



Integrating Microsoft SharePoint with IBM Lotus Notes: Driving User Adoption of SharePoint While Managing Costs

Interview with Matt Cain, Vice President for Business Intelligence and Information Management, Gartner and Yaacov Cohen, CEO of Mainsoft. Moderated by Scott Smith, Gartner Studio 56.

Scott: Collaboration. It's one of the top IT priorities for building an effective enterprise that can meet current and future challenges. Collaboration tools – including shared work spaces, instant messaging, and web conferencing – can enable people to increase the effectiveness of their work while reducing the time, cost, and effort spent working together.

But how do you drive mainstream adoption of collaboration spaces? Email has been the dominant tool for communication and document collaboration for business users for the past 15 years, and people don't change their habits easily. And, how can you take full advantage of Microsoft SharePoint, the most popular collaboration workspace on the market, if you are a Lotus Notes shop? We'll answer those questions and more with two leading experts on email and collaboration – Gartner Analyst Matt Cain and Yaacov Cohen, the President and Chief Executive Officer of Mainsoft.

And we begin with Matt Cain. Matt is a Vice President for Business Intelligence and Information Management Research at Gartner where he is the lead analyst on email. He joins us now from his office in Connecticut. Matt, welcome to the program.

Matt: Thanks for having me, Scott.

Scott: So Matt, we hear so much about collaboration these days and the many collaboration tools that are available. That said, are organizations succeeding with their current approaches to collaboration?

Matt: Well, how's yes and no for an answer? What we're seeing, of course, is that over the past couple of years, we've started to see instant messaging becoming more popular, and web conferencing and shared workspace become popular. But you know, the fundamental fact is that most of the collaboration is still occurring in email. And why do folks like email? Well, because everyone is always reading email, and you have that one core repository. But it's not necessarily the most efficient way to do your collaboration.

So for example, if we look at how many projects are run, let's be frank, what ends up happening is that we have people emailing around a large PowerPoint document or spreadsheet, and there's no version control, and there's no library services, and there's no good way to get all the information on a particular project out of email because it's all on this undifferentiated mass of email. So I suppose it's better than faxing things around, but the question is really -- is this the most effective way that we can collaborate, particularly when we're all involved in a project?

And the other thing to think about is that email isn't necessarily the cheapest thing in the world. When we look at email costs, we typically find that, on a fully loaded basis, email can be anywhere between 10 and 20 dollars per user per month. And so one of the things that all of these attachments do is exacerbate the storage problem – storage can be costly. So Scott, this is not necessarily folks that are really optimizing their investment in collaboration, is the answer.

Scott: So then what should we be doing to really help people change their work habits?

Matt: If we think about, at the highest level, what we want users to do is to match the collaboration tool with the business task at hand. And so, let's say, for example, you've got a user who is constantly broadcasting mail out to large distribution lists, and maybe some of that information is valuable, but maybe we would be better served by rewarding that individual with a blog and saying, "Hey, here's your blog, you can pronounce everything that you need to within that blog" and then using things like instant messaging for very quick status checks, and using things like Wiki, for example, for gathering large amounts of data from many different data points.

And so, what we're trying to suggest here is that we've got a lot of collaboration tools that are already there, and what we really need to do is make sure that, for the appropriate business circumstance we're using the most appropriate tool. And I would say that when we started talking earlier about getting involved in a large project, well to us, tools that allow you to have a virtual project workspace, tools like Microsoft SharePoint, that is a great way to encourage users to get out of email and to use a more appropriate tool.

Scott: Now, I know that a lot of technology-focused workgroups are turning to Microsoft SharePoint to really try to improve their approach to collaboration. Why is that?

Matt: Well, there are many good teamwork tools out there and SharePoint is one of them; and I think that we could probably generally conclude it's probably the most popular tool that's out there today. And it's interesting because it has really been adopted from the bottom up in most organizations, rather than the top down. It's a really good fit for these project teams because what SharePoint has proven to be able to do is to aggregate all of the different things that you would do in a project into one common store.

Typically, what happens is that as one user got involved in a project where SharePoint was present, they really saw the efficiency and they had a good experience with it. And then in the next project they got involved with, they said, "Hey, why don't we do this with a SharePoint infrastructure?" And so we see this kind of viral adoption and, by the way, viral adoption is not necessarily the best way to go. At some point you need to have policies and procedures and architectures and standards and things like that. But, it is growing virally and at some point you need to go in and start to control it.

