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MEETING MAKER
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Every law office has calendaring needs and requirements. Some offices have simple needs, while others have more complex requirements. Basically, however, we all want the same thing: a software program that works easily and reliably and records the required information in a readily accessible manner. Generally, the larger the office, the more issues calendaring presents in terms of getting the right people to the right place at the right time, getting a time that works for a meeting involving several people, or using a limited, but popular facility such as a conference room. Firms with litigation practices may also want a program to have rules-based calendaring. Meeting Maker was not designed specifically for use in a law office. If you need a rules-based calendaring system, Meeting Maker is not for you.

Meeting Maker serves as a basic calendaring program but facilitates the scheduling of meetings and resources. It provides the ability to have a separate calendar for each person in the firm; it allows the sharing of calendars and, it allows all calendars to be concurrently searched for available times for a meeting. By setting up a resource, such as a conference room, as a user and scheduling its use, you can also track and verify its availability for any required purpose at any given time. The product literature describes the product's focus as "collaborative scheduling".

On its website, Meeting Maker documentation distinguishes collaborative scheduling from individual calendaring as follows:

“... *personal calendar* solutions essentially simulate paper-based day planners to provide the user with the tools needed to track appointments and manage daily tasks. Often referred to as "organizers" or PIMs, these solutions provide minimal personal productivity enhancement, and do nothing to link the user with the greater organization. ... *group & shared calendar* solutions ... [provide] views into multiple calendars. This billboard-style access to schedules is limited by the static quality of the information being sought. The user is unable to gain up-to-date insight into the greater organization. It has only been through the

development of a third category, *collaborative scheduling*, that end-users have been able to utilize real-time connectivity and cross-platform integration to operate in a truly interactive and synchronous manner.”

Meeting Maker requires a server installation, but can use most desktop or laptop computers as a server and does not require a formal server structure independent of its own installation. If you will only run it on a single computer, you run the server installer on that computer and it sets up a server on the computer and then you use it as though it were a stand-alone. The program, however, was designed to work on a network and works most efficiently in a network environment as that allows each user to have access to their calendaring information and also allows the search of that information for the purposes of setting a meeting date. The advantages of collaborative scheduling depend on such an installation. To obtain that advantage, you must select one computer as the Meeting Maker server (you do not need to have a dedicated server). Install the Meeting Maker server software on it and install the Meeting Maker client software on the other computers on the network and on laptops that will sometimes connect to the server, so that they can access the program and data on the server.

Meeting maker is cross platform and works on all major platforms including Windows (98 or later) and Mac OS X (10.1 or higher), Linux, Solaris, Java, Palm OS (4.0 or higher), Pocket PC and RIM Blackberry. Do note, however that, as is the case with other calendaring programs, the installation of the required software to synchronize with a PDA may disable previously existing synchronization processes to prevent conflicts.

Meeting Maker lists complete hardware and software requirements for servers and clients on its website (www.meetingmaker.com). Briefly, for the Mac and Windows platforms, server requirements are 100 MB of free disk space, plus 1 MB for each user, 128 MB or more of RAM (256 recommended), and: Windows NT 4.0 or later on a Pentium III or better processor (Windows) or Mac OS X 10.1.x or higher on a G3 or better processor (Mac). Client requirements are 8MB of free RAM and 10 MB of free space regardless of platform and Windows 98 or later on the Windows side and Max OS X (10.1.x on the Mac side.

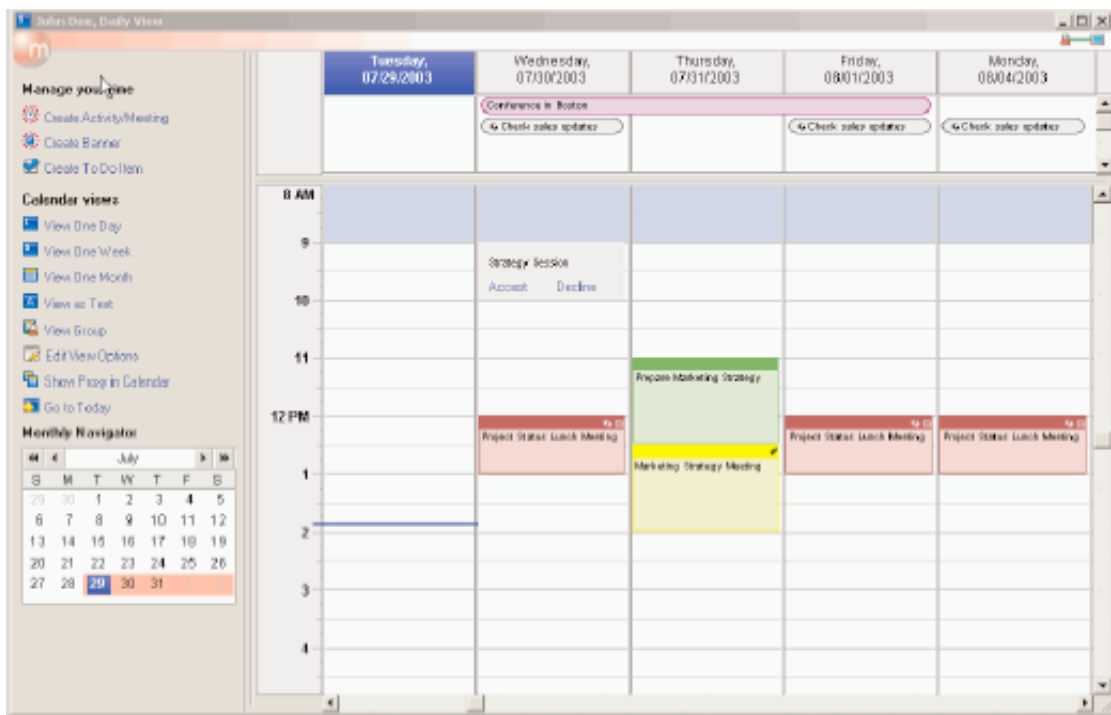
New Version: Meeting Maker Millennium (8.0): Meeting maker recently released the newest version of its software. Its most significant features

