PRODUCT REVIEW

Kerio Connect

Reviewed by Brien M. Posey





Introduction

There was a time when tech journalists were widely predicting the demise of Email. Even so, Email remains one of the most critical services for almost any business, and a business' choice of mail server can have a major impact on both its security and its bottom line.

Although mail servers have gained a reputation for being expensive and overly complex, it doesn't have to be that way. GFI's Kerio Connect is designed to be secure, intuitive, and affordable, without sacrificing the features that people have come to expect. I was curious to see how Kerio Connect stacked up against some of the higher priced mail servers.

O1 The Installation Process

As someone who has worked extensively with Microsoft Exchange, I was expecting the Kerio Connect setup process to be really tedious and time consuming. However, the opposite ended up being true. I was able to get Kerio Connect up and running in less than 10 minutes.

I found the installation process to be really straightforward, especially when compared to some of the other mail servers that I have installed. I created an MX record on my DNS server, and then launched the installation wizard. The installation wizard prompted me to provide a few basic pieces of information such as the server's Internet Host Name and E-mail domain. Once I had answered a few simple questions, the installation process completed and Kerio Connect was up and running.

02 Working with Kerio Connect

I wasn't quite sure what to expect with regard to Kerio Connect's administrative interface. Some of the mail server applications that I have seen over the years use a really convoluted GUI, or force you to do everything from the command line. When I opened Kerio Connect's administrative tool for the first time, I was taken to a very intuitive dashboard view. You can see what this looks like in the figure below.

¢) 🙀 http://localhost:4040/admin/#dashboar	s v c	GFI-Kerio.gfi.com - Kerio C 🗙				- □ × ☆☆®
	🔯 Dashboard	🔯 Dashboard				Where is	Administrator •
	🤝 Message Queue						
	Traffic Charts	Kerio News			License Details		^
-	Statistics	Visit the GFI upgrade center to	Visit the GFI upgrade center to keep up to date with latest versions Join the discussion on TechTalk by GFI for updated IT news		License number:	10512-8VKUZ-4MV7F	
	📸 Active Connections	Join the discussion on TechTa	k by GFI for updated 11 news		Software Maintenance expiration date:	2019-05-31	
al 1	Copened Folders				Product expiration date: Number of users allowed by the license:	2019-05-31 10000	
					Number of active mailboxes:	0 (1 created)	
ø	🏐 System Health				Company:	GFI Trial Download Licence	
					Kerio Antivirus:	Yes	
					Exchange ActiveSync® extensions:	Yes	
					Kerio Anti-spam:	Yes	
					Install license		
					Update registration info		
					Kerio Antivirus		
					Status:	Running	
					The current virus database was updated before:	4 hours, 30 minutes	
				~	Last update check was performed before:	4 hours, 31 minutes	
					Virus database version:	12907453	
		System			Scanning engine version:	11.0.1.18	
-		Version: 9.2.	9 patch 1 (4540)				
nec		Operating system: Wir	dows Server 2016, x86_64				
len l		Hostname: GFI	Kerio.gfi.com				
KerioConnect		System Status					~
~		Add Tile Technical Support	ggest Idea			Kerlo Technologies s.r.o.	All rights reserved. Legal Notices

This is what the Kerio Connect dashboard looks like.

As you can see in the figure, the administrative tool provides a series of tabs that you can use to monitor system health, the message queue, traffic, and various other statistics.

Once I had Kerio Connect up and running, I wanted to see what was involved in creating user mailboxes. I also wanted to attach a client to the mail server to see what the end user experience was like.

Creating a user account is as simple as going to the Users tab, right clicking in the Users pane, and choosing the Add command. This brings up a dialog box that you can use to create a user account. As an alternative, you can import users from the Active Directory or from a CSV file.

The Add User dialog box included options that are very similar to those found in Microsoft Exchange. You can for instance specify contact information, as well as the user's office, job title, department, etc. You can also set up the user's permissions, mailbox quotas, and various mailbox rules as a part of the mailbox creation process. The figure below shows the Add User dialog box's Messages tab, which is used for creating mailbox rules.

Add User								?>		
General Email Addresses	Contact	Forwarding	Groups	Rights	Quota	Messages				
This user can send/receive	messages to	/from his/her o	wn domain	only						
Maximum message size										
Use the limit defined for	Use the limit defined for this domain									
 Limit outgoing message 	◯ Limit outgoing message size to (overrides the domain limit):									
O Do not limit message size	O Do not limit message size									
Items clean-out										
Use the settings defined for this domain: Item clean-out is disabled										
○ Use custom settings for this user										
Permanently delete old items in:										
Trash folder, iten	Trash folder, items older than:						days			
Spam folder, items older than:						30 0	days			
Sent folder, items older than:						30 0	days			
All folders except contacts and notes, items older than:						3	years 💌			
							ок с	ancel		

This is what the Add User dialog box looks like.

