

U How NEO Improves Microsoft Outlook Productivity

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We often get asked how **Nelson Email Organizer** (NEO) differs from Microsoft® Outlook®, how it helps make managing email more effective, and who NEO is best suited for.

This non-technical document attempts to answer these questions. Information contained in this document is intended for product evaluators, the press and other interested parties, and may be used and distributed freely.

That's the magic of NEO -
NEO uses new technologies
to clear the email bottleneck
without hindering all that
Outlook already does.

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Overview

We often get asked how NEO differs from Microsoft® Outlook®, how it helps make managing email more effective, and who NEO is best suited for. This non-technical document attempts to answer these questions.

Microsoft Outlook is a powerful product

Like all successful products, Outlook evolves to meet the emerging needs of its users. With each new version we all weigh in on the new and updated features, pleased to see improvements in some areas but also wondering when we'll see improvement in others. In the end we ask 'how do these features help me', forgetting for a moment that there are millions just like us asking the same thing, each with a different set of needs.

People have their own ideas of how to manage their email, and it's Outlook's mission to accommodate them (as developers of email productivity software ourselves, we understand the challenge). That Outlook does in fact meet the needs of millions of diverse users is by itself a strong measure of product effectiveness.

Independent Software Vendors - extending the power of Outlook

Outlook has great features but much of its enabling power comes from its underlying technologies. One important enabler is the ability to extend Outlook functionality. End-users can create macros and custom forms, IT departments can extend Outlook behaviour using Microsoft Visual Basic®, and software companies can implement add-in programs to add even more value to Outlook.

That's where we come in. Microsoft encourages and supports companies in their development of products that enhance their products. As a member of Microsoft's Independent Software Vendor program, we are one of those companies.

We have developed patent-pending technologies that automatically organize email. We bring a fresh, much-needed solution to the email overload problem. We chose to develop NEO as an add-in product for Outlook because we saw the opportunity to help make Outlook users much more productive.

NEO – an add-in product that adds in a surprising way

Like other add-in products, NEO doesn't replace Outlook. For one thing, Outlook is much more than email. NEO interacts with the non-email aspects of Outlook, but for the most part NEO is email-centric because we view email as Outlook's productivity centre of gravity.

All of Outlook continues to work exactly as before. Where we can make users more productive, we do, but we do it in an additive way that preserves all that Outlook does. That's something our users both appreciate and find reassuring.

However, unlike most other add-in products that add or enhance a single feature, NEO takes a wholesale approach. We believe that real productivity gains don't come from incremental improvements here and there. As we describe below, the existing Inbox/Outbox/Sent Items folder-based model itself is actually causing the productivity bottleneck, and that in changing the model NEO greatly simplifies email use. As a result, productivity features are easier to use, making many more users more productive.

The magic of NEO is that it clears the productivity bottleneck without hindering all that Outlook already does. And it does it in a natural way, or as our users often say "...how Outlook should have looked in the first place."

Clearing the Email Bottleneck

How did we get here?

Email programs (called email clients) were designed in the days when people only had to deal with a handful of messages a day. Typically, these email programs contained an Inbox where messages arrived, an Outbox where outgoing messages sat until sent, and a Sent folder where sent messages landed. A little later, when the Inboxes started to get cluttered, users were given the ability to create their own folders and move messages to them so they could find them more easily.

It was a workable model then but soon became comically inadequate. Suddenly there were too many messages to deal with, and too much "heavy lifting" involved in dragging messages to folders, ... not to mention the constant decisions about where to drag the messages.

New rule-based features were then added. Instead of having to handle every message, all users needed to do was create rules that did the heavy lifting for them. That helped sophisticated users, but didn't help users who were weren't comfortable with or have the time to create and maintain rules. It turned out to be a band-aid solution at best. Most users don't use rules and thus get no benefit.

Linear solutions battling an exponential problem

Here's what we see users doing. They ...

- Let the mail pile up in their Inbox and take their chances when they need to locate a message.
- Become experts at taming their email client programs, spending hours creating and maintaining rules or dutifully dragging messages into folders so they know where to find them.
- Do both. Even with rules, who today can keep up with the Inbox?

Clearly this model isn't sustainable. The overload-coping solutions provided in email client programs to date – folders and rules – both require ongoing manual action by the user.

Ways email use has changed

To be fair, email use has changed so dramatically these past five years it's no wonder email client programs have not been able to keep up.

