

QuickPlace User Experiences

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Summary Slide

- Common Questions
- Common Answers – Part 1
- Common Questions – Part 2
- Common Questions – Part 3
- Administration
- Reality Check
- One Person's View

Summary Slide (cont.)

- Part 2 – More background
- Part 3 - First impressions
- Part 4 – The Plot thickens
- Part 5 - Email or Spam?
- Part 6 – The plan progresses
- Part 7 – User management
- Part 7 - Lasting impressions after using QP
- Part 8 – Migrating places

Summary Slide (cont.)

- Part 9 – A new metaphor
- Part 10 – More details
- Part 11 – Continuing Thoughts
- Part 12 – General Feelings
- Suggestions – Part 1
- Suggestions – Part 2
- Performance – Part 1
- Performance – Part 2

Summary Slide (cont.)

- Performance – Part 3
- Some Things we learned/observed
- Reference Suggestions

Common Questions

- Do you allow anyone to create Quickplaces on your server?
- Who administers QuickPlace servers - your Notes Administrators or Developers
- How many administrators are required
- What is required to do back-end development and customization
- Where are more Administration tools?
- Which is better – Standalone or on top of Domino?

Common Answers – Part 1

- Most people I've worked with start off allowing everyone to create QuickPlaces, and then quickly change to a smaller group.
- If you remember when Notes first got popular, people were creating hundreds of databases because it was so easy. It's the same with QuickPlace.
- Many organizations now require a “business case” for setting up a QuickPlace.
- If you restrict the number of people allowed to create QP's, there is a large burden of work on those people. QuickPlace is popular – they WILL have lots of work

Common Questions – Part 2

- On the administration side of things, don't expect the Admins to be the developers.
- It requires a much different skillset to do the complex customizations
- It does not take many people to administer QuickPlace. If you already have Notes Admins in house, they can do the job with little impact to their workload

Common Questions – Part 3

- The majority of the work involved in QuickPlace is on the backend
- Skillsets that are required are:
 - HTML
 - JAVA
 - Notes C API
 - CSS – Style Sheets
 - Web design capabilities

Administration

- There are not many tools for administration
- Version 2.0.8 provided a new Administrator tool.
 - It's browser based – similar to the old Web based Administration tool for R5 Unix servers
 - You can also do command line executions
 - The admin tool is on the QuickPlace installation CD
 - Load it and it's help files) qpmovehelp.txt and qpuserhelp.txt)
 - Note: Admin Utility can not logon to Domino if you have a password for the server ID. In order to run on top of Domino, make sure there is no password on the Domino server. Admin utility logons as a guest

View Progress

DONE

Your requests for updates, archiving actions and super user changes are listed below.

REFRESH **CLEAR LOG**

Action	Date/Time	Status
Update Statistics	02/27/2002 03:49:12 PM	Completed
Change Super User	02/27/2002 03:40:30 PM	Completed
Update Statistics	02/27/2002 01:47:00 PM	Completed
Update Statistics	02/24/2002 08:04:10 PM	Completed

DONE

Reality Check

- QuickPlace is Slow and really really eats memory. If you can, throw as much memory at the product as you can
- QuickPlace Chat is NOT Sametime – if your users are used to Sametime, they will not like QuickPlace Chat.

One Person's View

- Howdy Pat: Here is a rough but accurate assessment of my experience using and setting up QuickPlace (only creating and customizing, NOT installing). First some reference background:
- I've used QuickPlace to establish 3 active QPs and 1 test QP. The active QPs were all for use by Red Cross volunteers (unofficially since ARC does not sanction the use of "Red Cross" outside of ARC controlled and coordinated activities.

Part 2 – More background

- I'm intimately familiar with the underpinnings of QP in that I've developed core Notes for 8+ years
- I've only used QP to build sites that closely mimic the expected actions/usage of the QP target audience. I have not tried to customize it beyond the core focus.
- I have not used the newest QuickPlace versions, just the earlier ones (released thru early ~2001) so some of the issues/crocs may have been addressed by newer versions.



