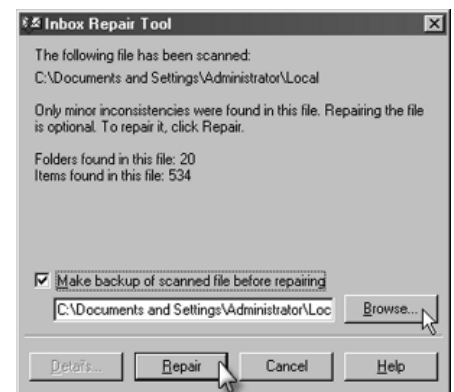


Figure 3. Back up and repair the .pst.

Selling Sales Automation...

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My company is developing its own sales automation system

If your company is developing its own system for sales, rather than working with a proven off-the-shelf product, there's a greater chance for failure and delay. You can position your proposal to show that you can be productive in a few weeks, rather than a year. You can also explain that you'll be building a client database with company information, e-mail addresses, Web sites, and information on your deals. In many instances, ACT! data can be imported into other systems once they go "live." Additionally, you can ask whether the corporate system will do things that ACT! does well, such as quick faxing, auto-dialing, and keeping history. Remember, it took 10 years and millions of dollars of programming for ACT! to become the product it is today.

Senior management doesn't understand computers and won't invest

This requires some education and a measure of politicking. You can enter data into ACT! and then run some interesting

reports to show how the same information can be used for sales management, scheduling, and mailing lists. Show the person what's on www.act.com or www.actaddons.com.

You may be able to show or to find some interesting products. Invite that person to an ACT! user group or sales automation trade show. Show senior management reports that you've developed.

The technical/computer support team in my company is too busy to work on the project

Most computer consultants make their living because companies have decided it's less expensive to "outsource" than to use their own dedicated resource. An investment in a few days with a knowledgeable ACT! consultant should speed up your project, save you time so that you can continue to focus on selling, and help you bridge the gap with your senior management and computer support team.

Our hardware is out-of-date or non-existent

Today, computers can be purchased or leased within minutes just by making a phone call. Companies like Dell, HP,

Gateway, and others have developed a niche answering technical questions and helping companies make the right buying decisions. They have lease programs available. Most equipment can be leased for less than \$150 per month. Again, if you look at the additional revenue a salesperson can bring in, this shouldn't be a major hurdle.

We don't have an ACT! administrator

Some creative ways to handle this are to hire a temp or possibly a college student with computer skills. You may also be able to find an administrative assistant who wants to get more involved with sales.

Conclusion

I hope these tips will help you overcome the hurdles of automating your sales force — and growing sales performance. ♦

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Hidden Tools and Tips...

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a .pst file that's grown larger than 2GB. This tool is useful for Outlook 2002 and earlier editions. Expect to lose some e-mail. But if a huge .pst is all that stands between you and your communication with the world, then you must proceed. Without a doubt, you'll pause beforehand and consider upgrading to 2003. Back up your .pst, of course, in anticipation of that upgrade day. And worry another

day about combining your old truncated and new .pst folder; just keep in mind it's possible.

You may also want to regulate .pst file size by creating different .pst files for different functions.

Other .pst File Solutions

If you've tried all of the tools listed without success, you do have other options. First, you should try creating a new Outlook profile and linking up your existing .pst files to it. It's interesting

that Outlook profiles are susceptible to corruption, even though .pst files usually aren't.

Or you could create a new Personal Folder File (.pst). Caution: This option may cause you to lose Outlook information beyond e-mails.

The most comprehensive solution is to create a new profile with a new Personal Folder File (.pst) and a new Personal Address Book File (.pab). Follow these instructions for Outlook XP/2003:

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