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Before describing aspects of the single meeting invite process, the remaining elements of FIG. 1 are described, as an understanding of those elements will facilitate the description to follow. As shown in FIG. 1, the host computer system 21 may also comprise one or more computer databases 50 that store, for example, data used by the web-based application 17 of the web server system 15. For example, in one implementation of the present invention, the application 17 of the web server 15 provides an applicant tracking platform for the enterprise 8, and the database 50 stores data about the applicants (e.g., job candidates or other types of applicants), among other data. The data network 52 may employ the TCP/IP protocol, for example, and may comprise one or more connected computer networks that connect to the enterprise 8 to the host computer system 21, such as the Internet, LANs, WANs, etc. Pertinent to aspects of the present invention, the host computer system 21 may access the enterprise's email system 14 to retrieve data from the email system 14 to be used in its compound meeting scheduling function, such as calendar information (free and busy times) for individuals and other resources (e.g., meeting rooms) associated with the enterprise. In various embodiments, the host data center 21 may access the data from the email system 14 using web services. Note that the private data network 16 and the data network 52 could be considered collectively to be one data network. The enterprise 8 and the host computer system 21 may each have associated network firewalls 54, 56. In other arrangements, as shown in FIG. 12, the web server system 15 could be within enterprise's network. In other arrangements, the client computing devices 12 may download a plug-in that allows the browser 36 to interface with the email/calendaring app 38 via an API, such as an ActiveX plug-in or some other suitable plug-in or extension.

The client-computing devices 12 shown in FIG. 1 could be implemented with desktop computers, servers, laptops, tablets, smart phones, or any other CPU-based computing device capable of connecting the enterprise email/scheduling server 14 and the web server system 15. Of course, the client-computing devices 12 may also include display screens (not shown in FIG. 1) for visually displaying information, including the graphical user interfaces or the web-based application 17 shown below. The client-computing devices 12 may also include input modalities through which a user (e.g., the initiator) can interact with the client-computing device 12, including providing the inputs to set up the appointments in the graphical user interface. The client-computing devices 12 of the enterprise could be distributed across different geographic locations and the enterprise 8 could have multiple enterprise email/scheduling servers 14, such as one for each enterprise location.

In the description herein, the server system 15 is described as a web-server system that provides a web-based application 17. It should be recognized that the present invention is not so limited and that in other embodiments, the server system 15 could provide another type of application (in addition to or in lieu of a web-based application) that the user of the client computing device could access to set up the compound meeting as described herein. The claims use the term "application server system" to encompass the web server system 15 or such other type of application server system. Also, in the description herein, the invites are sent by email by the email server system 14, which also stores and handles calendar data for the enterprise. It should be recognized that the invention is not so limited and that in other embodiments, the invites could be sent by other types of electronic messages, such as texts, instant messages, personal messages, etc. (in addition to or in lieu of email). The claims use the term "messaging server system" to encompass all of these types of electronic messaging. Also, the calendar information for the enterprise could be integrated into the messaging server system or a separate calendaring server system connected to the network 16 could store the calendar information for the enterprise (e.g., free and busy times for individuals and meeting rooms).

FIGS. 2-8 are example screen shots of the graphical user interface provided by the web server system 15 (and the browser 36) to the initiator using the client computing device 12 in order to set up and invite people to the series of meetings according to various embodiments of the present invention. The screen shots may be part of HTML web pages provided by the web server 15 and displayed by the browser 36. In the example of FIG. 2, the browser 36 of the initiator's client-computing device 12 is Google Chrome. Also in the example of FIG. 2, the initiator (Kyle Hogan), at the client-computing device 12, after logging into the application 17 hosted by the web server system 15, is setting up a series of back-to-back job interviews (e.g., sub-meetings) for prospective job candidate (in the illustrated example, Adam Tester) with various members