Part 3 - First impressions

- Creating a site from scratch is quick and simple. It takes ~2 minutes from start to on-line using any of the stock templates.
- The templates offered closely resemble the "menu on the left" or "menu on the right" layout prevalent on many web sites today. This is fine for a cookie cutter look where functionality is more important than looks but it seems to imply that 3rd party help may be necessary to customize beyond the stock templates.

Part 4 – The Plot thickens

- Creating and organizing libraries and discussion areas (as well as 'restricted' areas) is a breeze.
- The only complaint I have is that moving content around (ie: especially entire 'rooms') is NOT intuitive.
- It takes a few passes thru the help files to learn to do it right.

Part 5 - Email or Spam?

- New users who get invitations often think the invitation is spam.
 - This is due to the formatting of the sending email address and the Subject used.
- While it is somewhat customizable, it's not very clear to those that read the email exactly what QP is or why they should go there.
- Unless users know in advance what QP is and what the invite is good for, they tend to read it as "What is this QuickPlace?" and "Oh great, another subscription site. Time to delete it".
 - This makes bootstrapping new QP users a bit hard to do especially since they tend to delete the invite as spam

Part 6 – The plan progresses

- Resending an invitation to a user is not fathomable from what I ever found.
 - I typically had to reset their password or delete and then recreate the user.
- Creating initial content is quite easy for the base cases.
 - It took some time to overcome the expectation that I can totally control the formatting of the content (spacing, layout, etc) but once overcome, all was smooth sailing.

Part 7 – User management

- In general, user management for $> \sim 5$ folks is somewhat tedious.
 - I have yet to find any "group" functionality that allows me to say "Create John, Pat and Bob and then put them into the Admin Group" so I can then use Admin Group for access checking, etc.
 - Perhaps its been added since I last used QP to that extent (adding new users, etc).

Part 7 - Lasting impressions after using QP

- Most users did not realize they had to "Sign In" (Upper right corner in small text) before they could see the entire site and participate in discussions, etc.
 - This meant that even though I put that info in the Welcome Page, I had to make it VERY obvious.
- Until users get familiar w/the nesting of QP rooms, many 'get lost' when they go into specialized rooms and do not realize how to go in and out of other rooms (mainly 'up and out')

Part 8 – Migrating places

- Migrating or copying content between 2 QPs is not easily done.
- Its an entirely manual process which is quite tedious.
 - My 2002 Boston Marathon info site for Red Cross volunteers has to have many of the same files as the 2001 site and I have to migrate each 1 manually using 2 browsers. Ugh!!!
 - Perhaps this could be mitigated by having a "Initialized Library from Files or Other QP" option at create time but its not an unheard of need.
 - After all, if a site uses QP often they are likely to need some of the same reference files (ie: ISO specs on procedures, Text file or PowerPoint templates, etc).

Part 9 – A new metaphor

- QP is great for folks to get information and do Q/A style discussions once they understand the QP metaphor.
 - After the initial learning how QP expects users to behave and organize info, they tend to find it quite useful.
- There was no way to tag a page/document/file/room as "Update ALL users when this XXX is updated".
 - That would be VERY VERY useful when information needs to get disseminated quickly to many users.
- The fact that rooms are not visible to folks based on access rights is great since it prevents folks from trying to 'snoop around'.
 - They simply do not see those areas they cannot go. This is nicer than a link that would reject them with "403 Forbidden: Get lost you low level weenie".

Part 10 – More details

- When users are common to several QPs on the same system, they get multiple site update notices instead of 1 for all QPs on that same server.
 - This is due to how the users are segregated in the underlying directory so that its possible to have 2 “John Doe’s who run different QPs and who will thus not get access to each others QPs.
 - However there are ways to match up users (ie: by their email address!) so perhaps the QP developers may consider this nicety in the future.



