

## **Lotus Domino: New Game in Town**

In the old days (say 1995) companies built web sites to publish static content—marketing brochures, perhaps a page of frequently-asked questions about their products. Then came dynamic pages, where the content displayed depends on choices made by the user. This interactivity made possible new applications such as searchable knowledge bases for customer support and the golden lure of net commerce. But to truly realize the opportunities offered by interactive web technology requires integrating enterprise data with the Web. And the road from the corporate database to the web browser has been fraught with uncertainty—untested interfaces, untested languages, and always those gnawing doubts about security.

But now there's a new game in town.

With Lotus Domino, IBM hopes to bridge the gap between enterprise computing and the limitless opportunities of the Internet. Essentially, Domino is a suite of products that transform Lotus Notes into an interactive web server. This in turn allows any web browser to participate in Notes applications as a client.

"Always before, you were required to have Lotus client software to communicate with Notes servers," explains Louis Reyes, Software Product Manager for Dickens Data Systems. "Now you can access the servers from any web browser." Reyes remarks that Domino has generated tremendous excitement at Lotus. The sales projections help explain why. "From 1989-95, Lotus Notes was sold to two million customers. Over the next 18 months, that number grew to eight million. Now, with Domino, they are projecting 20 million by the end of 1997."

The capabilities of Notes are well-established. In addition to basic e-mail, group calendar, and scheduling functions, Notes provides shared access to document databases. By implementing flexible views, pages and forms, administrators can present data in different ways to different client users, all from the same database. And Notes includes an easy-to-use, tools-based environment for building custom workflow and groupware applications.

If you've ever worked in a Lotus Notes environment, you know that it really can, as claimed, knit together an organization. As Reyes points out, "Notes applications tend to proliferate. Once a Notes system is set up in an enterprise, people find they can use it for many different applications. Particularly because the data is stored in the same place."

What Domino adds to the Notes equation is integration with the standard Internet protocols. The server software comes in single and multi-processor versions. It supports all of the common web server operating systems, including IBM AIX, Windows NT, Sun Solaris and HP-UX. The Domino suite also offers several optional packages that extend the basic Notes/Web Server capabilities:

- Domino Advanced Services is a high-level version of Domino Server that offers clustering of physical servers, partitioning of a single server, and detailed usage tracking--all aimed at extending availability.
- Domino Action is a set of tools for creating and managing websites without requiring knowledge of HTML or other coding.
- Domino Merchant is an application framework for building net commerce sites. It includes tools for registering site visitors, gathering customer information, and taking payment via credit card. It allows net merchants to stock their web stores and catalogs by interfacing to existing order processing and accounting systems.

But what about security? Domino answers those concerns by implementing the established Notes access control model and extending it for web applications. Access control allows the Notes administrator to restrict user access from the level of entire databases all the way down to individual fields. Web clients accessing a Domino server can be authenticated through access control, as well as through standard web authentication based on user name and password. Domino also supports advanced security through server authentication and data encryption.

Dickens Data Systems is currently in the midst of implementing Domino as their new Internet and intranet solution. Bob Morris, Chief Information Officer for Dickens, foresees a number of benefits in terms of improved efficiency and productivity. On the corporate intranet site, for example, different departments will be able to update their pages without learning HTML coding, through the use of Domino forms. And Domino will facilitate the creation of a "virtual office," providing unified communication to allow distributed teams to work together on projects.

According to Morris, Domino represents "the next generation of Internet servers. It integrates basic web publishing of information with workflow, collaboration and application deployment. Notes is a proven product for workflow management."

In the classic game of dominos, players make connections by matching pieces with the same alignment of dots. In the new game of Domino, enterprises can make connections by matching their internal networks to the worldwide resources of the Internet. Then anyone with a browser can play.

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