Outpost v2.5 Release Content Description

Jim Oberhofer KN6PE
1 December 2010
Revision 2

1. Introduction

This Release Content Description provides information about new or changed functionality that will be available in Outpost Packet Message Manager Release 2.5. This information is organized under the following sections:

▪ *New Features:* A new capability that did not exist in any prior version of Outpost in any form.

▪ *Enhancements:* A change to an existing feature that further improves the performance or usability of the application. Enhancements include minor changes, internal changes (that may not be evident to the user, but contribute to improved supportability increased stability, or application performance) and bug fixes.

▪ *Changes since Version 2.4:* A list of the various changes that were introduced in maintenance or defect releases since the original v2.4 release.

▪ *Changes planned for Version 3.0:* Several of changes were planned to be part of the v2.5 release. However, due to the structural changes some of these would have inflicted on the release, I am moving them to a v3.0 (numbering reflects a structural change to the program), the next release after v2.5. The goal is to get v2.5 out and stable, and then focus on v3.0

2. New Features

2.1. ER#416, ER#857: ICS 309 Communications Log

The first occurrence of this release request came in 5 years ago as a need for a general reporting capability. In 2007, Outpost started writing the message.log file in anticipation of addressing this requirement.

Outpost v2.5 will introduce an ICS 309 Communications Log report builder to produce a standard ICS309 Comm Log Report. The report builder will be implemented as a separate program that can be run manually or callable controlled Outpost. While a manually filled in comm log is usually filled in sequentially as message traffic occurs, Ics309clb.exe (as it will be implemented) will let the user control the look and content of the report as follows:

1. Reporting Period: define the reporting period for which this report covers: (i) today, (ii) since last report run, (iii) the entire message.log file date range, and (iv) custom date/time range.

2. Content: defines which messages are included with options to select Sent, Received, Private, NTS, and Bulletins. Additionally, messages can be excluded based on words found in the Subject Line, such as "READ:" and "DELIVERED:". Exclusions are user-defined.

3. Sort: The report can be sorted by different fields including Date/Time, From- Date/Time, To-Date/Time, Local_Msg_ID-Date/Time, and Subject- Date/Time. For most of the sort options, a line break can be inserted at sort value transitions to improve readability.

4. Form: By default, all built-in fields are included. However, you may elect to exclude certain fields from the report.

5. Output: Ics309clb.exe will allow you to create 3 variations of the report: (i) standard printed form, (ii) file version of the report written to an ASCII text file, and (iii) comma-delimited file version of the report written to an ASCII .csv file. This option lets the user define what the Print button does when pressed.

Additionally, Outpost can schedule the ICS 309 report in 2 ways: (i) manual: run the program. Lets the user configure the fields, select options, and run the report as desired. (ii) auto-run the program. Outpost can run Ics309clb.exe at a certain interval. This will cause Ics309clb.exe to run an entire report sequence in the background, and then exit.

Additionally, implements ER #889 (double-log entries), #892 (Auto-run command).

2.2. ER#870: Local Message ID

There are some municipalities that require that all messages, both outgoing and incoming, be identified with a Local Message ID.

Currently, Outpost can assign a message ID to an outgoing message by placing an identifier into the Subject Line thereby helping the sending station keep track of what messages were created and sent.

To address the requirement for stamping incoming messages with a local message ID, Outpost can now optionally assign all incoming messages with a Local Message ID (LMI). This field will be implemented as follows:

1. Message Listing: The LMI field will now be visible as part of the base message listing for all folders. If not used, the field can be shrunk so that it is not displayed.

2. Message Display: If an LMI value is assigned, it will be presented on the message form.

3. Read and Delivery receipts: The LMI value will be added to all enabled receipts sent back to the original sending station.

4. ICS309 Comm Log: The LMI value is optionally included in the ICS 309 report.

2.3. ER#874: Standard Windows Data directories

When Outpost was initially launched in 2003, it wrote all its data files into the Program directory. This was not a good practice and did not follow Microsoft's standard for separating executable files from data files. This also turned out to be a problem with the introduction of Vista and Windows 7 where Windows enforced tighter file security with the programs directory. So, it is time to remedy this.

This change makes the Outpost program suite comply with this Windows standard. Essentially, the implementation will occur as follows:

1. Windows Vista and Windows 7: read and write all data files in the following directory
   Data: C:\AllPrograms\Outpost
   Program: C:\Program Files (x86)\Outpost

2. Windows 2000, NT, XP: read and write all data files in the following directory
   Data: C:\Documents and Settings\All Users\Application Data\Outpost
   Program: C:\Program Files\Outpost

3. Windows 89SE, Windows SE:
   Data: C:\Program Files\Outpost
   Program: C:\Program Files\Outpost

The assumption is that Outpost is running on a PC shared by many users and that a single log-on exists (if used at all).