We see four changes as having the most impact:

More email

Hardly a day goes by without a mention of spam and email overload. While formerly a badge of distinction, getting large volumes of email, particularly unsolicited mail, can cripple productivity.

Unless managed properly, even receiving solicited mail such as e-zines can affect productivity.

People save email

Email data contains important company information. It's no longer reasonable to ask users to delete or shunt non-current email offline. Email is too business-critical for companies to continue to take an "email is for communication only" policy.

Users will save their email any way they can because they know they will need it later. Email retention management is

becoming an emerging necessity – how to retain the right messages in an orderly way.

People need to find messages quickly

With tens and hundreds of thousands of messages being saved, the need to find messages quickly is obvious.

Users think about and hunt for messages in different ways. Productivity and user satisfaction goes up when messages are found where they expect them, but falls dramatically when users resort to brute-force browsing.

Email workflow is now more sophisticated

The email client paradigm is based on the office paper flow model, but is it really still an appropriate model for today's higher email volumes? What is more, email workflow characteristics are actually quite unlike those for paper documents: there is more urgency, it's more dialog-based, and there are many, many more correspondents.

Users are left to creating their own systems to workaround the workflow limitations of email clients.

What's needed now?

What's needed are ways that better accommodate email's new reality.

We believe that's only possible by clearing the bottleneck caused by the Inbox/Outbox/Sent Items folder-based model. Only by shifting away from this out-dated model can we begin to realize order of magnitude productivity gains.

What is NEO?

NEO is an email organizer

NEO is a client-side program that interfaces with Outlook and Outlook Exchange data and message stores. NEO does not store Outlook messages. It organizes email by storing pointers to the messages in NEO catalog(s).

NEO operates as an add-in product for the Microsoft Outlook email client program.

Email organizers vs email clients

Think of email organizers as 2nd generation email clients. Email organizers go significantly beyond the simple storage and mail transport features of email clients to specifically address the additional needs of today's email users.

Email organizers are designed to automate email organization, to accommodate people's needs to permanently save all their email, to enable quick and easy email retrieval (improved presentation, improved browsing, improved searching), and to promote more effective ways of managing email workflow. Importantly, email organizers do this with good to excellent performance even with hundreds of thousands of messages.

Many email products extend email client capability, but unless they add value in at least several of these fundamental ways, they are not email organizers.

Does this mean NEO is only for power users?

On the contrary, it would be more accurate to say that you don't have to be a power user to use NEO. NEO makes email productivity more accessible to users of all user levels.

Recall that as message volumes grew, new overload-coping features were added to email client programs. This did help, but only by shifting the organizing workload to the email user. However, the unfortunate side effect was that it made email client programs much harder to use. They became more complicated, and less intuitive. Since the features did not naturally extend the model, they were buried into the user interface (product depth instead of product breadth).

In developing NEO, we studied the folder-based model and decided a new model was needed. By shifting the model focus, we were able to surface all the needed functionality (lots of product breadth). In NEO, most features are simplified, more accessible, more consistent, and more obvious, thereby empowering all users – not just power users.

Since NEO automatically shoulders most of the organizing tasks, all users get an immediate productivity boost. Users can manually organize, but the need to do so has reduced dramatically.

How NEO Makes Outlook More Productive

Comparing NEO to Outlook

It's difficult to compare products on a feature by feature basis. Even though there are features similar to both NEO and Outlook, it serves no useful end to compare them one on one.

As an add-in product that complements Outlook, NEO was not designed to replace Outlook. In taking a 2nd-generation approach to email management, NEO was designed to extend Outlook and make email more productive for the more than 100 million Outlook users. In effect, NEO turns Outlook into a 2nd-generation email program - a very powerful email organizer.

To that end, I will concentrate on ten areas where NEO adds real productivity value to Outlook, bypassing areas where the differences are just incremental. Some features such as unified view of messages across message stores, categories and conversation threading are exclusive to NEO Pro – otherwise all features are common to both NEO Standard and NEO Pro.

In the following I'll assume we're taking a tour of NEO together, with me explaining the features of NEO in a conversational way.