Scott: So Matt, how do you go about promoting corporate-sanctioned workspaces, in particular to mainstream users who may be less technically savvy?

Matt: One of the ways that we think that you can encourage the use of SharePoint is to basically invest in easy access to SharePoint. And as we know Scott, you and I, we live in email and boy wouldn't it be nice to have a nice link between my email infrastructure and my SharePoint infrastructure? So being able to deliver that kind of linkage between the email infrastructure and a virtual workspace environment is often very encouraging to users who want to adopt these technologies.

Scott: Let's focus on that. Promoting SharePoint adoption by linking it to email -- sometimes that's easier said than done, right? If I'm an IBM customer, for instance, and I adopt SharePoint, should I be looking to migrate to Outlook and Exchange or is there a coexistence strategy we should consider?

Matt: Yeah, it's kind of a tricky issue, but you're right, I mean we need to keep in mind that IBM Lotus Domino, the Notes platform, is still a very popular email infrastructure. It's the number two player in the market; and so it's not typically uncommon now to see a Domino organization bringing in SharePoint. And of course our immediate reaction is "Oh, man, how do I begin to pull those two things together? Should I just migrate over to Outlook and Exchange, or should I continue to run Notes Domino and to do some integration? And both have their merit. Let's acknowledge that, up front, a migration from Domino to Exchange is not particularly simple and it's not particularly cheap. Our number is if you factor in all the labor costs and the capital costs, it could be upwards to 200 dollars a seat to make that migration. And for companies that are migrating to a whole Microsoft stack, that could make a

lot of sense. But in many cases, companies have lots and lots of Domino applications that they're getting really good business value out of, and they may be perfectly happy with how Notes Domino is working for them. And we think that you could actually have that combination where you're able to maintain your Domino application and your email infrastructure, and you can start to benefit from it by doing some integration between Notes and the SharePoint environment relying on third-party tools out there. We do think that's a very viable strategy that you can take.

Scott: Now you mentioned that email migration is expensive. On the flip side, can you give a cost savings example for integrating SharePoint and Lotus Notes?

Matt: Having SharePoint in addition to Domino can yield efficiencies from a business perspective. We can move all that traffic that's project related up into the SharePoint environment, so we can really help eliminate a large volume of the Domino data stores. We think 80% of email volume measured by bits is in the attachments, so if we could move those attachments out of Domino into a SharePoint environment, then you have some really good efficiencies on the Domino store.

Scott: Matt, thank you very much.

Matt: Scott, thank you for having me today.

Scott: Matt Cain is a Vice President for Business Intelligence and Information Management Research at Gartner, where he is the lead analyst on email. Now Matt made very clear the importance of integration when dealing with Microsoft SharePoint and Lotus Notes. And Yaacov Cohen makes it very clear to organizations how they can achieve this integration. Yaacov is the President and CEO of Mainssoft, a leading provider of SharePoint integration software, and we welcome him from his office in Silicon Valley.

Yaacov, thanks for joining us.

Yaacov: Thank you for having me, Scott.

Scott: Now, as I said, Mainssoft is a leader in this field. Could you tell us about Mainssoft?

Yaacov: Sure. Mainssoft has been providing enterprise solutions and products to enterprises since the mid 90's. And in the past three years, we are focused on SharePoint integration, and we've developed a SharePoint integration platform to integrate with multiple IBM products. We have also signed global resell agreements with IBM, and IBM is reselling most of our products directly to their customers. So we integrate SharePoint with WebSphere Portal, with IBM Rational Jazz, and obviously with IBM Lotus Notes, which we will talk more about today.

Scott : So let's jump right in. Tell me more about SharePoint integration software for Lotus Notes.

Yaacov: Yeah, absolutely, I must say integrating SharePoint with your email client is really key to encourage SharePoint usage. And this is because, you know, all of us have been used to email for the past 15 years, and most of the mainstream users are really living in email and staring at their email client for most of the day. So in order to be successful rolling out SharePoint, and having these mainstream users use SharePoint and get familiar with the check in/check out mechanism, and familiar with the collaboration practices of SharePoint, you really need to bring SharePoint to the email client, where these users are really living.