invite file attachment can be opened from the attendees' email program and added to their electronic calendar. An example invite file 200 is shown in FIG. 6. The invite 200 may specify the subject 202 that the initiator specified in the "Subject" field 120 when setting up the meeting (see FIG. 2). The invite also specifies the meeting time slot 204 and the meeting location 206, as specified by the initiator when setting up the meetings. The example of FIG. 6 shows the candidate's meeting invite, so it for 2:00 pm to 5:30 pm, as specified by the initiator. The invites for the other attendees would show their particular sub-meeting time slot (e.g., in this example, Chauncey Everett for 3:00 pm to 4:30 pm, Mary Hart for 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm, and Lucille Ricardo for 4:30 pm to 5:30 pm). Thus, in this example, separate invites are sent to the four different attendees. The recipients of the invites (e.g., the attendees) can accept, tentatively accept, or reject the invite by clicking on the "Yes," "Maybe," or "No" buttons 210, 212, 214 respectively in the invite. When the recipient selects an invite, confirmation may be sent to the initiator and/or to the web server system 15 for tracking. The enterprise email/schedule server system 14 may also update and track the scheduling information for the attendees and the meeting location, i.e., updating the attendees' and the meeting room's free and busy times to mark the meeting time slot specified in the invite as busy (or tentative if the recipient tentatively accepts it) at the appointed time slots so that the attendees are not double-booked in scheduling other meetings on the date in question.

In Microsoft Outlook 2010 and Goggle Calendar, to set up the above-described interview schedule, the initiator would have to either: (1) set up three separate meetings--one for Tester and Everett from 3:00 pm to 4:30 pm, one for Tester and Hart from 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm, and one for Tester and Ricardo from 4:30 pm to 5:30; or (2) set up one meeting for all of the attendees that spans the entire time window from 2:00 pm to 5:30 pm. Option (1) is time consuming for the initiator because he/she has to set up three meetings rather than one and results in an increased number of invites being emailed (e.g., in this example, Tester would be emailed three different meeting invites), which increases network activity and can be confusing for the recipients (Tester might think that later invites are updates to prior updates, rather than invites to additional meetings). Option (2) is not ideal either because all of the attendees will be indicated as busy by the enterprise email/scheduling server system 14 for the entire time from 2:00 pm to 5:30 pm, even though they are not all busy that entire time, which may impair the scheduling of other meetings involving those attendees. On the other hand, various embodiments of the present invention can alleviate these drawbacks in the prior art through the above-described single set-up process, where the initiator can set up, at one time, a compound meeting with multiple sub-meetings, with each resulting meeting invite particularized to the recipient's specified sub-meeting time slot(s). That decreases network traffic, saves the initiator time, and is less confusing for the recipients.

In various embodiments, the initiator can add files as attachments to the invite (e.g., pdf files, word documents, spreadsheets, image files, etc.). In the example of FIG. 3, the initiator can click the "Add Attachments" icon 250 to add files stored on the initiator's client-computing device 12. In one implementation, attachments added to the invites in such a manner are included in the invites emailed to each of the attendees. When that is not desirable, such as when one or more of the attendees should not be in receipt of certain files, the initiator (or one of the meeting attendees) could add attachments to the meeting invites for selected attendees after the meeting invites are sent. That is, for example, after the meeting invites are sent (e.g., by clicking the "Send" button 160 in FIG. 5), the initiator (or other user) could search for the desired attendee using the search box 104 (see FIG. 2), open the scheduling grid 102 for that attendee (see FIG. 2), find and click on the desired meeting notification 200 (see FIG. 6) to open the invite up, and add an attachment via the attachment icon 252 in the meeting notification 200, for example. The recipient of the invite could also add his/her own attachments in this manner.

In another embodiment, the initiator could specify particular attachments for particular invitees when setting up the meeting. For example, as shown in the example of FIG. 7, the meeting set up window 100 could have an "Add Attachments" icon 270 associated with each of the selected invitees. By clicking on the "Add Attachments" icon 270 for a particular invitee, the initiator can add one or more files from the client-computing device 12 that are included only in the meeting invitation for that selected invitee. If multiple attendees, but not all, are to receive a particular attachment file(s), the initiator would have to individually add the attachment file(s) for each such invitee.

In another embodiment, when the initiator clicks the "Add Attachments" icon 250 (see FIG. 3), an attachment window 350 may open as shown in the example of FIG. 8. From the window 350, the initiator can select the desired attachments for the invites. The list of possible files 352 may be constituted from the