3. Enhancements

3.1. Outpost

ER#533: NTS Tab Management. This change improves the usability of the NTS Message Maker by causing fields into which the user tabs to be fully selected. This reduces the number of keystrokes needed to change a field.

ER#770: Non-Model Form Error. This problem presented itself when one user had the prompt-for-PacFORMS0-in-Native open, and an error occurred when Outpost Send/Receive tried to run again. This specific case has been addressed, and all similar user prompt cases have been handled.

ER#826: Create new Message Button from Address Book. When working in the address book, it is sometimes desired to launch into a message immediately after setting up an address, and to use that address. This change adds a menu control and cntl-key function that will create a new message from

the Address Book using the address that is displayed. I anticipate that feedback will provide guidance as to the use of a form button to further deliver this functionality.

ER#843: Invoke Address Book. Double-click on the new message form TO: icon to bring up and select the address book choices.

ER#845: Find log files. This change adds a menu option to open Windows Explorer to the exact location for Outpost data directories.

ER#860: Force retrieves Bulletins. When retrieving bulletins, Outpost checks to see if the bulletins already have been retrieved. There may be times that it is unclear whether the message was retrieved or not. This is an Outpost main form option to force a one-time retrieval of any bulletin that Outpost thinks is already downloaded.

ER#863: JNOS, skip List of "0 New" message listing. After you download messages from a JNOS area, when you go back to that area, JNOS will report "<#> messages - 0 new". This change will detect this JNOS comment and, if "0 new" is present, will not sent the L(ist) command, thereby reducing channel traffic.

ER#865: Save Tac Call, Tac Text. This change will cause Outpost to save the entered Tactical Call and Tactical Test regardless whether Use Tactical Call is selected or not.

ER#868: Add an Archive button to the Message form. This button is to be placed on the message forms for incoming messages. On opening the message, the user will now have the option to (i) close, (ii) delete, or (iii) archive the message.

ER#875: Add link button from Report Settings to Message Settings. Turning on the Subject Line Identifier or the newly added LocalMessage ID feature occurs at the Tools > Message Settings, Tab 2. However, the data that gets populated with this feature resides on the Tools > Report Settings form (originally designed for OnLine Reports). This change places a Config Values button on the Message Settings, Tab 2 area that opens the Report Settings.

ER#879: MINOR: TNC init file name change. Currently, when opening the TNC Init file for edit, the full path name is displayed and is too long for the form. This is a minor change to leave off the entire path so that only the file name shows in the form caption.

ER#880: MINOR: PacFORMS: popup prompt change. Change Outpost/PacFORMS processing popup from YES/NO/CANCEL to YES/NO… Cancel is meaningless in this case.

ER#881: MINOR: Spelling change. Fix Auto-Read/deliver receipt wording; Msg Settings > Tracking

ER#883: Error Handling. Enhance ReportError routine to pass 1 or 2 additional parameters for clarification.

ER#888: Disconnecting from a BBS with AGWPE. AGWPE does not provide any message indicating that the disconnect process is complete. Instead, Outpost waits 5 seconds before unregistering from AGWPE. If the BBS disconnect was not detected by AGWPE, it continues to send disconnect tries, then times out. Need to fix.

ER#890: NTS and Winlink Classic. Unlike WL2K, Winlink Classic does support Bulletins and NTS. This change allows Outpost to clearly differentiate between WL2K and Winlink Classic as a BBS, and allows NTS and Bulletins to be sent and retrieved.

ER#891: Resolved Message Window sizing problem. This change fixes the situation where the Message window could be minimized, then closed (right-mouse click on the tool-bar icon), and never opens again.

ER#894: Cursor Placement in a Message. When opening any message (new, reply, forward), the cursor is now placed in the first blank field.

ER#895: JNOS Message Uniqueness. Determining if a JNOS message was previously downloaded is difficult since there is no such concept as a unique Message ID. The test for message uniqueness is to add a test for the actual message size as listed on the BBS along with the subject.

3.2. Opscripts

ER#793: Add BBS Expire command. Some users wish to replace a posted message with a new message as it becomes available. When this occurs, it is desirable to delete any previously posted bulletin message so that only the latest is used. This change will introduce a new Opscript command to EXPIRE() a Bulletin that the user determines that they own.

ER#814: Add Message Receipt command. There are times when the user may wish to override or set a request for read or delivery receipts. This change adds a new Opscript System Variable to set the Message Receipts.

ER#816: Add a variable that holds the result of the SR session. This change will let a script recover, view, and act on the status of an initiated send/receive session. A new System Variable – SRNOTE (for Send/Receive Notification) – will present the Notification window for the last session ran. If the SRNOTE Variable is 0 length, no error occurred.