Top ten productivity features

1 - Unified view of messages across message stores	
How it Works	Productivity Benefits
<p>Outlook users are encouraged by Exchange Administrators and by the Outlook email client to archive messages to secondary message stores (Pests). As a result, most users are unwillingly forced into a multi-message store situation.</p> <p>While this helps solve the performance limitations of Outlook, it is rarely desirable by users. Although you can drag and drop between stores, and rules operate across message stores, there is no way to view messages from different message stores together. <u>In fact, in Outlook you can't even search for messages across message stores.</u></p> <p>NEO Pro extends unified viewing by breaking down the artificial message store boundaries. When using NEO Pro you have a seamless viewable, searchable space for all your messages no matter what message stores they are in.</p> <p>NEO Pro lets you choose which of your profile's message stores to put into your NEO catalog (e.g., your Exchange Mailbox and several archive Pests). All messages in your catalog then show seamlessly together in NEO's folders – you aren't even aware they come from different message stores (except of course in our Outlook view). What is more, you can search across the entire catalog. You can even have as many catalogs as you like, each containing different message stores.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ You can view and search for your messages without limit. <p>You can continue to archive in Outlook as required without hindering your productivity when using email.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Exchange administrators also get a big break. As a user you will be less reluctant to archive your data knowing that it no longer affects your ability to find messages. <p>Also, it's an opportunity for shifting some of the data storage resources off the email server and onto alternate locations such as other servers and desktops.</p>

2 - Unified view of messages across Outlook folders	
How it Works	Productivity Benefits
<p>This feature alone contributes more than any other to NEO's improved productivity. It is a direct result of NEO's superior email model (underlying architecture) and is one of the key reasons the Inbox/Outbox/Sent Items folder-based model has ceased to be effective.</p> <p>Outlook organizes messages into folders and presents them in different ways by creating views on the fly that you can sort and group. In contrast, NEO uses indexing (shortcut) technologies to create multiple indexes to each message so that the views and folders display instantly.</p> <p>NEO is aware of and uses the Outlook folder information, but is not artificially bound by it. As a result, NEO can show messages in useful ways that are <u>independent of the Outlook folder a message lives in.</u> Outlook draws fences around its folders. Outlook operations across folders are very awkward, or simply not possible.</p> <p>In Outlook, if you use folders to organize messages you cannot see a conversation across multiple folders. So you decide to use categories instead as your major organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Browsing time is significantly reduced because messages are where you expect to find them. Switching from view to view, folder to folder is instant because of NEO's indexing technology. <p>Users think about their messages in different ways (e.g., message last week from Sylvia with the PDF attachment). NEO instantly shows the same message in different ways.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Since NEO automatically creates these folders for you, you don't have to understand or set up complex organizing strategies to side-step the folder boundaries in Outlook. <p>Though different than Outlook,</p>

<p>mode. To make this useful you need to sort the list pane by category, but doing so destroys your ability to see conversations. Basically, any choice you make to organize and view your mail disables other equally valid strategies. We call this the <u>folder straight-jacket</u>.</p> <p>Incidentally, we believe the practice of organizing messages into Outlook folders is flawed. Messages can only be in one location at one time and therefore cannot be thought of in multiple contexts. This is another reason the folder-based model is failing. Though we fully support the use of Outlook folders, we recommend as a best practice using Categories for keyword/project-based organization.</p>	<p>NEO's organization is simple and intuitive.</p>
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<h3>3 - Views as tabs</h3>	
<h4>How it Works</h4>	<h4>Productivity Benefits</h4>
<p>NEO's view tabs display your messages in different ways.</p> <p>For example, by clicking the Correspondent tab you see all your messages auto-organized into their own Correspondent folders, and by clicking Attachment you see them auto-organized into folders by attachment type.</p> <p>These tabs are analogous to Outlook's views. In essence, we've taken the notion of views and surfaced them to make them a single click away.</p> <p>However, we've gone further in two important ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By creating <u>indexes to the messages</u> we don't create the views on the fly like Outlook, we display the contents instantly regardless of the number of messages in the display set. 2. <u>View tabs give concurrent contexts</u>. With Outlook there is one list pane; with NEO it's more like you get one for each view tab. You can select a message in one view, click to move to another view to select another message, then when done click to go back to your original message. <p>NEO's folder structure automatically preserves message focus when moving from view to view regardless of the Outlook folder a message is stored in.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ View tabs are right on the interface surface – easier to see and use for all users. ▪ Instant presentation of messages – no waiting for Outlook to create a view. ▪ One-click instead of three to select a view. ▪ Can jump easily to see messages in other views without losing your current message focus. <p>In Outlook, if you need to change views to locate another message in the same folder, then focus on another message, you must re-find the original message when changing the view back. Unlike in NEO, the Back and Forward keys don't help within the same folder for different views.</p> <p>NEO users quickly move back and forth between views without hesitation.</p>

