

# a diagram illustrating using .forwards and procmail to collect mail sent to a single e-mail address and distribute it to multiple users

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The diagram on the following page illustrates how sendmail interacts with .forward files and procmail in the context of collecting e-mail sent to a single address and fanning it out to multiple addresses.

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*There is no warranty expressed or implied; this document is furnished for informational purposes only, in the spirit of collegial interchange of ideas. "ourco" is a fictitious company. Marc Gordon is a real person, to whose assistance and review I am indebted for the preparation of this document.*

The general premise is as follows:

- Mail is sent to a single address, but intended for multiple recipients. For this example we will assume that the mechanism which flags separate users is on the To: line, but Subject line processing is also certainly possible. The specific mechanism is the name appearing in parentheses, as follows:

```
ourco@a-big-isp.tld (Fred Morris) mail intended for Fred Morris, for ultimate delivery to  
m3047@inwa.net  
ourco@a-big-isp.tld (Marc Gordon) mail intended for Marc Gordon, for ultimate delivery to  
marc@ourco.tld
```

Mail sent to the address with no name in parentheses, or with a name which is not recognized, will be set to the catchall address sales@ourco.tld

- A .forward file in the ourco account at a-big-isp forwards the mail to the default account on the ourco server.
- procmail is invoked on the ourco server to sort the mail out and send it to different accounts.
- There are 3 accounts on the ourco server: marc, sales and default.

There is a lot of detail; it is not intended to be printed out, instead you'll be zooming in and out to see various aspects of the process.

the internet "cloud"

e-mail message

```
Received: from boss.yoyodyne.com by
mail.yoyodyne.com
To: ourco@big-isp.tld (Marc Gordon)
From: bigboss@yoyodyne.com
```

SMTP

mail.a-big-isp.tld  
(a unix server)

```
login: ourco
password:
~$ ls -a
.
..
.bashrc
.forward
~$ more .forward
default@ourco.tld
~$
```

sendmail  
daemon

SMTP

e-mail message

```
Received: from mail.yoyodyne.com by mail.a-big-
isp.tld
Received: from boss.yoyodyne.com by
mail.yoyodyne.com
To: ourco@big-isp.tld (Marc Gordon)
From: bigboss@yoyodyne.com
```

mail.ourco.tld

```
login: default
password:
~$ ls -a
.
..
.bashrc
.forward
.procmailrc
~$ more .forward
"exec /usr/local/bin/procmail #default"
~$ more .procmailrc
:0
* ^TO.*Fred Morris
!m3047@inwa.net
:0
* ^TO.*Marc Gordon
!marc
:0
* ^TO.*ourco
!sales
~$ ls /usr/mail/spool
default
marc
sales
~$
```

sendmail  
daemon

procmail

popper

e-mail message

```
Received: from mail.a-big-isp.tld by
mail.ourco.tld
Received: from mail.yoyodyne.com by mail.a-big-
isp.tld
Received: from boss.yoyodyne.com by
mail.yoyodyne.com
To: ourco@big-isp.tld (Marc Gordon)
From: bigboss@yoyodyne.com
```

POP3

Marc's workstation

mail  
client