TopDreamweaverExtensions Newsletter
Improving System Performance

www.topdreamweaverextensions.com

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Introduction

There is a special PHP code on the site used for sending newsletters (the **sender-script**). This PHP code must be called periodically to process the send-outs without violating hosting restrictions.

For your convenience this PHP is called automatically every time the newsletter admin system is accessed and every time that someone visits any of your website's pages that contain a newsletter subscription form.

Nevertheless, in case that your website does not have many visits - which slows down sending out newsletters - you can improve the system performance by scheduling the **sender-script** or calling it from another site or application.

Important Note: This information and steps described on this document are not required to make the Newsletter system works, these steps are only intended for additional optimization.

The basics

There are many different ways to automatically schedule the **sender-script**, some of which are described below.

The most common way to schedule a task on Linux and UNIX based servers is to use the cron daemon. On Windows 2000 and XP servers there is a graphical interface to schedule tasks or you can use the command. If for some reason you can't use these tools you could opt to use an external cron service, or call the **sender-script** from another web site or application.

Calling the sender-script from another web site or application

Just call PHP from another site with more traffic, by using a 1x1 invisible image tag, example:

```
<img src="http://your-web-site/TDE_Newsletter/admin/sender.php" width="1" height="1">
```

As alternative, you can place the same 1x1 image on all the pages of your website or at least on those that receive most traffic. Generally the page with most traffic is the home page.

Note: The page that contains the subscription form already contains that code.

Scheduling tasks on Linux and UNIX based servers

If you are using Linux server or a Unix based server such as BSD, Sun or MacOS X you can use the cron daemon to automatically run the **http://your-web-site/TDE_Newsletter/admin/sender.php** script. You can edit your scheduled tasks using the crontab utility. If you don't have permission to use crontab, please contact your service provider or server administrator.

In most cases you will need shell access to your server to add a new scheduled task. After using telnet or ssh to login to your server use the following command to export your existing scheduled tasks to a text file:

crontab -l > cron.txt

After exporting your existing tasks to a text file you can use any text editor you want to add tasks. Because every server or service provider is different it is not easy to provide a way to schedule tasks that will work on every server. Depending on the configuration of your server you can use one of the following tools to actually run the **sender-scrip**t: curl, fetch, lynx or wget. To find out which is supported by your server simply type the name of the tool on the command-line. If you get a message 'command not found' the tool isn't supported on your server.

Based on which tool your server supports add one of the following lines to the cron.txt file:

if your server supports curl:
0 * * * * curl -s -o /dev/null http://your-web-site/TDE_Newsletter/admin/sender.php

if your server supports fetch:
0 * * * * fetch -o /dev/null http:// your-web-site /TDE_Newsletter/admin/sender.php

if your server supports lynx:
0 * * * * lynx > /dev/null -dump http:// your-web-site /TDE_Newsletter/admin/sender.php

if your server supports wget:
0 * * * * wget -q -O /dev/null http:// your-web-site /TDE_Newsletter/admin/sender.php

After you changed the cron.txt file and added the line for the tool you want to use, you need to import the file back again into the cron daemon. To do this type the following command on the command-line:

crontab cron.txt
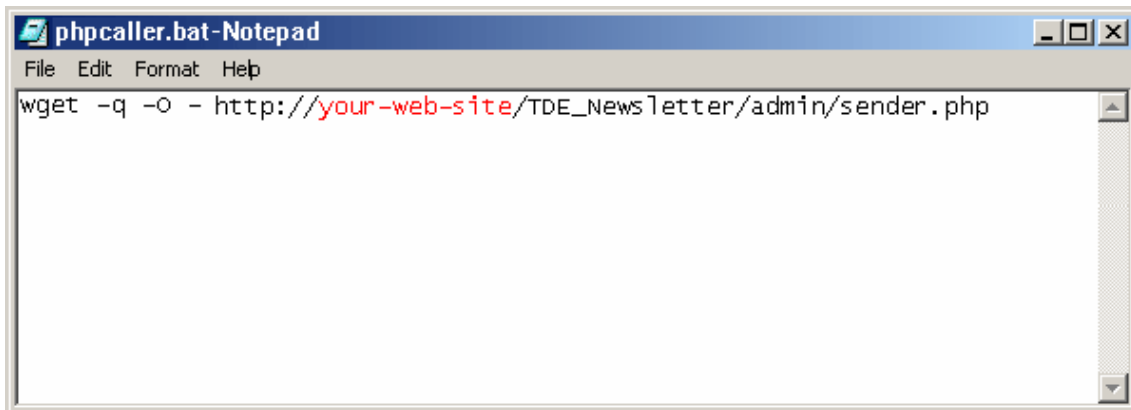
Scheduling tasks on Windows servers

If you are using a Microsoft Windows 2000 or XP server you can use the Scheduled Tasks to automatically run the **sender-script**. However there is no standard tool available to actually run the **sender-script**.