Part 11 – Continuing Thoughts

- It is not possible to have 2 users in the same QP who view the discussion rooms different ways.
 - That is users cannot opt to see titles only while others opt for titles and some preliminary text.
 - I'm used to sites that can do this (based on cookies and user prefs) but I suspect that this is more due to the underlying Notes/Domino infrastructure than to any QP limitation.
- QP makes it easy to go from nothing to a fully functional site quite rapidly.
 - As long as there is a quick enough link to the server, maintenance and reconfiguration happens at a quite tolerable rate.
 - If doing it over a dial-up line I'd probably give the 'off-line' setup a try. So far I haven't done that.



Part 12 – General Feelings

- Overall I'd say that QP definitely fills the need for what I use it for; getting information out to the Red Cross Boston Marathon Station supervisors and their volunteers.
 - I have not tried to use QP beyond this scope nor did I try to actually put all the marathon volunteers into the QP since they only needed the info on the Welcome page and there are ~400 of them.
 - Still, I did get lots of positive feedback on the QPs once last years Boston Marathon was over so thats probably another good indicator of how well QP worked for them too.

Suggestions – Part 1

- Move to 2.0.8 – it's much better and more stable
 - Administration tools
 - Fixes many of the nHTTP crashes
 - Developer Kit
 - Can run QuickPlace on top of Sametime
 - QPMove
 - Copy Quickplaces to other servers

Suggestions – Part 2

- Make sure you set up a Super User
 - It will save your life
- Constantly monitor statistics for the server, including total number and size of QuickPlaces, the current license count, and statistics for individual QuickPlaces including name, managers, size and time last accessed.
- You can run QuickPlace and Sametime on the same machine – DON'T

Performance – Part 1

- QuickPlace pages average around 100-200KB each
 - Pages are full of scripts
 - One note I read stated the following statistics:
 - 5 concurrent users able to download a page at the same time with a response time of 30s max ==> 256Kbps reserved bandwidth
 - 5 seconds response time on a LAN and Internet Explorer 5 is typical for reading a QP page.

Performance – Part 2

- Publishing a pages over a slow link or using Netscape will be longer
 - Netscape supports a different version of Java
- One way to handle slow reading in Netscape
 - minimize the nesting depth of tables.
 - Try using a single table for column layout in your theme
 - Align skin components vertically using
 tags, instead of nested table structure.



Performance – Part 3

- Over-utilized servers slow down response
 - Processes to watch are nhttp.exe and nupdate.exe
 - If nhttp.exe > 90% of CPU = server is over utilized.
 - If nupdate.exe > 50% of CPU for more than 15 minutes = server indexing too much data.
- To avoid indexing attachments use the `FT_INDEX_IGNORE_ATTACHMENT_TYPES` variable in the notes.ini file.
- Set the maximum active session value lower than the default of 1000 if your system is overload
- Make sure you read the performance paper on the QuickPlace website



Some Things we learned/observed

- Teach people how to logon to a QP
 - Make sure they have a browser that supports JAVA
 - Make sure they logon and don't come in as Anonymous – they won't be able to participate in the rooms and discussions
- Use subrooms if discussion in a room gets too busy or too intense
- Use your Windows based word processors to develop your documents and then drag them into the QuickPlace
 - The QuickPlace editor is OK, but not Word.
- Teach people how to copy rooms offline so they can work when not attached to the Internet or network



Reference Suggestions

- Lotus QuickPlace
 - <http://www.lotus.com/home.nsf/welcome/quickplace>
- Developer and Admin Zone
 - <https://extranet.lotus.com/QuickPlace/qpdevzone/Main.nsf>
 - This is a QuickPlace itself
- Redbook on Customizing QuickPlace
 - <http://www.redbooks.ibm.com/pubs/pdfs/redbooks/sg246000.pdf>
- Notes.net discussion forum
 - <http://www.notes.net/quickplace.nsf>
- Sample code on Notes.net
 - Portal
<http://notes.net/sandbox.nsf/ecc552f1ab6e46e4852568a90055c4cd/2b349e4e2c4b088188256aa20083ca63?OpenDocumentHighlight=0,quickplace>