Sieve: Vacation Extension

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Abstract

This document describes an extension to the Sieve mail filtering language for an autoresponder similar to that of the Unix "vacation" command for replying to messages with certain safety features to prevent problems.
0. Meta-information on this draft

This information is intended to facilitate discussion. It will be removed when this document leaves the Internet-Draft stage.

0.1. Discussion

This draft is intended to be an extension to the Sieve mail filtering language, available from the Internet-Drafts repository as <ftp://ftp.ietf.org/internet-drafts/draft-showalter-sieve-10.txt> (where 10 is the version number, which is currently 10).

This draft and the Sieve language itself are being discussed on the MTA Filters mailing list at <ietf-mta-filters@imc.org>. Subscription requests can be sent to <ietf-mta-filters-request@imc.org> (send an email message with the word "subscribe" in the body). More information on the mailing list along with a WWW archive of back messages is available at <http://www.imc.org/ietf-mta-filters/>.

1. Introduction

This is an extension to the Sieve language defined by [SIEVE] for notification that messages will not be immediately answered.

Conventions for notations are as in [SIEVE] section 1.1, including use of [KEYWORDS].

2. Capability Identifier

Sieve implementations that implement vacation have an identifier of "vacation" for use with the capability mechanism.

3. Vacation Action

Syntax:   vacation ["days" number] ["addresses" string-list] ["subject" string] ["mime"] <reason: string>

The "vacation" action implements a vacation autoresponder similar to the vacation command available under many versions of Unix. Its purpose is to provide correspondents with notification that the user is away for an extended period of time and that they should not expect quick responses.

"Vacation" is used to respond to a message with another message. Vacation’s messages are always addressed to the Return-Path address (that is, the envelope from address) of the message being responded to.
3.1. Days Parameter

The ":days" argument is used to specify the period in which addresses are kept and are not responded to, and is always specified in days. The minimum value used for this parameter is 1. Sites MAY define a different minimum value. Sites MAY also define a maximum days value, which MUST be greater than 7, and SHOULD be greater than 30.

If ":days" is omitted, the default value is either 7 or the minimum value (as defined above), whichever is greater.

If the parameter given to ":days" is less than the minimum value, then the minimum value is used instead.

If ":days" exceeds the site-defined maximum, the site-defined maximum is used instead.

3.2. Previous Response Tracking

"Vacation" keeps track of all of the addresses that it has responded to in some period (as specified by the :days optional argument). If vacation has not previously responded to this address within that time period, it sends the "reason" argument to the Return-Path address of the message that is being responded to.

Vacation responses are not just per address, but are per address per vacation command. For instance, if coyote@desert sends mail to roadrunner@acme, once with the subject "Cyrus bug" and once with the subject "come over for dinner", and roadrunner@acme has the script below, coyote@desert would receive two responses, once with the first message, once with the second.

Example: require "vacation";
if subject :contains "cyrus" {
  vacation "I’m out -- send mail to cyrus-bugs";
} else {
  vacation "I’m out -- call me at 304 555 1212";
}

Note that coyote@desert gets the second message despite having gotten the first one because separate vacation responses have been triggered. This behavior is REQUIRED.

If a sieve script changes, implementations MAY reset the records of who has been responded to and when they have been responded to. Alternatively, scripts can store records of who has received which message, and never send a message to someone twice.
3.3. Subject Parameter

Users can specify the subject of the reply with the ":subject" parameter. If the :subject parameter is not supplied, then the subject is generated as follows: The subject is set to the characters "Re: " followed by the original subject with all leading occurrence of the characters "Re: " stripped off.

3.4. MIME Parameter

The ":mime" parameter, if supplied, specifies that the reason string is, in fact, a MIME part, including MIME headers (see section 2.4.2.4 of [SIEVE]).

If the optional :mime parameter is not supplied, the reason string is considered to be a UTF-8 string.

3.5. In-Reply-To

Replies MUST have the In-Reply-To field set to the Message-ID of the original message.

3.6. Address Parameter and Limiting Replies to Personal Messages

"Vacation" MUST NOT respond to a message unless the user’s email address is in the "To" or "Cc" line of the original message. Implementations are assumed to know the user’s email address, but users may have additional addresses beyond the control of the local mail system.

Users can supply additional mail addresses that are theirs with the ":addresses" argument, which takes a string-list listing additional addresses that a user might have. These addresses are considered in addition to the addresses that the implementation knows.

3.7. Restricting Replies to Automated Processes

Implementations MUST have a list of addresses that "vacation" MUST NOT send mail to. However, the contents of this list are implementation defined. The purpose of this list is to stop mail from going to addresses used by system daemons that would not care if the user is actually reading her mail.

Implementations are encouraged, however, to include well-known addresses like "MAILER-DAEMON", "LISTSERV", "majordomo", and other addresses typically used only by automated systems. Additionally, addresses ending in "-request" or beginning in "owner-", i.e., reserved for mailing list software, are also suggested.
Implementors may take guidance from [MAILBOXNAMES], but should be careful. Some addresses, like "POSTMASTER", are generally actually managed by people, and people do care if the user is going to be unavailable.

3.8. Interaction with Other Sieve Actions

Vacation does not affect the implicit keep.

Vacation can only be executed once per script. If vacation is used with another vacation, the script fails.

Implementations MUST NOT consider vacation used with discard, keep, fileinto, or redirect an error.

3.9. Examples

Here is a simple use of vacation.

Example: require "vacation";
vacation :days 23
:addresses ["tjs@znic.edu", "ts4z@landru.edu"]
"I’m away until October 19.
If it’s an emergency, call 911, I guess.";

By mingling vacation with other rules, users can do something more selective.

Example: require "vacation";
if header :contains "from" "boss@frobnitzm.edu" {
   redirect "pleeb@xanadu.wv.us";
} else {
   vacation "Sorry, I’m away, I’ll read your message when I get around to it.";
}

4. Security Considerations

It is critical that implementations correctly implement the limitations described above. Replies MUST NOT be sent out in response to messages not sent directly to the user, and replies MUST NOT be sent out more often than the :days argument states.
5. Author’s Address

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Appendix A. References


Appendix B. Full Copyright Statement

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