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A. Melnikov, Ed.
Isode Limited
B. Leiba, Ed.
W. Segmuller
IBM T.J. Watson Research Center
T. Martin
BeThereBeSquare Inc.
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SIEVE Email Filtering: Extension for Notifications
draft-ietf-sieve-notify-12

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Abstract

Users go to great lengths to be notified as quickly as possible that they have received new mail. Most of these methods involve polling to check for new messages periodically. A push method handled by the final delivery agent gives users quicker notifications and saves

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server resources. This document does not specify the notification method but it is expected that using existing instant messaging infrastructure such as XMPP, or GSM Short Message Service (SMS) messages will be popular. This draft describes an extension to the Sieve mail filtering language that allows users to give specific rules for how and when notifications should be sent.

Changes since [draft-ietf-sieve-notify-11](#)

- o [As per DISCUSS from Cullen] Changed a SHOULD to a MUST in the following requirement: A notification SHOULD include means to identify/track its origin.
- o [As per DISCUSS from Cullen] Changed sms: URIs to tel: URIs.
- o [As per COMMENT from Chris] Updated the notify mechanism IANA registration template to allow for specifications which are not RFCs.
- o Additional security considerations as per SecDir review from Sean Turner.
- o Added a new registry for the notification-capability parameter of the notify_method_capability test (as per Pasi Eronen gen-art review).

Changes since [draft-ietf-sieve-notify-10](#)

- o Updated IANA registration template as per discussion in Vancouver.
- o Added ABNF for :options names.
- o Prohibit notification methods from defining new Sieve tags.

Changes since [draft-ietf-sieve-notify-09](#)

- o Extended requirements for avoiding loops and amplification attacks.
- o Other minor editorial changes as per AD's (Lisa) review.

Changes since [draft-ietf-sieve-notify-08](#)

- o Added missing IANA registry for notification methods.

Changes since [draft-ietf-sieve-notify-07](#)

- o Added a new "set" modifier for URL percent-encoding.
- o Clarified that notification methods must address notification loops.
- o Added an implementation consideration for implementations that use URIs internally.

Changes since [draft-ietf-sieve-notify-06](#)

- o Remove extract_text. The WG consensus was to move it to another document, such as Sieve MIME loops.
- o Deleted markers for open issues from the document.
- o Clarified that a notification mechanism can treat some URI parameters as an error.
- o Added notify_method_capability test and example.
- o Minor corrections to the IANA registration as a result of other changes.

Changes since [draft-ietf-sieve-notify-05](#)

- o Fixed XMPP URI in one example.
- o Addressed Michael's issue with how timestamp are described.
- o Renamed "valid_notif_method" to "valid_notify_method".
- o Added text about truncation of a textual part when it is stored in a variable using extract_text.

- o Changed tagged :method argument to positional argument.
- o Added text about notification throttling, identifying notification source and restricting values of the :from parameter.
- o Added a requirement on documents describing notification methods to list which URI parameters must be ignored.

Changes since [draft-ietf-sieve-notify-04](#)

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- o Made notification method required.
- o Defined "mailto" as a mandatory-to-implement method.
- o Added normative reference to mailto.
- o Clarified that :importance may be treated as a transport indicator.
- o Clarified that :importance value can be included in the default :message, if one is not specified.
- o Made the default :message implementation specific.
- o Renamed the capability name from "notify" to "enotify"
- o Updated IANA registration.
- o Moved text about ManageSieve capability to the ManageSieve document itself.
- o Removed reference to IANA registry for options.
- o Some miscellaneous text cleanup and clarification.

Changes since [draft-ietf-sieve-notify-03](#)

- o Added a warning that "notify" must not be used as a crappy form of "redirect".

- o Added a warning about using "notify" to forward confidential information in order to bypass organization's policy.
- o Fixed syntax of the :options argument - it is a string list, each string containing "<attribute>=<value>"
- o Renamed :priority to :importance
- o Cleaned up section about requirements on methods.

Changes since [draft-ietf-sieve-notify-02](#)

- o Added :from tagged argument.
- o Added Extract_text action, which allows to extract content of the first text/* part.

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- o Added back the ":options" parameter to the notify action.
- o Added new section talking about requirements on notification method specs.
- o Added more examples.