ER#820: Add a variable that holds the DATETIME value of a message. On reading a message, the message date/time value will now be accessible by the script.

ER#821: Add ability for a script to call another script. This is a documentation change to present the run-line command options for anyone wishing to call a script either from another script, or from some other program of .bat file.

ER#877: trap the cursor position on the Edit Form. After editing a script in the Edit window and then moving to the 2 other forms, moving back to the Edit window never preserved the cursor position. This change ensures that the cursor is were the user left it prior to moving to a different view.

ER#898: Fix String Compare. This change corrects a problem where you could not compare a string as used in cases such as "`if FROM = "KN6PE" then…`".

3.3. Interactive Packet

ER#886: Handle windows standard windows edit Pop-up. For users who use the Mouse and right-click to bring up an edit menu when moving around a text field, a standard windows popup occurs, but does not trigger the correct cut, copy, or paste. This change fixes this problem on Ipserial, Iptelnet, and Ipagwpe.

3.4. Message Capture System

ER#806: Support Concurrent Connects. This should have been available as part of the v2.4 release of Ics213mm feature. Opdirect was rewritten (again) and now supports more than one program connecting at a time. This was an apparent need given the intent to have more than one instance of Ics213mm running at a time. The change will also mange access to the Outpost message DB; tuning of this change will undoubtedly occur as user deploy this in their environment. Additionally, this change should address some instability issues reported by Ics213mm and PacFORMS users.

3.5. Ics213mm

ER#810: Resolve program hangs if Opdirect stops. With the above change to Opdirect, this problem should no longer occur. However, changes to Ics213mm will also be made to trap problems on its side to ensure hangs do not occur.

ER#873: Handle situation with ":" in the text. Ics213mm uses the colon as a field delimiter when formatting and creating a message sent by Outpost. If a colon is embedded in the message, undesirable results occur. The workaround was: do not use the colon in your message. This problem will be addressed by handling the colon correctly.

3.6. PacFORMS

ER#878: PacFORMS: Add local message controls for opening in native form. Today, Outpost treats PacFORMS the same for opening in the native program whether they are incoming from a local PacForm submittal or received from the BBS. In most cases, we want to prompt for received

PacFORM messages, but not necessarily for locally created messages. This change separates the prompt options and creates an option set for received PacFORMS and one for Locally created PacFORMS.

ER#887: PacFORMS, Pick up Message Priority. Outpost can flag a message as Urgent. When Pacform messages are created, the message status is embedded in the subject line. This change will read the locally created pacform message subject lines and tag them as Urgent if the U (urgent) or E (emergency) flags are in the subject line.

4. Documentation

ER#738: Spell Check. While spell-check will not be directly added to Outpost message forms, Application note will be written that describes how to use TinySpell with Outpost.

ER#772: Telnet-BPQ Link. Write a HOW_TO for the telnet-BPQ link setup procedure.

ER#876: Doc Updates, Opscript run command line. Opscript can be run with certain command line options. This is a change to document this.

All other documentation will be updated to reflect the changes made in this release.

5. Changes since v2.4 c074

Version 2.4.0c077 Release , January 3, 2010

ER#508: Fixes address book to reformat the email address area from a list of entries to a line of entries.

ER#799: add change to allow BPQMailChat to support SMTP email

ER#802: change PacForms handling for opening a message back in its native HTML page

ER#807: Scripts is not pulling up BBS by Connect Names instead of Friendly Names

ER#809: allow current BBS, TNC, Retrieve options if not called out in Scripts

ER#803: Addresses problem where Ics213mm restarts after shutting it down. Other changes may follow.

ER#808: Changes Opdirect to write Ics213mm & PacForm messages to Out Tray vs Draft Folder.

ER#805: update Opupdate24 control button label

Version 2.4.0c081 Release, January 11, 2010

ER#799: One more time, add change to allow BPQMailChat to support SMTP email

ER#811: Corrects problems with Node Handling, Xconnect, and BBS connect commands.

ER#813: Supports BPQMailChat RMS: and RMS/ address structures for BPQMailChat-to-RMS node message passing.

Version 2.4.0c082 Release, January 28, 2010

ER#822: Fixes Address book problem with single Address entry.

ER#823: Fixes BPQMailChat handling to exclude LFs on transmitted strings.

Version 2.4.0c089 Release, April 7, 2010

ER#824: Removes the AA4RE LM check for my call sign in the To Listing; no longer needed.

ER#825: Adds option to not put the message number on the subject line.

ER#827: Resolves Outpost not retrieving filtered JNOS messages.