include:

- Web access for remote users that need quick access to their calendars
- Share free and busy time with others, simplifying the scheduling process
- iCalendar support allows sending meeting invitations to people and calendars outside of your organization
- Colors and labels, various layouts, and numerous viewing options for calendar customization
- Email integration provides the ability to contact attendees and send them attachments using your own email client
- Can automatically select the next timeslot when all attendees are available
- Lets you view the availability and schedules of teams or groups of people from a single window
- Automatically adjusts to any time zones around the world
- Send meeting invitations and reminders to mobile phones, pagers, and wireless PDAs (Palm, PocketPC & Blackberry)
- Runs on all major platforms - Windows, Macintosh, Linux, and Solaris -- even in your enterprise portal as a Web Service

Installation.

After downloading the most current version of the software, it easily and smoothly installed on my computers.



A familiar calendar view shows all your commitments in one place.

Operation. The program is quite intuitive and easy to learn. The User interface will appear familiar to anyone who has used a calendaring program. Both the data input screen and the calendar display screen are readable and easily understood. I had no problems with the actual operation of the program. It did what it was supposed to do; and it did it well. If you want a scheduling program that facilitates group scheduling, Meeting Maker works quite well. If you are installing the server on a laptop, you will need to be aware of one problem that you will have to address. During the installation process, the server software configures itself to the computer's IP address. If the server is on a computer that is relocated, it will not automatically reconfigure to a new IP address. As a result, it will not recognize the server as operational, even if it is the host computer. Manually reconfiguring the server to reflect the new IP address, however, solved the problem. The reconfiguration process is quite simple, it involves opening the server administrator and typing in the new IP address.

Activity: Untitled

Details Guests Options

Title: Untitled

Location:

Date: Sun 7 / 25 / 04 Time: 5 : 15 PM Duration: 1 : 00

Occurs once

Agenda

Delete Activity Cancel Create Activity

Cost

Meeting Maker works best with larger numbers of players. As if to

emphasize that point, the company sells the program in blocks of ten seats. Ten is the smallest number you can buy. The software cost for ten seats is \$950 (\$95 each). Additionally, you must buy the server software; it costs \$499. Once you have the software, they charge a fee of \$18 per User per year for support, which gets you software maintenance and upgrades.

An Offer You Can't Refuse. While Meeting Maker was designed for and is best suited for larger organizations, it can prove useful and quite satisfactory for a smaller office. In order to give potential users the opportunity to familiarize themselves with its features, the company currently has created what it calls a 3 for Free Evaluation. The program provides you with free access to Meeting Maker support for 30 days and the software gives you the server and three Users for an unlimited time period. If you are with a larger organization, you would keep the three Users and add to them as needed. If you are a small organization with three or less schedules to track, the company is, effectively giving you the software free.

Pros.

1. Easy to install
2. Easy to learn
3. Easy to use
4. Free for up to three users
5. Cross platform

Cons.

1. Better suited for larger firms/businesses; less useful in smaller firms.
2. Only sold in blocks of 10 units or more.
3. Can be pricey, depending upon the number of users

The Verdict. If you have a large organization and the need to identify times available for meetings involving two or more of your scheduled personnel, Meeting Maker is an excellent choice in terms of performance and a pretty good value. For a small firm (three or less schedules), the 3 for Free Evaluation offer is an offer you can't refuse. If you need more than three, but less than ten seats, however it become somewhat pricey and you can probably do better. Whatever size your firm, if you need to have rules-based calendaring, however, look elsewhere.