4 - Active Mail – a staging area for your mail	
How it Works	Productivity Benefits
<p>What's missing in Outlook is a way to deal with new mail you haven't had time to act on yet - the mail that piles up while you're busy in meetings.</p> <p>In Outlook, this special area is more or less the top of the Inbox. Many users employ a variety of ingenious methods for dealing with their active mail. Some use flags, but flags are more appropriate for longer term actions and follow-ups. It's also common for users to use the Read status of the message as a poor-person's indicator meaning "I still have to deal with this." Most simply let the mail pile up in their Inbox and remember what messages they have dealt with based on date or the state of the message.</p> <p>The lack of a special area for dealing with active mail requires the user to deal with it immediately, file it, flag it, or maintain a system to remember what still needs to be done.</p> <p>NEO's Active Mail is simply your "I have to deal with this" email. It's your active mail - some read, some unread - that requires your attention soon but not necessarily immediately. All new mail arrives here. Like Outlook you can read and reply to messages, but unlike Outlook <u>you can remove messages from Active Mail when you have dealt with them – without having to file or delete them</u>. In NEO you can read a message yet still have it in the state where you still need to take action on it. After all, we have to at least read messages before deciding what to do with them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Helps highlight just the mail you have to deal with (important email is not lost). ▪ Reduces need to handle mail messages more than once (making a message inactive leaves the message in Outlook but removes it from view). ▪ You are no longer overwhelmed by an overflowing Inbox. If your Active Mail is empty, you have no more messages you need to deal with. <p>While difficult to quantify, this is no small point. NEO users report much less stress because they feel more in control of their email.</p>

5 - Automatic detection of Bulk Mail	
How it Works	Productivity Benefits
<p>In Outlook, bulk mail such as e-zines, discussion lists, company notifications, etc. are treated like other mail and can't be globally hidden from view. Outlook power users can define filters to re-direct their bulk mail to be filed into folders.</p> <p><u>NEO automatically organizes your bulk mail into a special view called Bulk Mail</u>, separate from your direct, personally-addressed mail which is automatically stored in the Correspondent view (with a folder automatically created for each correspondent).</p> <p>NEO separates out bulk mail on the assumption you want to pay attention to your direct correspondence mail throughout the working day, and want to read your bulk mail at times of your choosing. Using NEO's filters, users can temporarily hide bulk mail from NEO folders with a single click.</p> <p>You can configure NEO's new mail alerts to signal with a tray pop-up and/or sound individually for each of Hot, Correspondent and Bulk Mail.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduces visual clutter by moving higher volume, lower priority mail to the background. ▪ Your important direct mail is not obscured by your bulk mail, allowing you to focus on it more. ▪ You can configure new mail alerts to notify you only with the mail that matters to you based on <u>your</u> definition of Hot, Correspondent and Bulk Mail – fewer desktop interruptions.

6 - Making Categories more useful	
How it Works	Productivity Benefits
<p>In Outlook, categories should be the preferred way to organize messages by topic, project or keyword. Categories are much more universal and appropriate for identifying messages you need to think about in different ways.</p> <p>However, <u>categories in Outlook are actually more awkward to work with than folders because they are hidden in the user interface</u>. Also, the awkwardness of Outlook’s view model precludes them from being as useful. Consequently, some Outlook power users recommend using Categories for higher level organization, and folders for lower level organization (more heavy lifting).</p> <p>One other problem with Outlook’s categories is that there is no referential integrity with category names. If you want to change the name of a category, you need to change it in every message the category is assigned to.</p> <p>NEO Pro exposes Outlook’s Categories and makes them more useful. Most importantly, categories are surfaced onto their own tab. You can get at them independently of your other views, and even have Category view undocked to drag messages to. Secondly, we let you edit your category names without having to manually change them in each message.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Easier to see and understand for all users. Will help turn more people into productive category organizers. ▪ Save time because they are easier to work with. You can see and set categories in the Reading Pane, and you can even undock the Categories view to make it always visible on top. ▪ Ability to easily edit category names means you can reorganize and adjust whenever you want.