So that's what we are do with the SharePoint Integrator for Lotus Notes; it's all about bringing SharePoint to the Lotus Notes client, making it really easy for this user, these mainstream users, to publish documents on SharePoint. For example, to be able to drag and drop a document which has been received as an attachment,

and to be able to simply drag and drop it on a SharePoint document library, and to publish it on this document library. Or to be able to take a SharePoint document, or a SharePoint link, and to drag and drop this document to as an email attachment. And so it is very easy for users to adopt SharePoint in both ways, taking information from the Notes client to SharePoint and from SharePoint to the Notes client.

The other thing which is really important for a user is his ability to take an entire Notes email with multiple attachments and to easily drag and drop it to SharePoint with its entire attachment so I can share this email with my team. This ability to share email is very important for most of our customers.

The last thing is the ability to aggregate multiple SharePoint team calendars within the Lotus Notes calendar. So really enabling the ability to aggregate multiple SharePoint calendars within Notes, so I can take a sales team calendar with all important meetings happening between my team and customers; I can aggregate another SharePoint team calendar, like a marketing tradeshow calendar, and I can aggregate and get a consolidated view of all these calendars within my Notes calendar. This enables better team time management, better resource management, as I can see all these team calendars in one consolidated place.

Scott: You can hear so clearly the benefits of the Mainsoft approach. In today's market, though, CIOs want to be able to measure their SharePoint initiative and the impact of the SharePoint-Lotus Notes integration. How can they do that?

Yaacov: So, when I talk to IT executives who are in charge of collaboration and messaging, they are really clear that they want to define the right metrics to measure any collaboration initiative, such as a SharePoint initiative. They want to see more collaboration, which means more SharePoint usage, and less dependency on email. They want to see less of these large emails going around to a lot of folks with very large attachments. Because, as Matt said, this email volume and this growth in email storage is very expensive, and companies want to instead encourage collaboration.

So, we have been helping enterprises define and monitor collaboration metrics in order to really measure the success of the SharePoint initiative. The metrics that we are measuring as more specifically are one - the number of users which are actually contributing to the SharePoint site. The other metric you want to measure is the number of shared documents, shared email, and shared calendar events which are being published on SharePoint. As this number grows, this gives you a sense that the overall collaboration within the enterprise is also growing, which is good. At the same time, you want also to monitor your email volume. Is your email volume going up? Are people sending more and more attachments? That's the wrong direction. What you actually want to see is reduction in email volume and email traffic. So what we typically find with the integration of email with SharePoint, and with the SharePoint integrator for Lotus Notes, is that mainstream users are actually able, finally, to start using SharePoint.

The second point is for the existing user, now that the SharePoint is integrated, and it's here, close in their email, we see a dramatic increase in the number of documents being shared on SharePoint. Typically, it's going to be at least twice or three times or more the number of shared documents now available for collaboration on SharePoint.

At the same time, you see that the email traffic and the email storage are going down. This is because users are now sending links to shared documents on SharePoint, rather than sending physical attachments. And we have also a feature that enables the automatic replacement of attachments with links.

So encouraging the usage of links, encouraging collaboration, and making the whole enterprise more collaborative and more social.

Scott: Yaacov, those metrics definitely sound very good. But what if an enterprise has already made the decision to migrate to Outlook. Would they have any use for this product still?

Yaacov: Well we are focused on Notes customers, and we have customers such as Kawasaki Robotics or the French Banking Federation, which are upgrading to Notes 8 or upgrading to Notes 8.5, and they are opting for a SharePoint-Notes coexistence strategy using Notes to promote SharePoint usage.

We also have customers which made the decision to migrate to Outlook. What's actually shared across all these customers is that they see the benefit of the email integration into SharePoint, regardless of the client. That's why we have made the decision to offer a SharePoint Integrator for Outlook*. So even the customers, the Notes customers, which are in the process of migrating to Outlook can integrate their email client with SharePoint. They can start with Notes and we are helping them to [deliver easy access to SharePoint] as they get to Outlook.

They get this very important and very strategic email to SharePoint integration.

Scott: Yaacov, thank you very much.

Yaacov: Thank you for having me.

Scott: Yaacov Cohen is the president and CEO of Mainsoft. And thank you again to Gartner Research Vice President Matt Cain for his insights and advice. To find out more about SharePoint integration software, and in particular those that bridge Microsoft SharePoint with Lotus Notes and Lotus Sametime, as well as to see a demonstration of Mainsoft's SharePoint integration software in action, go to www-mainsoft-dot-com.

The Beta release will be available in Q4, 2009. The GA release is scheduled for 1H 2010.