Downloading wget

The first thing to do is to download wget, which is a command line utility to get the con-tents of a file stored on a web server. Wget is available for all kinds of operating systems, including Windows. After you have downloaded the zip file you need to copy the wget.exe file to the directory where Windows is installed. Wget isn't part of the Newsletter system and needs to be downloaded separately. Up-to-date download locations are listed on the wget homepage: http://www.gnu.org/software/wget/wget.html
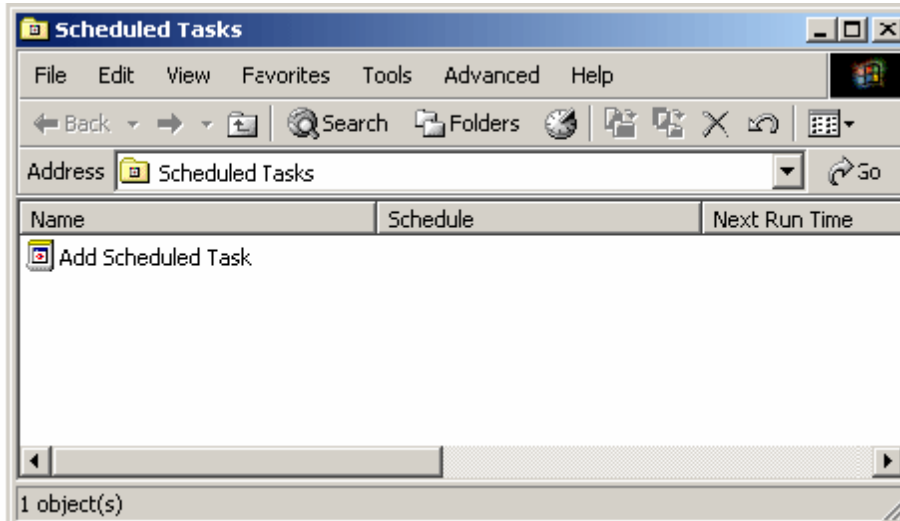
Creating a batch file

The next step is creating a small batch file which will call the wget utility with the correct parameters. This file can be executed as a Scheduled Task later on. You can use Notepad to create a new file and add the information below, then save the file as phpcaller.bat. You can save the file anywhere you like, but it is wise to keep it in a location that isn't going to change, and isn't accessible by the web server. Also make sure to specify the correct URL inside the batch file, the URL below is just an example.

```
phpcaller.bat-Notepad
File  Edit  Format  Help
wget -q -O - http://your-web-site/TDE_Newsletter/admin/sender.php
```

Creating the scheduled task

The next step would be to actually add a new Scheduled Task. You can find all Scheduled Tasks inside a directory inside the Control Panel.

Now click on Add Scheduled Task. The wizard will begin and after you click on Next it will ask you for the program to run. Just click on Browse... and select the batch file you just created. Now you need to give this Scheduled Task a name and select to perform this task daily.
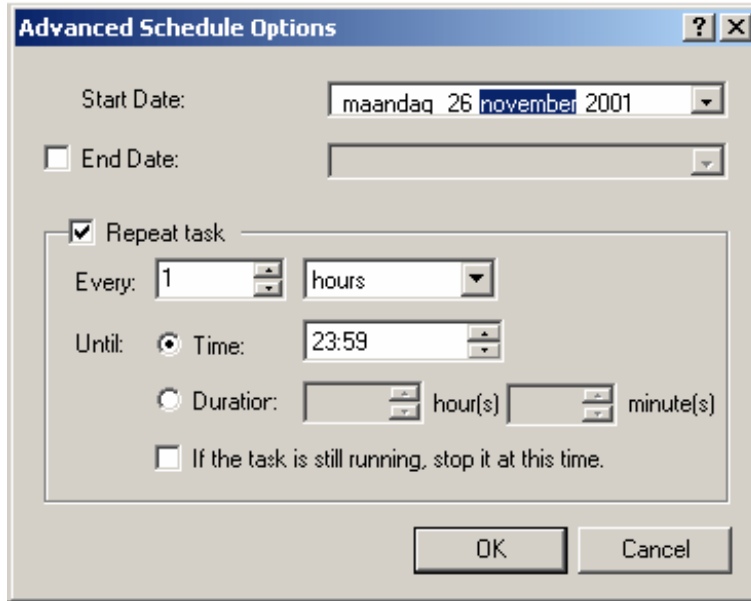

