Yahoo! Mail

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Yahoo! Mail is a Web-based e-mail (Webmail) service from Yahoo! It is one of the biggest e-mail providers on the Internet, serving millions of users. Yahoo!'s competitors include Gmail, AIM Mail, and Hotmail.

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Top: A typical Yahoo! Mail inbox.
Bottom: Yahoo! Mail beta.

Maintainer:	Yahoo!
OS:	
Genre:	E-mail, webmail
Website:	http://mail.yahoo.com/

J. J. Healy, Yahoo!'s resident investment banker who had been hired in November 1996, was the man dealing with every Yahoo! acquisition. Few months before, the portal had looked into buying a yellow-page directory called BigBook. Getting a Merger and Aquisition specialist certainly a smart way to extend the network; this was precisely what Healy was there for.

"No one knows your business like your employees" he said. According to him, the main question to consider is "should we build, buy or rent?" In fact this really depends on the growth of the competitors and the current position of the company. The main reason to buy things was gaining speed to market "you say, 'If we don't have it in two, four, or six months, what is that going to mean to our market position?'"

The growth of internet users eventually boosted the e-mail technology, this also created a very competitive landscape where the winner was the first one to launch an e-mail service to attract potential users. Why was e-mail so important? Simply because it was the key feature a portal could offer as it would mean a regular visit from the user on the network.

At the middle of this battle, you would find Excite, Lycos, AOL, or Microsoft. There was one challenge: to acquire Four11.

Yahoo! already had made a deal with the online communications company for co-branded white pages.

Gloria Gavin, who worked at Four11 as director of international business development said: "We always had a bias about being acquired by Yahoo! They were more entrepreneurial than Microsoft. We had a great cultural fit—it made a lot of sense"

The real point in acquiring Four11 was that in March 1997, the company launched Rocketmail (http://www.rocketmail.com/), a webmail system that could be offered to the users.

Unlike AOL or Microsoft who were known as the "Evil Empire," Yahoo! was always well seen by a number of companies. "They liked what we had to say, and they didn't like AOL or Microsoft". This is probably the reason why Yahoo! was offered first looks at Hotmail and Mirabilis, the creator of instant messenger ICQ. As you know, Yahoo! passed on both offers as they were too expensive for the company. Microsoft bought Hotmail for $400 million and AOL bought Mirabilis for $288 million. In the end, Yahoo! concluded a deal with Four11 for $96 million. Yahoo! announced the acquisition (http://docs.yahoo.com/docs/pr/release128.html) on October 8, 1997, the same day Yahoo! Mail (http://docs.yahoo.com/docs/pr/release124.html) was launched.

Why did Yahoo! Mail result from an acquisition rather than an internal platform development? Because, as Healy said "Hotmail was growing at thousands and thousands users per week. We did an analysis. For us to build, it would have taken four to six months, and by then, so many users would have taken an e-mail account. The speed of the market was critical."

Apart from Four11's CEO, Mike Santullo, Steve Victorino, VP of business development, all Four11 workers had been well integrated in their new company, and all of them found a good job to fit them.

For Rocketmail users, the transition to Yahoo! Mail certainly was not easy at first. Yahoo! released various help pages (http://help.yahoo.com/help/us/mail/rmail/) to explain the steps to follow.[1] (http://www.flakmag.com/opinion/rocket.html)

The understandable frustration of this user also comes from the fact that on March 21, 2002, Yahoo! cut software client access and introduce the Mail Forwarding Service (http://news.com.com/2100-1023-865570.html). Mary Osako, a Yahoo! Spokeswoman told Cnet, "For-pay services on Yahoo, originally launched in February 1999, have experienced great acceptance from our base of active registered users, and we expect this adoption to continue to grow." The service was offered at the cost of $29.99 per year and people who subscribed before April 24 got a promotional price of $19.99 for the first year.

During the summer of 2002, the Yahoo! network was gradually redesigned. On July 2, Zdnet (http://news.zdnet.com/2100-9595_22-941329.html) not only announced that Yahoo.com was given a facelift but that other services like Yahoo! Mail would enter the same processus. Along with this new design, new features were to be implemented: "The new Yahoo Mail will also include new navigation tools, such as drop-down menus in DHTML (dynamic HTML) and different category tabs, and will use a new color scheme that people can change."

On November of the same year, Yahoo! launched another paid service: Yahoo! Mail Plus (http://docs.yahoo.com/docs/pr/release1023.html). Yahoo! Mail Plus offers a number of features. Among them are:

- 2 gigabytes of e-mail storage
- 20 megabyte message size limit
- Ability to send up to 10 attachments per e-mail
- POP Access and Forwarding
- Archiving of e-mail messages to a hard drive for offline access
- Ability to send messages from Yahoo! Mail using other e-mail domains
- 200 blocked addresses and 50 filters to help screen unsolicited e-mails
- No promotional taglines in messages
- No account expiration
- choice of stationaries for your composer

"The launch of Yahoo! Mail Plus is part of Yahoo!'s strategic initiative to offer premium services that deliver innovative, reliable and relevant services to consumers," said Geoff Ralston, senior vice president, Yahoo! Network Services, and creator of the original Yahoo! Mail technology in 1997. "In just five years, Yahoo! Mail has grown from one million to tens of millions of users, illustrating how consumers have made e-mail an essential part of their daily lives. Through Yahoo! Mail Plus, Yahoo! continues to demonstrate leadership and innovation by offering consumers the industry's most complete and powerful e-mail solution." (Press Release)

On April 1, 2004, Google announced a free webmail with 1 gigabits of storage.