7 - More effective conversation threading	
How it Works	Productivity Benefits
<p>Conversation threading will be available in NEO Pro version 3.1.</p> <p>Outlook treats conversations this way:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Incoming and Outgoing messages are sent to separate folders (Inbox and Sent Items). As an advanced user option you can re-direct sent messages to be saved with the original if original is saved to a folder first. 2. Using the Related Messages feature of the Find All action, you can see related messages in a linear search dialog that pops up. 3. Using Conversation view you can see items arranged by Subject in collapsed or expanded mode. <p>NEO takes a different approach:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sent messages are always stored along with received messages. You can use NEO’s filter to see either or both. 2. NEO makes conversations viewable in an ad hoc way for a particular message. This is functionally similar to Outlook’s Related Messages except that the conversation is shown directly in the list pane, and it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Showing incoming with outgoing mail makes it much easier to quickly see ALL your mail (e.g., NEO’s Today folder shows all mail I sent and received today). ▪ You don’t need to continually go to your Sent Items folder (though you can via our Outlook view). ▪ You don’t have to switch views to expand into a conversation. Message conversations are instantly viewable in any NEO view. They are a feature of the view rather than a view themselves.

<p>is immediate (indexes eliminate the need to search).</p> <p>We believe Outlook's emphasis on the Inbox and their subordination of Sent Items is out of step with email use today. Outgoing mail is important too, which is why we show it along with incoming mail.</p> <p>Outlook's Conversation view is good, until you need to shift to other views to look for messages. Then you lose your ability to see conversations. The Related Messages feature is not practical because it is too slow.</p>	
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<h3>8 - Universal pre-defined filters</h3>	
<h4>How it Works</h4>	<h4>Productivity Benefits</h4>
<p>In Outlook, filters are used to reduce the number of messages displayed in a folder. For example, you could show just the messages you have received in the past 7 days.</p> <p>Outlook's filters are very configurable. You can define filters based on the values of field or category, and can even custom configure SQL statements directly.</p> <p>There are two limitations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As a property of a view, they are buried inside a view. Characteristic of Outlook views, they not as user-accessible as they should be. 2. Outlook filters do not operate across folders! <p>NEO's filters work similarly in concept but are pre-defined. Rather than folder-bound, NEO's filters are global across an entire NEO catalog (across all folders and all message stores in the catalog). NEO filters are also easily accessible on their own NEO toolbar.</p> <p>What is more, since all filter settings are indexed (being pre-defined) <u>they have fantastic performance</u> – sub-second display across hundreds of thousands of messages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NEO filters are easy to set and easy to understand. Being more accessible in the product, they are usable to more users. ▪ Since NEO has pre-defined its filters, users don't have to spend time learning about them or creating them. ▪ As NEO filters operate quickly (almost instantly), you don't hesitate to put them to work for you. ▪ Imagine being able to show messages from your entire catalog within one second with a few clicks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All Unread messages addressed exclusively to you (2 clicks) ○ Only folders that contain Unread messages (1 click) ○ All messages you sent out in the past 3 days (3 clicks). ○ Clear the filter to show all messages again (1 click)

9 - Folder Lists (trees) built for performance	
How it Works	Productivity Benefits
<p>In productivity item #3 I talked about Views as tabs. NEO's flagship views are so central to NEO that it is worth talking about how they contribute to productivity.</p> <p>Each of our nine tabs has its own "folder list". When the Correspondent view has the focus, the folder list shows correspondent folders; when the Categories view has the focus, category folders are displayed, and so on.</p> <p><u>We feel that providing organizing features for folders are just as important as for the messages contained in them.</u> After all, some of these folders lists can be very long (e.g., hundreds to thousands of correspondents).</p> <p>Here are some of the productivity features of our views and their folder lists.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One unique view is our Hot view. This is similar to Outlook's Favorite Folders view. However, NEO was designed with the Hot view as the view in which users spend most of their time. ○ Several of NEO's views including the Hot view have high-level top-level folders that automatically classify folders by how recently they have been used. New folders automatically created by NEO appear in the New system folder; after a pre-determined but configurable time of say 30 days, they move into the Current system folder; then after 90 days of inactivity, they move in the Dormant system folder. ○ All view folder lists feature a folder list filter for quickly zeroing in on a folder. E.g., to find Judy Bishop, entering just "bi" is sufficient to filter even a long list down to something you can pick from. ○ All view folder lists have three folder sort orders (tree order, alphabetic order, most-recently-used order). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Living in Hot view gives users a productivity home into which they can quickly shift folders to highlight <u>what's important to them now</u>. Outlook users will live in other views and go to Favorite Folders to see folders there. They don't live with their important folders like they do in NEO. ▪ Top-level folders give you the ability to quickly digest and deal with long lists of folders. They let you zoom into the right area quickly. <p>For example, consider that many users have hundreds - even thousands - of correspondents. Having, less-frequently used Correspondent folders automatically move to the Dormant area makes currently-active correspondents faster to find. Likewise, new correspondents begin in the New area so you can first decide how you want to organize them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It's quick and easy to find folders in the folder list. Less time is wasted with the scrollbar. <p>Even with the organizing structures like top-level folders, folders are easy to find in other ways: click the Alpha sort button and the tree is instantly flattened to show folders in that order; ditto for date (recently used) order.</p>

