

Feature Story

Good Times for Partners Who Help Customers Move to Microsoft's Unified Communication and Collaboration Platform

The ability to deploy a modern, integrated communication and collaboration platform with Microsoft Exchange Server 2007, Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007 and the 2007 Microsoft Office system prompts companies to move from IBM LotusNotes/Domino to Microsoft's platform.

REDMOND, Wash., Jan. 21, 2007 – As Microsoft continues to deliver innovations to its unified communication and collaboration platform – which includes Microsoft Exchange Server 2007, the 2007 Office system with Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007, and has solutions in the pipeline such as the next generation of Microsoft Office Communications Server – Microsoft's industry partners find that business is booming. An increasing number of customers report that their existing communication and collaboration solutions, built on older, non-Microsoft platforms, are not effectively evolving with business trends and practices, and they are turning to Microsoft and its partners for help.

IT managers in these companies face a dilemma: How can they gain the advantages of unified messaging, which allows employees to receive and manage e-mail, voice mail, and faxes through a single inbox? How can they enhance their employee's productivity through workplace collaboration and better business insight – while reducing organizational IT costs – when the legacy messaging and collaboration platforms aren't up to the challenge of supporting more advanced technology?

Conversations with a number of Microsoft partners who specialize in migration, system integration and management services reveal that for a growing number of their customers the answer is simple: It's time to move, and, with these tools – which will be released as no-charge downloads for customers and partners over the next month – it will automate and simplify transitions to Microsoft's platform more than ever before.

'Great Time to Switch'

"I think today is a great time to switch to the Microsoft unified communication and collaboration platform," says Jay Lendl, Microsoft Practice Vice President for Fujitsu Consulting, the U.S. consulting and services arm of the US\$40.6 billion Fujitsu Group and a Microsoft Strategic Global Systems Integrator, based in Edison, N.J.








"I feel very confident that the new Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 platform and 2007 Office system including Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007 can deliver all the messaging and collaboration services that our clients are demanding right now," says Lendl. "I believe that whether you are a large or small company, this platform will deliver unprecedented predictability, rich features and cost-effective solutions for customers."

Migrating for Performance, Productivity

The release of Exchange Server 2007 and SharePoint Server 2007 at the end of November 2006 also bodes well for business at Quest Software, a Global ISV and Gold Certified Partner that delivers solutions to help organizations get more performance and productivity from their applications, databases and Windows infrastructure.

One third of Quest's business is dedicated to providing organizations with the tools they need to migrate to and manage Microsoft technologies, says Steve Dickson, Quest's vice president, Windows Management Solutions. "More and more organizations are moving from Lotus Notes to Exchange Server for their messaging and collaboration needs," he says. "Quest has helped move more than one million mailboxes from IBM Lotus Notes to Exchange Server, and more than 10 million mailboxes from other platforms to the latest Exchange Server. We expect to see continued

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growth in this area."

Quest is also a leader in developing tools to help manage SharePoint-based collaboration environment, and has created products that provide reporting, migration and back-up and item level content recovery. Dickson says that many of Quest's customers use Microsoft Office SharePoint Server to exchange business-critical information because it is an easy form of collaboration to implement and use and that developing management tools for the SharePoint environment is an important part of their business. "We have recently released a tool that offers an efficient and cost-effective method to migrate content from Microsoft Exchange Server Public Folders to the SharePoint platform, which helps consolidate collaboration platforms for easier management," says Dickson. "Quest solutions help organizations get the greatest possible benefit from their Microsoft SharePoint-based solutions."

Benefits of Switching

As companies make the strategic business decision to review their existing messaging and collaboration platform and evaluate new options, Lendl says they will find that Microsoft's platform for unified communications and collaboration, including Exchange Server 2007 and SharePoint Server 2007, offers not only greater functionality but can also help increase employee productivity, reduce IT costs and improve business processes.