Changes since [draft-ietf-sieve-notify-00](#)

- o Updated references, etc.
- o Added IANA considerations section.
- o Removed denotify action.
- o Updated examples to use the variables extension.
- o Replaced notification method with URI.
- o Removed text suggesting that this extension can be used to track all Sieve actions taken.

- o Changed priority to be a string.
- o Added text about URI verification.
- o Clarified that a notification method is allowed to perform adaptation of notification context (e.g. truncation, charset conversion, etc.). These adaptations must be documented in a document describing the notification method.
- o Clarified that notify is compatible with all existing actions.
- o Removed the :id parameter to the notify action.
- o Added valid_notif_method test that allows to test if a notification method (URI) is supported.
- o Added a new capability response to ManageSieve that allows to report supported notification types.

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[1.](#) Introduction

This is an extension to the Sieve language defined by [[Sieve](#)] for providing instant notifications. It defines the new action "notify".

This document does not specify the notification methods. Examples of possible notification methods are email and XMPP. To allow a mechanism for portability of scripts that use notifications,

implementation of the [\[MailTo\]](#) method is mandatory. Other available methods shall depend upon the implementation and configuration of the system.

[1.1.](#) Conventions used in this document

Conventions for notations are as in [\[Sieve\] section 1.1](#), including the use of [\[ABNF\]](#).

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in [\[Kwds\]](#).

[2.](#) Capability Identifier

The capability string associated with the extension defined in this document is "enotify".

[3.](#) Notify Action

[3.1.](#) Notify Action Syntax and Semantics

```
Usage:  notify [":from" string]
         [":importance" <"1" / "2" / "3">]
         [":options" string-list]
         [":message" string]
         <method: string>
```

The Notify action specifies that a notification should be sent to a user. The format of the notification is implementation-defined and is also affected by the notification method used (see [Section 3.2](#)). However, all content specified in the :message parameter SHOULD be included.

[3.2.](#) Notify parameter "method"

The method positional parameter identifies the notification method that will be used; it is a URI [\[URI\]](#). For example, the notification

method can be a tel URI [\[TEL-URI\]](#) with a phone number to send SMS

messages to, or an XMPP [[XMPP](#)] URI containing an XMPP identifier [[XMPP-URI](#)].

The supported URI values will be site-specific, but support for the [[MailTo](#)] method is REQUIRED in order to insure interoperability. If a URI schema is specified that the implementation does not support, the notification MUST cause an error condition. Sieve scripts can check the supported methods using the "valid_notify_method" test to be sure that they only use supported ones, to avoid such error conditions.

If the method parameter contains a supported URI schema, then the URI MUST be checked for syntactic validity. An invalid URI syntax or an unsupported URI extension MUST cause an error. An implementation MAY enforce other semantic restrictions on URIs -- for example to restrict phone numbers in a tel: URI to a particular geographical region -- and will treat violations of such semantic restrictions as errors.

[3.3.](#) Notify tag ":from"

A ":from" parameter may be used to specify an author of the notification. The syntax of this parameter's value is method-specific. Implementations SHOULD check the syntax according to the notification method specification and generate an error when a syntactically invalid ":from" parameter is specified.

In order to minimize/prevent forgery of the author value, implementations SHOULD impose restrictions on what values can be specified in a ":from" parameter. For example, an implementation may restrict this value to be a member of a list of known author addresses or to belong to a particular domain. It is suggested that values which don't satisfy such restrictions simply be ignored rather than causing the notify action to fail.

[3.4.](#) Notify tag ":importance"

The :importance tag specifies the importance of quick delivery of the notification as perceived by the Sieve script owner. The :importance tag is followed by a numeric value represented as a string: "1" (high importance), "2" (normal importance), and "3" (low importance). If no importance is given, the default value "2" SHOULD be assumed. A notification method MAY treat the importance value as a transport indicator. For example, it might deliver notifications of high importance quicker than notifications of normal or low importance. Some notification methods allow users to specify their state of activity (for example "busy" or "away from keyboard"). If the

notification method provides this information it SHOULD be used to selectively send notifications. If, for example, the user marks herself as "busy", a notification method can require that a notification with importance of "3" is not to be sent, however the user should be notified of a notification with higher importance.

