

Threaded replies

BulkRate 2.1 now supports threaded replies. This means that replies you generate with BulkRate will be properly inserted into the appropriate thread. This will allow people using FirstClass® Client to follow threads and find your replies using the "Next Thread" function in FirstClass® Client, and message histories will now show your replies. Some BBSs discourage the use of BulkRate because its replies have fallen outside the threads; now this will no longer be the case.

You can turn on threaded replies for a given service by choosing "Service setup..." under the Service menu. Click the "Exchange settings" icon. Check "Use threaded replies". You may also want to add your screen name as it appears on that service to prevent replies from being sent back to your mailbox. Close the dialog by hitting "OK" and save the changed service file by choosing "Save service" under the Service menu.

Drawbacks

There are two major drawbacks to threaded replies, which is why they are implemented as an option in BulkRate:

- 1) Posting a threaded reply is slower than posting a new message or a non-threaded reply.
- 2) Threaded replies have constraints on addresses placed in the To and cc fields of a message.

How threaded replies work

When you create a reply, information is stored with the reply that tells BulkRate what conference the original message was in, how to get to that conference from the Desktop, and identification information for the actual original message in the conference (a message "header").

During an exchange, when a threaded reply is found, BulkRate navigates to the original conference and opens it, requesting a list of all messages in that conference. (This can be rather time consuming if the conference has many messages in it.) It then finds the original message in the message list and sends a command to reply to that message. The FirstClass® CLUI then starts a reply and lets BulkRate finish it.

The fact that the FirstClass® CLUI starts the reply for you places some constraints on message addressing. The addresses that the FirstClass® CLUI automatically enters when generating a reply cannot be removed from the reply. You may add addresses, but you cannot remove any. If, while editing a reply in BulkRate, you remove any existing addresses or press the delete key while editing either address field, the reply will no longer be

treated as a threaded reply to prevent copies of the message from going to people or conferences you do not expect.

Threaded or not?

You can choose to enable threaded replies for a given service or not; you may also elect to "de-thread" any given reply by unchecking the "Threaded reply" checkbox in the Outgoing message window. Why might you want to NOT use threaded replies? Since BulkRate must ask for a message list that includes EVERY message in the original conference in order to locate the original message, this can get quite slow. (BulkRate is smart enough to use the list for multiple replies to the same conference, if those replies are next to each other in the outgoing mail file). This slowness might not bother you with a fast modem, but if you use BulkRate at 2400 bps, it can slow things down quite a bit. Non-threaded replies and new messages are sent much faster, since there is no need to locate the original message.

Sometimes the choice is made for you: if you delete any existing addresses from a reply, the reply becomes de-threaded. In interests of speed, replies to messages in your Mailbox that have been sent only to you and not to any other people or conferences are also initially non-threaded, though you can change that before closing or saving the message.

In any case, once a reply has been saved as a non-threaded reply, there is no going back: the information that would connect the reply to the original message is lost.