"Once people understand what's included in Microsoft's platform, they begin to see that to replicate all that functionality would require them to go out and bring together technologies from three or four different vendors just to equal what's already available with Exchange Server 2007 and SharePoint Server 2007," says Lendl. He further notes that standardizing onto a single, integrated platform such as Microsoft's can reduce support and licensing costs of disparate programs and multiple messaging systems, while providing improved services to employees, such as unified messaging.

Another value of Microsoft's integrated platform, says Lendl, is Microsoft's commitment to ongoing innovation in the messaging and collaboration space while simultaneously maturing the base tool set of the underlying platform. "With each major release, Exchange Server keeps improving," he says. "With Exchange Server 2007, they have added the key technologies to enable unified messaging. Today, I would say that a unified Exchange Server, Office system and SharePoint platform can deliver everything that IBM Lotus Notes or Domino can, but more quickly and more completely out-of-the-box. In fact, I'd say that IBM doesn't have anything near what Microsoft has from the standpoint of messaging and calendaring," says Lendl. "And SharePoint Server 2007 makes it possible to bring together business intelligence and electronic content management capabilities in a single server, quite unlike the myriad of servers that IBM technology requires to perform the same functions."

Commitment to Maturing the Platform

Lendl contrasts Microsoft's commitment to maturing its platform with what he sees as IBM's lack of a clear strategy regarding the future of its messaging and unified communications platform, particularly after the recent IBM decision to remove its Workplace Messaging offering from the market. "IBM needs to clarify what their mid- and long-term plans are around their messaging and collaboration technologies," says Lendl. "They need to tell customers what the future holds. Our clients are concerned and confused by what they are hearing, and not hearing, from IBM. This is also coming at a time when many are getting ready to move forward with a unified communications strategy for the benefit of their employees and ultimately their entire organization."

Microsoft's ongoing commitment to its technologies and clear communications make a business difference to Fujitsu Consulting and its clients, Lendl says. "We can be confident in presenting our Exchange and SharePoint Server solutions because we understand and trust Microsoft's roadmap, and at the same time I think our clients increasingly see the benefit of purchasing a greater degree of predictability and maturity with their technology dollars."

And making the switch from Lotus Domino has never been easier, says Lendl. Microsoft Transporter Suite for Lotus Domino, announced today, significantly eases the sometimes challenging migration from a Lotus Notes e-mail environment to the Exchange platform. "The Transporter Suite is the best set of consolidated tools available for migrating from Domino to Exchange Server 2007," says Lendl. "Using a single integrated interface to migrate the platform just makes it that much easier to realize the benefits of Exchange Server 2007."

Momentum Builds for SharePoint Server

Microsoft partners that specialize in SharePoint Server 2007 implementations are also experiencing increased business, as a growing number of companies move from their current portal solutions to

the Microsoft collaboration and communication platform. "We are seeing increased momentum in adoption of Microsoft Office SharePoint Server," says Rama Shenoy, Practice Manager – Microsoft Communications and Collaboration Practice, Microsoft Business Unit, Wipro Technologies, a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner and the world's largest independent research and development services provider and a global provider of integrated business, technology and process solutions, based in Bangalore, India. "We have large global customers evaluating SharePoint as the hub of their enterprise collaboration and communication platforms because they recognize the need to migrate from their existing portal and collaboration platforms built on LiveLink, Documentum and Lotus Notes."

Increasingly important to customers looking to explore the opportunities presented by new collaboration, portal and communication technologies, says Shenoy, is investing in a single, unified platform, as this can decrease IT cost and simplify software management. "Increasingly, customers see value in going for a single-vendor solution like Microsoft for workplace collaboration," says Shenoy. "The Microsoft collaboration and communication platform is emerging as the core platform in this space."