If the notification method allows users to filter messages based upon certain parameters in the message, users SHOULD be able to filter based upon importance. If the notification method does not support importance, then this parameter MUST be ignored. An implementation MAY include the importance value in the default message [Section 3.6](#), if one is not provided.

[3.5.](#) Notify tag ":options"

The :options tag is used to send additional parameters to the notification method. Interpretation of the parameters is method-specific. This document doesn't specify any such additional parameter.

Each string in the options string list has the following syntax:
"<optionname>=<value>".

where optionname has the following ABNF [[ABNF](#)]:

l-d = ALPHA / DIGIT

l-d-p = l-d / "." / "-" / "_"

optionname = l-d *l-d-p

value = *(%x01-09 / %x0B-0C / %x0E-FF)

[3.6.](#) Notify tag ":message"

The :message tag specifies the message data to be included in the notification. The entirety of the string SHOULD be sent but implementations MAY shorten the message for technical or aesthetic reasons. If the message parameter is absent, a default implementation-specific message is used. Unless specified otherwise by a particular notification mechanism, an implementation default containing at least the value of the "From" header field and the value of the "Subject" header field is RECOMMENDED.

In order to construct more complex messages the notify extension can be used together with the Sieve variables extension [[Variables](#)], as shown in the examples below.

[3.7.](#) Examples

Example 1:

```
require ["enotify", "fileinto", "variables"];

if header :contains "from" "boss@example.org" {
    notify :importance "1"
        :message "This is probably very important"
            "mailto:alm@example.com";
    # Don't send any further notifications
    stop;
}

if header :contains "to" "sievemailinglist@example.org" {
    # :matches is used to get the value of the Subject header
    if header :matches "Subject" "*" {
        set "subject" "${1}";
    }

    # :matches is used to get the value of the From header
    if header :matches "From" "*" {
        set "from" "${1}";
    }

    notify :importance "3"
        :message "[SIEVE] ${from}: ${subject}"
            "mailto:alm@example.com";
    fileinto "INBOX.sieve";
}
```

Example 2:

```
require ["enotify", "fileinto", "variables", "envelope"];

if header :matches "from" "*@*.example.org" {
    # :matches is used to get the MAIL FROM address
    if envelope :all :matches "from" "*" {
        set "env_from" " [really: ${1}]";
    }

    # :matches is used to get the value of the Subject header
    if header :matches "Subject" "*" {
        set "subject" "${1}";
    }

    # :matches is used to get the address from the From header
    if address :matches :all "from" "*" {
        set "from_addr" "${1}";
    }

    notify :message "${from_addr}${env_from}: ${subject}"
           "mailto:alm@example.com";
}
```

Example 3:

```
require ["enotify", "variables"];

set "notif_method"
"xmpp:tim@example.com?message;subject=SIEVE;body=You%20got%20mail";

if header :contains "subject" "Your dog" {
    set "notif_method" "tel:+14085551212";
}

if header :contains "to" "sievemailinglist@example.org" {
    set "notif_method" "";
}

if not string :is "${notif_method}" "" {
    notify "${notif_method}";
}

if header :contains "from" "boss@example.org" {
    # :matches is used to get the value of the Subject header
    if header :matches "Subject" "*" {
        set "subject" "${1}";
    }

    # don't need high importance notification for
```

```

    # a 'for your information'
    if not header :contains "subject" "FYI:" {
        notify :importance "1" :message "BOSS: ${subject}"
            "tel:+14085551212";
    }
}

```

[3.8.](#) Requirements on notification methods specifications

This section describes requirements for documents that define specific Sieve notification methods.

Notification mechanisms **MUST NOT** add new Sieve tags to the notify action.

A notification method **MAY** allow modification of the final notification text -- for example, truncating it if it exceeds a length limit, or modifying characters that can not be represented in the target character set. Characters in the notification text which can't be represented by the notification method **SHOULD** be replaced with a symbol indicating an unknown character. Allowed modifications **MUST** be documented in the document describing the notification method.

A notification method **MAY** ignore parameters specified in the Notify action.

A notification method **MAY** recommend the default message value to be used if the :message argument is not specified.