Click on Next and set the Start time to 0:00 and choose to perform this task every day. If you click Next the wizard will ask you for your username and password.

After you supplied your username and password click on Next. Make sure to select Open advanced properties..., because you will need to make some modification to this task. Now click on Finish.
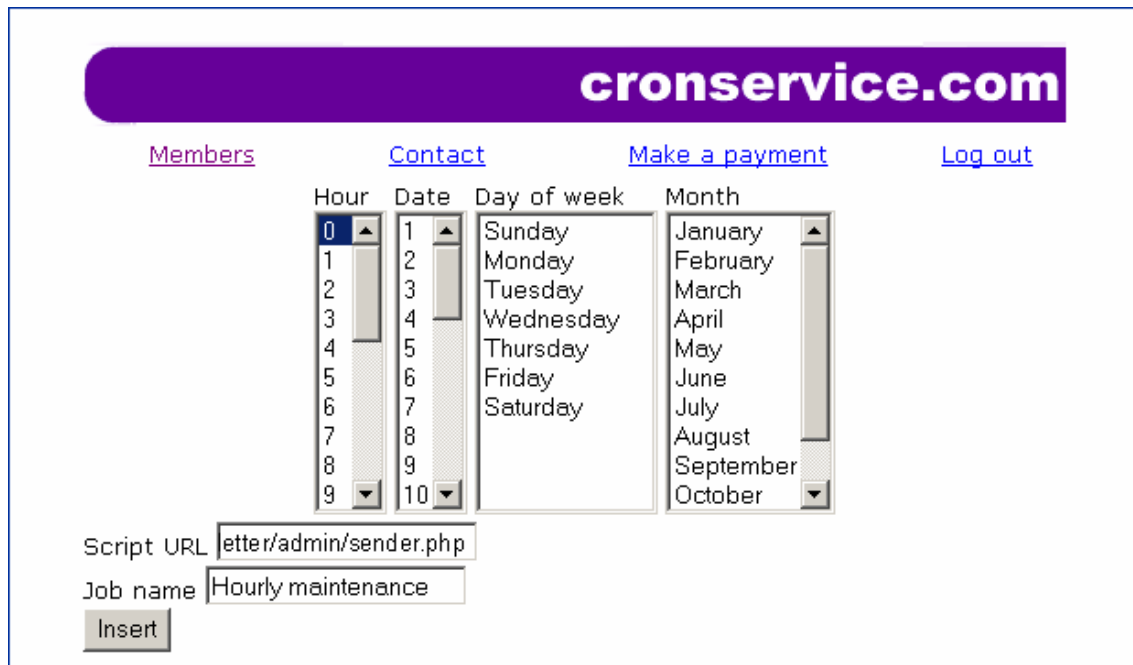

To make sure this task runs hourly you will need to go to the *Schedule* tab and select the *Advanced...* button. Now check *Repeat task* and make sure the task is repeated every hour. Also select the radio button *Time* and set the value to 23:59. Now click *OK* to close this dialogbox and click *Apply* to save all settings.

Using an external cron server

If your server doesn't support *Scheduled Tasks* or *cron* jobs, it is still possible to run the **sender-script** every hour automatically, by using an external cron server.

For example, for just $9.95 a year, cronservice.com allows you to add as many scheduled tasks as you want by using a simple web based interface. After logging in at cronservices.com, you need to specify which task you want to run by clicking the *Add new job* button.

If you want to run a job hourly you need to select all *hours*. Don't select a *date*, *day of week* or *month*. Then enter the full URL of the **sender-script** in the *Script URL* field.

For example: if you installed the Newsletter system on **http://your-web-site**, the full URL would be:

http://your-web-site/TDE_Newsletter/admin/sender.php

After entering a *job name* you can click on the *Insert* button.

Disclaimer: Cronservices.com has no relation with our company; we are not responsible for that service.