

Sendmail and AIX - part 1

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Part 1: Introduction

This is part 1 of a series of - as yet unknown - articles on configuring SENDMAIL on AIX.

What's so hard about using sendmail on AIX?

I have tried, time and time again, to get sendmail set up properly on my server in my basement (that also hosts www.rootvg.net, forums.rootvg.net, www.aixtools.net and download.aixtools.net).

I have long been frustrated that I could not get this working as there are so many tutorials on the web showing how easy sendmail is to setup. (Of course, there are, these days, many saying the opposite - drop sendmail because it is so hard to setup.) Partly - I have been "Blind in one eye and not looking out the other" when I read documentation. But there were also some AIX specific things that make it hard to follow the examples, tutorials or even documentation "by rote".

Anyway, I am sticking with sendmail because I have been a user (read consumer and even, once a long time ago, a rule author) since the 80's. This dog is not interested in a new trick.

What have been the issues?

- By default, AIX does not have ssl enabled. There is a binary so named (/usr/sbin/sendmail_ssl) but just calling that program - as well as adding the certificate lines in sendmail.cf (or in aixsample.mc or a private version of sendmail.mc) was not the correct path to follow. More on this in part 2.

- An important part of most tutorials is configuring sendmail AUTH. Guess what is not built into AIX sendmail - AUTH support. So, in hindsight, it is not surprising that I felt "blinded" by all the examples - none of which worked.

- I have worked to build sendmail on my own. Once upon a time I had that working (that I could build it). But I lost track of the small modifications I made. Sendmail, as an open source project has not made any updates in years. The official version is still sendmail-8.15.2 and I think the last version of AIX that it really knows about might be AIX 5.2 (maybe AIX 5.3, I'll have to look again).

Coming Up

In the parts that follow I shall reveal some, maybe all, of the lessons learned. (People around me are saying I need to be a bit more commercial - at least enough so to capture the costs of energy to keep the server up and running).

In any case - I'll cover how to get sendmail_ssl working, and probably the modifications I make to get it to build "naturally" on AIX6 and AIX7.