Notifications **SHOULD** include timestamps, if the notification method allows for their transmission outside of the textual message. Implementation methods which can only transmit timestamps in the textual message **MAY** include them in the textual message.

A notification **MUST** include means to identify/track its origin, in order to allow a recipient to stop notifications or find out how to contact the sender. This requirement is to help tracking a misconfigured or abusive origin of notifications.

Methods **SHOULD NOT** include any other extraneous information not specified in parameters to the notify action.

Methods MUST specify which URI parameters (if any) must be ignored, which ones must be used in the resulting notification and which ones must cause an error.

Methods MUST specify what values are returned by the `notify_method_capability` test [Section 5](#), in particular for the "online" notification-capability.

If there are errors sending the notification, the Sieve interpreter SHOULD ignore the notification and not retry indefinitely. The Sieve interpreter MAY throttle notifications; if it does, a request to send a notification MAY be silently ignored. Documents describing notification methods SHOULD describe how retries, throttling, duplicate suppression (if any), etc. are to be handled by implementations.

[4.](#) Test `valid_notify_method`

Usage: `valid_notify_method <notification-uris: string-list>`

The "valid_notify_method" test is true if the notification methods listed in the notification-uris argument are supported and they are valid both syntactically (including URI parameters) and semantically (including implementation-specific semantic restrictions). This test MUST perform exactly the same validation as would be performed on the "method" parameter to the "notify" action.

The test is true only if ALL of the listed notification methods are

supported and valid.

Example 4 (partial):

```
if not valid_notify_method ["mailto:",
    "http://gw.example.net/notify?test"] {
    stop;
}
```

[5.](#) Test notify_method_capability

Usage: notify_method_capability [COMPARATOR] [MATCH-TYPE]
 <notification-uri: string>
 <notification-capability: string>
 <key-list: string-list>

The "notify_method_capability" test retrieves the notification capability specified by the notification-capability string that is specific to the notification-uri and matches it to the values specified in the key-list. The test succeeds if a match occurs. The type of match defaults to ":is" and the default comparator is "i;ascii-casemap".

The notification-capability parameter is case insensitive.

The notify_method_capability test MUST fail unconditionally if the specified notification-uri is syntactically invalid (as determined by the valid_notify_method test [Section 4](#)) or specifies an unsupported notification method. However this MUST NOT cause an error.

The notify_method_capability test MUST fail unconditionally if the specified notification-capability item is not known to the Sieve interpreter. A script MUST NOT fail with an error if the item does not exist. This allows scripts to be written that handle nonexistent items gracefully.

This document defines a single notification-capability value "online", which is described below. Additional notification-capability values may be defined by using the procedure defined in [Section 9.3](#).

The "relational" extension [[Relational](#)] adds a match type called ":count". The count of an notify_method_capability test is 0 if the returned information is the empty string, or 1 otherwise.

For the "online" notification-capability the notify_method_capability

test can match one of the following key-list values:

- o "yes" - the entity identified by the notification-uri can receive a notify notification immediately. Note that even after this

value is returned, there is no guarantee that the entity would actually be able to receive any notification immediately or even receive it at all. Transport errors, recipient policy, etc. can prevent that.

- o "no" - the entity identified by the notification-uri is not currently available to receive an immediate notification.
- o "maybe" - Sieve interpreter can't determine if the the entity identified by the notification-uri is online or not.

Example 5:

```
require ["enotify"];

if notify_method_capability
    "xmpp:tim@example.com?message;subject=SIEVE"
    "Online"
    "yes" {
        notify :importance "1" :message "You got mail"
            "xmpp:tim@example.com?message;subject=SIEVE";
    } else {
        notify :message "You got mail" "tel:+14085551212";
    }
```

6. Modifier `encodeurl` to the 'set' action

Usage: `":encodeurl"`

When the Sieve script specifies both "variables" [[Variables](#)] and "enotify" capabilities in the "require", a new "set" action modifier (see [[Variables](#)]) `":encodeurl"` becomes available to Sieve scripts. This modifier performs percent-encoding of any octet in the string which doesn't belong to the "unreserved" set (see [[URI](#)]). The percent-encoding procedure is described in [[URI](#)].