O3 The Client Component

Once I had set up a few user mailboxes, I created a Windows 10 VM, and then downloaded the email <u>client</u>. Kerio Connect supports a variety of clients, and there is even a connector component for Outlook. For the purposes of this review however, I decided to try out the 64-bit Kerio Connect Client for Windows. GFI also offers a 32-bit version of this client, as well as a MacOS version.

Initially I had problems getting the client to connect to the mail server. After a bit of trial and error however, I realized that the Kerio Connect installer does not automatically open the necessary firewall ports. Once I opened those ports on the mail server, the client was able to connect with no problem. You can see what the Kerio Connect Client looks like in the next figure.

erio Connect			🤶 💭 📖 🛽	¥ 🖌 🗏	🔔 🛛 US User1
nbox 2	« COMPOSE				
ent Irafts	• User2 One More Thing	12:21 PM 1.1 kB			
ipam Trash	• User2 Welcome	12:21 PM 1 kB			
OLDERS	+			No items selected Always display message preview	

This is what the Add User dialog box looks like.

As you would probably expect, the Kerio Connect Client opens to reveal the user's mailbox, as shown in the figure above. Like competing mail clients, the Kerio Connect Client also includes a calendar, a contact list, a task list, and a Notes feature.

One of the things that makes the Kerio Connect Client different from some of the other clients on the market is that it has a built-in instant messaging feature. You can see what the instant messenger looks like in the next figure.

Chat - (2) Kerio Connect		- 🗆 ×
File Edit View Email Window Tools	Help	
Kerio Connect	🔀 💭 📰 🖉 🖃	🌲 US User1 🕶
Q Search contact	User2 Online	HIDE NOTIFICATIONS
RECENT		
User2 Online ONLINE -	User2 12:47 PM Hey, do you have a second?	
There is no one online	US User1 12:47 PM Sure, what's up?	
	New messages	
	User2 12:48 PM I just had a quick question about that project that you were working on last week.	
		SEND
		SEND

The Kerio Connect Client supports instant messaging.

After spending some time with the instant messenger, I went back to the client's calendar. I was curious as to whether the calendar was simply a bare bones calendar, or whether it supported more advanced features. I started off by creating a meeting appointment and inviting some other users to the meeting (you can even search for a meeting time that works for everyone). This worked in nearly the same way as it does in Outlook, except that the invitation shows up in the client's Calendar tab rather than as an email. You can see an example of this in the next figure.

23 Tuesday	April 2019 24 Wednesday	25 Thursday	week 16 26 Friday	Uter?
23 Tuesday		25 Thursday		
23 Tuesday	24 Wednesday	25 Thursday	26 Friday	27 Saturday

The Kerio Connect Client allows you to invite other users to events.

I also found that the Kerio Connect client allows you to label events and set reminders in a way that is very similar to Outlook. You can even add an attachment to a calendar item. You can see an example below.

Calendar - Kerio Connect			- 🗆 X
File Edit View Email Window Tool: Kerio		ault email client. Do you want to set Kerio Connect to be your default email client? Set as default	×
Kerio Connect	Q Search Calendar		🗴 🥼 User2 🗸
APPIL ENTO A S T N T E S 1 E A A S S 7 B S IC IV IZ IS 14 IS IG IV IC IS IV 21 S IS IS IV IC IS 26 29 IV IV IV IV 20 IV IV IV IV IV	 HUM INERT CTEATE All der TSUAT ANT TSUAT ANT TSUAT <	Meeting Where Conference Room 1 When April 27, 2019 from 1:00 PM to 2:00 PM Attendees User1 (organizer) User2 Travel time 0	ABI A Contractor
		PRINT	

Here is what a calendar appointment looks like.

04 Pricing

GFI offers several different options for purchasing Kerio Connect. Pricing starts at \$365 per year for the minimum of 10 users. Additional users are \$36.50 up to 19 and then the price per user is reduced. A "deluxe" version includes Kerio Anti-Spam, Kerio Antivirus, and ActiveSync sells for \$440 for the minimum 10 users, and \$44 for additional users up to 19, when again, the price per user drops. Kerio Connect is also available through bundles in the GFI Unlimited plan.

You can find the full pricing information, and a listing of the various plans that are offered at: https://www.gfi.com/products-and-solutions/email-and-messaging-solutions/kerio-connect/pricing_

05 The Verdict

Whenever I review a product on this site, it has become customary for me to conclude the review by giving the product a star rating, ranging from zero to five stars. In the case of Kerio Connect, I decided to give it a score of 4.8, which is a gold star review.

Overall, I was really impressed by Kerio Connect. It has proven to be a very competent mail server that can definitely hold its own against higher priced competitors. The end users will no doubt find that the Kerio Connect Client includes all of the features that they have come to expect, but users also have the option of using a client of their own choosing.



Administrators will appreciate that the administrative interface is far more intuitive than a lot of the other mail servers on the market. Although I didn't really get into it in the review, Kerio Connect is jam packed with security features. The software also includes native archiving and backup capabilities, which can help with an organization's compliance requirements.

With all things considered, I think that the thing that impressed me the most about Kerio Connect was that it was so feature rich, and yet highly intuitive at the same time.



Get your FREE Kerio Connect trial



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