

IBM Begins to Reinvent Itself at Lotusphere 2007

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Lotusphere 2007 featured an impressive lineup of refreshed favorites and some new launches that may appeal to non-Lotus users. IBM has clarified some of its plans for the Lotus products, but important challenges remain.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Event

On 22 January 2007, at Lotusphere, IBM demonstrated new versions of its flagship Notes and Domino v.8 and Sametime 7.5.1 products. It also announced

- Quickr: New products for basic content services. Quickplace users can upgrade to Quickr Personal Edition for free.
- Lotus Connections: The first launch of a social-software suite from a major collaboration vendor.
- UC2: Unified communications and collaboration integration with Sametime based on IBM's telephony partners like Avaya, Cisco, Nortel and Siemens .
- WebSphere Portal Express v.6: An updated portal offering for midsize enterprises to be released in January 2007.

All of these products are slated for release in mid-2007 (except Portal Express). Pricing information is not available.

Analysis

Significant updates to Lotus Notes and Quickplace, as well as the introduction of some compelling new products, were the reason that IBM's Lotusphere 2007 was buzzing with positive feedback from IBM customers and partners.

Perhaps the best news coming from Lotusphere is the near-disappearance of the bewildering "Workplace" name. The folding of Workplace into WebSphere Portal has helped to reduce the confusion regarding its strategy, messaging and products. While Workplace was, in Gartner's view, a failed marketing effort, its underlying concepts embracing the Web have provided a critical foundation for Notes 8, Quickr, Connections and Sametime — which are all built on Eclipse with the Expeditor tool. Combined with the recently added representational state transfer (REST) application programming interfaces, Atom syndication capabilities and "mashability," these concepts serve as a strategic architecture for all future Lotus products.

IBM hopes Lotusphere 2007 will launch an updated, more competitive and appealing Lotus. The demonstrations and product sessions have been successful among the Lotus users who come to these events. However, several challenges persist. The relationship of Quickr to existing products like Domino Document Manager, DB2 Content Manager and new document-oriented clients remains murky. While the mashups and possibilities of social software are promising, the lack of consumer-focused or Web 2.0 software-as-a-service offerings limits penetration.

IBM has addressed many of the lingering questions about Lotus's future direction and managed to inject a level of excitement in a product line that many consider moribund. During 2007, we will watch for signs that IBM has effectively executed on its plans and expanded rapidly into other delivery and business models.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Lotus customers:** Develop plans to evaluate and deploy Notes/Domino 8.

- **All users interested in social software in a business setting (including Microsoft-centered IT organizations):** Evaluate Lotus Connections.

RECOMMENDED READING

- "IBM Lotus/Domino Users on the Road to Hannover" — After its first demonstration at Lotusphere 2006, IBM Hannover appears promising and somewhat less mysterious. **By Jeffrey Mann**
- "Microsoft E-Mail Momentum Growing at IBM's Expense" — Client inquiries indicate Microsoft is gaining momentum in the e-mail and calendaring market, and the trend appears to be accelerating. **By Tom Austin, David Cearley and Matthew Cain**

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