The `":encodeurl"` modifier has precedence 15.

Example 6:

```
require ["enotify", "variables"];

set :encodeurl "body_param" "Safe body&evil=evilbody";

notify "mailto:tim@example.com?body=${body_param}";
```

[7.](#) Interactions with Other Sieve Actions

The notify action is compatible with all other actions, and does not affect the operation of other actions. In particular, the notify action MUST NOT cancel the implicit keep.

Multiple executed notify actions are allowed. Specific notification methods MAY allow multiple notifications from the same script to be collapsed into one.

[8.](#) Security Considerations

Security considerations are discussed in [\[Sieve\]](#). Additionally, implementations must be careful to follow the security considerations of the specific notification methods.

The notify action is potentially very dangerous. The path the notification takes through the network may not be secure. An error in the options string may cause the message to be transmitted to someone it was not intended for, or may expose information to eavesdroppers.

Just because a notification is received doesn't mean that it was sent by the Sieve implementation. It might be possible to forge notifications or modify parts of valid notifications with some notification methods.

Forgery of the :importance value (for example by unauthorized script modification) can potentially result in slow down in notification delivery.

Note that some components of notifications should not be trusted. For example the timestamp field can be easily forged or modified when some notification transports are used. Even if the timestamp is believed to be correct by the sender and is not modified in transit, it might be misleading on the receiving system due to clock differences.

information to unclassified networks. Unless the policy is also enforced in the module responsible for generating (or sending) of notifications, users can use the extension defined in this document to extract classified information and bypass the policy.

Notifications can result in loops and bounces. Also, allowing a single script to notify multiple destinations can be used as a means of amplifying the number of messages in an attack. Moreover, if loop detection is not properly implemented it may be possible to set up exponentially growing notification loops. Accordingly, Sieve notification methods:

1. MUST provide mechanisms for avoiding notification loops.
2. MUST provide the means for administrators to limit the ability of users to abuse notify. In particular, it MUST be possible to limit the number of notify actions a script can perform. Additionally, if no use cases exist for using notify with multiple destinations, this limit SHOULD be set to 1. Additional limits, such as the ability to restrict notify to local users MAY also be implemented.
3. MUST provide facilities to log use of notify in order to facilitate tracking down abuse.
4. MAY use script analysis to determine whether or not a given script can be executed safely. While the Sieve language is sufficiently complex that full analysis of all possible scripts is computationally infeasible, the majority of real-world scripts are amenable to analysis. For example, an implementation might allow scripts that it has determined are safe to run unhindered, block scripts that are potentially problematic, and subject unclassifiable scripts to additional auditing and logging.

Allowing notify action at all may not be appropriate in situations where Sieve scripts are associated with email accounts which are freely-available and/or not trackable to a human who can be held accountable for creating message bombs or other abuse.

Implementations that construct URIs internally from various notify

parameters MUST make sure that all components of such URIs are properly percent-encoded (see [URI]). In particular this applies to values of the :from and the :message tagged arguments and may apply to the :options values.

Header/envelope tests [Sieve] together with Sieve variables can be used to extract the list of users to receive notifications from the incoming email message or its envelope. This is potentially quite

dangerous, as this can be used for Deny Of Service attacks on recipients controlled by the message sender. For this reason implementations SHOULD NOT allow use of variables containing values extracted from the email message in the method parameter to the notify action. Note that violation of this SHOULD NOT may result in the creation of an open relay, i.e. any sender would be able to create specially crafted email messages that would result in notifications delivered to recipients under the control of the sender. In worst case this might result in financial loss by user controlling the Sieve script and/or by recipients of notifications (e.g. if a notification is an SMS message).

Note that the last SHOULD NOT is not a generic prohibition of use of variables in the notify action, as controlling the target of a notification by extracting it from user owned data stores (such as user's LDAP entry) is considered to be useful.

[9.](#) IANA Considerations

[9.1.](#) Registration of Sieve extension

To: iana@iana.org

Subject: Registration of new Sieve extension

Capability name: enotify

Description: adds the 'notify' action for notifying user about the received message. It also provides two new test: valid_notify_method checks notification URIs for validity; notify_method_capability can check recipients capabilities.

