email connection crossover workarounds

Posted At : August 22, 2013 5:04 PM | Posted By : Mark Kruger
Related Categories: ColdFusion, Coldfusion Troubleshooting

As a follow up to yesterday's post (regarding sending mail and having it end up in someone else's "sent" folder) I thought I might put some flesh on the workaround suggested both in the **bug report** and on **CF-Talk**. The suggestion is to:

Create a CNAME to point to the SMTP server address so that both websites were looking at different domain names.
This idea is workable up to a point so I thought I would explore it for my readers.

A "CNAME" record is a DNS entry that functions as an *alias*. When a DNS server sees a CNAME it says "Oh.. the user wanted abc.com but is see that's just a pointer to xyz.com. I'll serve up xyz.com's IP address." What the workaround suggests is that such an alias can be created to "fool" the ColdFusion server into believing that connection A is different from connection B even though they are pointed at the same IP address.

To return to our example of Bob and Mary - if Bob's email is relayed to smtp.bobsadufas.com (with a CNAME record that aliases smtp.bobsadufas.com to smtp.gmail.com) and Mary's email is relayed to smtp.ithinkbobsadufas.com (with a CNAME record that aliases smtp.ithinkbobsadufas.com to smtp.gmail.com) then the ColdFusion server would assume that both emails required a *separate* SMTP connection - even though in reality they are hitting the *exact same mail server relay*. ColdFusion sees them as different because it's pool of connections is not tied to the IP address but to the domain string - so no crossover is possible.

This will work to a point. But there's a bit more to it than simply creating a CNAME and calling it good. For example, what if the two emails are on the same domain? If *both* bob and Mary are relaying through smtp.bobsadufas.com then a crossover is still possible right? Indeed each email address used on the server that is required relay through smtp.gmail.com is actually going to *require* its own CNAME just to be safe. Needless to say that's an untenable solution in many cases.

In addition you will need to modify the code. This is *not* clear in the workaround description. Each cfmail tag that specifies server="smtp.gmail.com" is going to have to be updated with the string representing the CNAME - that's the only way ColdFusion will know which connection to use (or not use). So all around this is an iffy solution to a ticklish problem. A more reliable work around (where possible) is to use a relay on a server that does not place the email in the sent folder - like a local SMTP server. Meanwhile this is an ongoing issue.