10 - Searching that's fast enough to be useful!	
How it Works	Productivity Benefits
<p>I just performed a quick search test. In my 15,000 messages, Outlook took several minutes to find all messages with the string "red" in it. On the same message store, it took NEO four seconds to find all messages with the word "red" in it. Not very scientific, but it does speak to the orders of magnitude difference in Outlook vs NEO search speed.</p> <p>It seems an absurd statement, but Outlook's searching capability is flexible but <u>far too slow to be usable</u>. Users must wonder why they can search all of the Internet many times faster than searching within their own messages.</p> <p>The reason is that Outlook performs a linear search within all the messages each time a search request is made. This is because Outlook's search is based on word strings. In contract, NEO, like web searches, searches based on whole words. NEO pre-indexes all the words in all your messages and, as a result, searches in NEO are ultra fast.</p> <p>Lack of speed isn't Outlook's only short-coming:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ You can't search across message stores (only within a message store) ○ It takes too much work to get a search going: Ctrl+Shift+F, browse to select all folders, enter "red", then change "In" to search subject AND the message body (Outlook has Subject only as the default so it doesn't look so slow, but it's useless) <p>For such an advanced product, Outlook is surprisingly behind the curve in searching capability. NEO's searching is web-like: enter a few words, press enter and all your results appear very quickly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Spend some time looking over the shoulders of Outlook users as they try to locate mail. Only as a second resort do they go to the search (Find) facility. Because Outlook's Search is so slow, users waste time attempting to manually browse for the message first. <p><u>This productivity point is worth emphasising.</u> Inherently, the time taken to execute a computer-based search should be many orders of magnitude faster than the time taken to execute a human-based search based on visually browsing. That in practice Outlook's search is too slow to be the tool of first choice, means Outlook users waste excessive amounts of time just locating messages.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NEO users go to search much more quickly because it is so fast, and quick to get going (Alt+S; "red" ; Enter). In practice, NEO users run searches without hesitation many times a day.

A Few Final Remarks

A refreshing new way to manage email

There's no question that NEO is a new and different way to manage email.

While Outlook is a powerful product, it is in some ways a victim of its own success. So many users and subsystems depend on its current behaviour that improvements must come in small increments. Despite Microsoft's resources, significant change is not easily achieved.

Unfortunately, significant change is just what's needed. Not only is email use growing exponentially, email behaviours and workflow have evolved too. People now use email differently than in the past: more messages are saved, email workflow is more sophisticated, and the need to find messages quickly is more important than ever.

As an independent software vendor, Caelo can develop the technologies and features needed. NEO uses new technologies to clear the email bottleneck without hindering all that Outlook already does.

The importance of surfacing features to make productivity accessible to more users

I've mentioned several times how NEO adds user interface breadth. Think of breadth as having features that are visible horizontally across the user interface, and think of depth as having features that you drill down into the user interface to access.

Outlook's user interface model is based on the out-dated Inbox/Outbox/Sent Items folder-based model. This model is not extensible, and as a result newer features tend to get buried deep into the user interface. That's why so many features in Outlook are confusing and so awkward to find and use. In contrast, NEO's model was specifically designed to present email in different ways, and as a result NEO's features and information are on the surface, right in front of the user.

Why is this important? It's important because only power users go deep into the user interface. Most users stay on the surface layers of software products. With features at the surface, everyone - not just power users - can realize email productivity gains.

And that's how company-wide productivity gains really get leveraged - when they accrue to the majority of users and not just the small percentage who are power users.

The productivity fallacy - what's possible versus what's practical

I often get comments from users such as "Hey, I can do what NEO's Correspondent folders do in Outlook by doing this". I usually have a look and find that they are right,... with a little tinkering I can set it up to do that too.

Whether or not NEO adds value for users such as these is not the important issue. The **important issue** for decision makers who are concerned about email productivity in their companies is whether NEO adds value for the majority of users.

Outlook is a flexible product with lots of features. However, features are useless if most people don't know about them and don't use them. It's a productivity fallacy. In my observations, only the power users get significant productivity gains with Outlook, and not without a lot of tinkering.

NEO gives productivity gains to a much wider audience, and it does this instantly, with very little additional user configuration.