RFC number: this RFC

Contact address:

The Sieve discussion list <ietf-mta-filters@imc.org>

This information should be added to the list of sieve extensions given on <http://www.iana.org/assignments/sieve-extensions>.

9.2. New registry for Sieve notification mechanisms

IANA is requested to create a new registry for Sieve notification mechanisms. This registry contains both vendor-controlled notification mechanism names (beginning with "vnd.") and IETF-controlled notification mechanism names. Vendor-controlled notification mechanism names have the format as defined in the following paragraph and may be registered on a "First Come First Served" basis [[IANA-GUIDELINES](#)], by applying to IANA with the form specified later in this section. Registration of notification mechanisms that do not begin with "vnd." are registered using the "Specification Required" policy [[IANA-GUIDELINES](#)].

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Vendor-controlled notification mechanism names MUST have the form "vnd.<vendor-name>.<mechanism-name>", where <vendor-name> is as specified in the ACAP Vendor Subtree registry [[ACAP](#)].

This defines the template for a new registry for Sieve notification mechanisms, to be created as <http://www.iana.org/assignments/sieve-notification>. There are no initial entries for this registry.

To: iana@iana.org

Subject: Registration of new Sieve notification mechanism

Mechanism name: [the name of the mechanism]

Mechanism URI: [the RFC number of the document that defines the URI used by this mechanism. Different mechanisms MUST use different URI schema.]

Mechanism-specific options: [the names of any Sieve notify option names (as used in the :options parameter) that are specific to this mechanism, or "none"]

Permanent and readily available reference: [the RFC number or an URL of the document that defines this notification mechanism]

Person and email address to contact for further information: [the name and email address of the technical contact for information about this mechanism]

9.3. New registry for notification-capability parameters

IANA is requested to create a new registry for notification-capability parameter of the notify_method_capability test. This registry contains both vendor-controlled notification-capability values (beginning with "vnd.") and IETF-controlled notification-capability values. Vendor-controlled notification-capability values have the format as defined in the following paragraph and may be registered on a "First Come First Served" basis [[IANA-GUIDELINES](#)], by applying to IANA with the form specified later in this section. Registration of notification-capability values that do not begin with "vnd." are registered using the "Specification Required" policy [[IANA-GUIDELINES](#)].

Vendor-controlled notification-capability values MUST have the form "vnd.<vendor-name>.<capability-name>", where <vendor-name> is as specified in the ACAP Vendor Subtree registry [[ACAP](#)].

The following template must be used for registering notification-capability parameters:

To: iana@iana.org
Subject: Registration of a new notification-capability parameter
Capability name: [the name of the notification-capability]

Description: [a description of what the notification-capability is for]

Syntax: [formal definition of allowed values and their syntax]

Permanent and readily available reference(s): [the RFC number(s) or an URL of the document that defines this notification mechanism]

Contact information: [the name and email address of the technical contact for information about this mechanism]

Below is the registration form for the "online" notification-capability:

To: iana@iana.org

Subject: Registration of a new notification-capability parameter

Capability name: online

Description: Returns whether the entity identified by the notification-uri parameter to the notify_method_capability test can receive a notify notification immediately.

Syntax: Can contain one of three values: "yes", "no" and "maybe". Values MUST be in lowercase.

Permanent and readily available reference(s): This RFC

Contact information: The Sieve discussion list
<ietf-mta-filters@imc.org>

10. Acknowledgements

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Authors' Addresses

Alexey Melnikov (editor)
Isode Limited
5 Castle Business Village

36 Station Road
Hampton, Middlesex TW12 2BX
UK

Email: Alexey.Melnikov@isode.com

Barry Leiba (editor)
IBM T.J. Watson Research Center
19 Skyline Drive
Hawthorne, NY 10532
US

Phone: +1 914 784 7941
Email: leiba@watson.ibm.com

Wolfgang Segmuller
IBM T.J. Watson Research Center
19 Skyline Drive
Hawthorne, NY 10532
US

Phone: +1 914 784 7408
Email: werewolf@us.ibm.com

Tim Martin
BeThereBeSquare Inc.
672 Haight st.
San Francisco, CA 94117
US

Phone: +1 510 260-4175
Email: timmartin@alumni.cmu.edu

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