ER#828: If "L" is entered as the Filter List message command, does not append the Area. Makes for more efficient message checking.

ER#830: Adds ability to use the JNOS SC command (send copies) for multiple address processing (used when multiple addresses or a Dist List is on the TO: line).

ER#832: Adds option to always reply with a delivery receipt.

ER#834: Adds Notification levels to the Doc; changes the "L" flag to "N".

ER#835: Resolves Send/Receive not exiting during a TNC connect prior to the BBS connect.

ER#836: Allows BBS Area Filters to accept a "-" or a "_" for Area Names.

ER#837: Resolves Note box and Session log not showing all application error data

ER#840: Resolves situation where S/R session is running while user changes the BBS selection.

ER#841: Resolves problem where multiple addresses on a script TO: field were not displayed correctly.

ER#844: Resolves N0ARY send message problem (returning "!! Abort Send Command" Error)

ER#838: Ipserial.exe: Adds a timestamp when we do a connect & disconnect by Outpost

ER#831: Opdirect.exeDerives Subject Line from !PACF! header line. Requres PacFORMS v.31.

Version 2.4.0c099 Release, June 15, 2010

ER#801: Allow Outpost to Telnet through BPQ to a BBS using BBS Paths.

ER#817: Resolves problem of performing copies of BBSs with Path Files, and the Path File was not copied. Associates Path Files with BBS Friendly Name, not Connect Name.

ER#847: If there was a BBS disconnect immediately after a connect, try to determine the reason, and report it.

ER#848: Resolves Tools > Msg Settings > Advanced, Prompt option did not stick.

ER#850: Adds ARL Number 47 for ARL numbering section, see latest FSD-3 form.

ER#853: Further improves TNC initialization error and abort handling.

ER#854: Aligns Outpost Telnet connect sequence to the Telnet Protocol Specification.

ER#858: Enhances script handling for BBS names; now accepts Friendly Name or Connect Names.

ER#859: Add a flag to wait for the script to complete before exiting Outpost.

ER#862: Ignore Auto-receipts (Delivery and Read) for Bulletins.

ER#864: Resolves erroneous error notification when abort is pressed with Retrieve Filters enabled.

ER#852: Ics213mm, Resolves situation where Signature and Position were not printed.

6. Changes planned for v3.0

Several of the following were planned to be part of the v2.5 release. However, due to the structural changes some of these would have inflicted on the release, I am moving them to a v3.0 (numbering reflects a structural change to the program), the next release after v2.5. These include:

ER#681: Add Export/Import TNC, BBS capability. This change is similar to what Outpost currently supports with message export and importing. With this change, users will be able to export and import TNC and BBS configurations. Because the output will be an ASCII file, This will help with sharing configurations by sending them by packet.

ER#683: Increase message size limit. Outpost currently imposes a hard 10,000 character limit on its messages (some HF BBSs impose a 3000 limit). However, there are situations when passing a larger message may be desired such as zipped and uuencoded files (still all ascii). This change will increase the message size to something larger than 10,000 characters.

ER#732: TNC time to Zulu. This option will allow the user to set the TNC to either local time or UTC time.

ER#769: Pass Command lines parameters to Outpost. This is the first release where Outpost can be run with command line options. Initially, the command line option will be limited to polling frequency.

ER#800: Allow multiple Outpost instances at the same time. Currently, only one instance of Outpost can run at a time. This change is an ADVANCED feature that allows multiple Outpost instances to run. However, it will be incumbent on the user to manage the set of up the different instances whether from the same directory or from different program directories.

ER#839: Error Handling. The problems with Vista and W7 have exposed some error handling gaps that previously never presented themselves. This change continues to create a more robust error – handling environment to trap errors before they occur.

ER#851: Associate key BBS values with the BBS. Currently, the Tools > Send/Receive settings are global for whatever BBS is selected. However, from the feedback I am getting, the may no longer make sense since not all BBSs are same or are desired to behave the same. This change does the following:

1. Adds two tabs to the BBS Setup form: Automation and Retrieving

2. Moves the storage of the automation and Retrieving values from the global Outpost.ini file to the respective BBS configuration

3. When a BBS is selected, the Automation and Retrieving settings will be loaded.

4. The Tools > Send/Receive Settings menu will also show the Automation and Retrieving tab values as before, and can be temporarily overridden. For permanent changes, you will need to go to Setup > BBS, Automation or Retrieve tabs.

ER#45, #491, #871: Outpost runs in the background. It is getting to the point that Outpost can run to retrieve messages, and should be less intrusive to normal PC operations. This change will break out the Send/Receive Session from the main program allowing it to run unobtrusively. It also allows it to be called from Opscripts, thereby eliminating the need for Outpost to be running with Opscripting.