Though Gmail, Google's e-mail service, certainly offers a large amount of storage capacity, its lack of features kept the other webmail services at the forefront. Good webmail features are now just expected by Internet users. Most of the major webmail providers like Yahoo! Mail, Hotmail, and AOL followed Google's lead and increased their mailbox storage considerably. Yahoo! was the first provider to announce (http://docs.yahoo.com/docs/pr/release1168.html) 100 MB of storage for basic accounts and 2 GB of storage for premium users. Hotmail followed suit, offering 250 MB, only 150 MB more than Yahoo! Mail, but still 850 MB beneath Google's initial whopping 1 GB. Some Hotmail users are still stuck with Hotmail's original 2 MB of storage. When signing up for a Hotmail account, users are initially only given 25 MB for the first 30 days, after which time the account quota rises to 250 MB. After assessing the playing field and determined not to lose customers, Yahoo! Mail countered Hotmail and Google by increasing the storage quota of its free email accounts to 1 GB. Yahoo! Mail! is still considered to be the premier webmail service by the majority of Internet users due to it's feature set and seamless integration with other Yahoo! offerings like Yahoo! Calendar.

Proof that innovative webmail features were gaining importance for the user experience could be observed when, on July 9th, Yahoo! acquired Oddpost (http://oddpost.com/yahoo.html), a strong webmail offering that simulated a desktop email client like Microsoft Outlook. Oddpost had innovative features like drag-and-drop support, right-click menus, RSS feeds, and a preview pane, but it also had incredible speed, using e-mail caching to shorten the response time. Both the Yahoo! Mail and Oddpost teams have been busily working to merge the innovations of both products into a seamless, better whole.

Features

Yahoo Mail has the following features:

- *Free version*: 1 GB quota. 10 MB attachments, plus protection against spam and viruses. (*See: DomainKeys*) Advertising is displayed on the screen while working with the e-mail account. Users can also read mail from a POP3 server through Yahoo! Mail. However, if they want to send mail from a distant SMTP server, they must upgrade to a Plus account. Accounts not logged into for four months get deactivated (The account can be retrieved but all personal data is lost). Every free Yahoo! account will be deleted after an inactivity of 4 month.

- *Plus version*: 2 GB quota. The Plus service offers POP3 access—meaning that the e-mail account can be accessed through e-mail clients (Mozilla Thunderbird, Outlook, Eudora, etc.) that work with the POP3 protocol. When working with the account over a web browser, no ads are displayed. This type of account has additional spam and virus protection. Yahoo! is charging $19.99 per year per user for Yahoo! Mail Plus. Users of Yahoo! affiliated Internet service providers, such as SBC, BT, and Rogers have all the features of the Plus version included as part of their accounts.

- Additionally, a user can pay $35 per year to have up to five custom e-mail address and domain name.

Future

In September 2005 Yahoo! began beta testing a significantly enhanced version of their e-mail service, based on Ajax scripting. The look and feel of the new version is designed to mimic a desktop e-mail client, with drag-and-drop capabilities and shortcut keys for managing messages. Wide-scale public release of the new version is expected in 2006.

Controversy

In 2002, it came to light that Yahoo! Mail had filters that changed certain words and word fragments into other words. "Mocha" was changed to "espresso", "expression" became "statement", and perhaps most damaging, "eval" (short for "evaluation") became "review". The widespread effects of this can be seen by using the Google search engine to find such nonsensical terms as "prreviewent", "reviewuation" and "medireview".

When questioned about these changes, Yahoo! explained that the changed words were common terms used in Web scripting, and were blacklisted to prevent hackers from sending damaging commands via the program's HTML function.

As of Tuesday, February 7, 2006, the Yahoo! Mail filters no longer substitute certain words for others. Although the change may have occured prior to this date, Yahoo! Mail now prepends an "_" (underscore) to certain words and word fragments.

Sending a test email from a non-Yahoo! Mail account to a Yahoo! Mail account with the words "Mocha", "eval", and "expression" in a sentence resulted in the Yahoo! Mail filters prepending an "_" (underscore) to those words, resulting in "_Mocha", "_eval", and "_expression". This prepending obviously removes the threat of the words acting as commands via the program's HTML function by rendering them as non-commands or unrecognizable commands.

See also

- AIM Mail
- Hotmail
- Gmail
- Windows Live Mail
- webmail

External links

- Yahoo! Mail (http://mail.yahoo.com/)
- The Yahoo! Mail Users Group - Ask your questions, Share your knowledge, learn and discuss the latest news about Yahoo! Mail (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Y-Mail/)
- Yahoo! Mail Team Blog (http://updates.mail.yahoo.com/)
- Yahoo! Mail FAQ (http://help.yahoo.com/help/us/mail/)
- YPOPs: An application that provides POP3 access to Yahoo! Mail (http://yahoopops.sourceforge.net/)

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