Given the increased competitive pressures organizations face today, more and more businesses are looking at taking employee productivity to completely different levels, and Wipro sees technologies such as the forthcoming SharePoint templates playing a key role in making that happen. "Role-based MySites will enable our customers to quickly deploy robust functional portals with seamless integration to back-end ERP's, CRM's and custom applications," says Shenoy. By bringing critical back-end data to their desktop browser, SharePoint My Sites become a one-stop shop to access all that employees need and want for their day to day work. "Once customers get a taste of MySites, they'll be hungry to do more and more with SharePoint's personalization capabilities. My Sites is making a 'must have' of a 'nice to have' functionality," says Vijit Chhabra, Microsoft Practice Manager, Wipro Technologies.

Wipro's customers also look to the new features of SharePoint Server 2007 to extend their current portal functionalities and improve workplace communication and collaboration capabilities more broadly, says Chhabra. "SharePoint Server 2007 consolidates collaboration features like enterprise search, enterprise content management, and document and records management onto the platform into a single, unified platform and this offers a key value differentiator for our customers," says Chhabra. "For our customers who are turning to collaboration platforms to create virtual workplaces and to improve data visibility, availability, tracking and communication, SharePoint Server 2007 is our top recommendation. In fact, we believe that Microsoft has emerged as the super-platform in the collaboration space," says Chhabra.

Unified Messaging Draws Customers

Tim Bakke, product manager for Enterprise Messaging and Collaboration at Avtex – a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner that provides application and systems integration for unified messaging, contact center and IP telephony solutions – says that interest in the Exchange platform has spiked since the November release of Exchange Server 2007. "We're getting a lot of interest from customers regarding Exchange Server 2007," says Bakke. "We find that many longtime Lotus Notes customers are considering migrating to the Exchange platform because of the potential to enable unified messaging within a company. The Transporter Suite makes it easier for IBM customers to move to Exchange, and that is good news for us."

Avtex is primarily a telecommunications systems integrator based in Minnesota with a specialty in unified messaging, or UM. "Our sweet spot, our technical expertise is how legacy and IP telecommunications and computers speak to one another," Bakke says. "Microsoft technologies are a growing part of our business, and we'll definitely expand our business to support the velocity of interest in the Exchange platform, because we as a company see the benefit of the Exchange Server unified messaging solution. We are already seeing the revenue impacts.

"In our business, a unified messaging initiative usually comes in one of two different flavors," adds Bakke. "In one, IT customers are looking to upgrade e-mail servers to Exchange Server 2007 from a previous version of Exchange, and as part of that they are looking to add in voice messaging to a unified messaging framework without having to increase telecommunications investments." The second opportunity is from telecommunications customers who are in the midst of upgrading their telephone and voice messaging platform. "They have heard the buzz about how powerful the Exchange Server 2007 Unified Messaging component is and realize that they could use the Exchange Server environment as a vehicle to upgrade their telecommunications messaging infrastructure."

Bakke points out that Exchange Server isn't only effective for large enterprise-scale businesses. "We've had experience with Exchange in all kinds of environments, large and small, and personally I think Exchange is a viable e-mail platform for small and medium sized companies. A company can then deploy Exchange's UM component with the result that the company not only has their e-mail handled, but also their voice mail and unified messaging, all for a fairly low price and a single

support cost.”

Bakke says migrating onto the Exchange Server platform is attractive to many customers for another reason: consolidation of vendors. “A lot of customers tell us they want to migrate to a smaller number of trusted vendors. So consolidating messaging platforms from IBM Lotus Notes to Microsoft Exchange Server, and taking advantage of unified messaging, is attractive to many customers.”

Reducing the number of third-party vendors in a company's technology and telecommunications infrastructure doesn't just provide savings in support costs and decreased IT overhead, it can also enhance productivity, he explains. “As Microsoft adds more value to the Office system communications environment, and as companies continue to avail themselves of its potential, I think you'll find more and more businesses migrating to a Microsoft-only platform because it provides a simple path to so many real-time collaboration scenarios in the workplace,” says Bakke.

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