Lotus® software

IBM Lotus Sametime Advanced software: breaking new ground for unified communications and collaboration.

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Introduction

As business accelerates, the need for employees to communicate and collaborate with one another becomes increasingly important. A single day, even an hour, can make the difference between winning a deal and losing ground to competitors. Customers expect answers fast, or they'll simply go elsewhere to get them. And since innovation, which begins with a single idea, can make or break an organization's future, companies are looking for ways to tap into the collective mindshare and knowledge of employees and outside experts.

Building an effective, collaborative work environment has been on the forefront of business leaders' minds for years. In a study conducted by IBM in 2006, more than 750 CEOs from around the world identified collaboration as a key tenet to fostering innovation and growth.[1] Yet, according to *The Global Human Capital Study 2008* conducted by IBM, only 8 percent of companies interviewed believe they are effective at fostering collaboration across the enterprise.[2] In fact, one study participant stated, "Better collaboration would enable us to help global customers more effectively and increase the level of product/service innovation." Clearly, leading organizations recognize that in order to excel, they must give their employees the ability to communicate with anyone, anytime, in realtime, within and outside the business.

IBM is a recognized leader in the collaboration marketplace, providing innovative solutions that help address the many issues faced by organizations today. A central part of the IBM Lotus® portfolio is the award-winning IBM Lotus Sametime® software. This solution provides a platform for delivering robust unified communications and collaboration capabilities, making it easier for people to find, reach and collaborate with one another, no matter where they are. Security features, broad platform support, investment protection and ease of integration are also hallmarks of Lotus Sametime software, and are designed to help you address IT and line-of-business challenges.

IBM Lotus Sametime Advanced software includes groundbreaking functionality for realtime community collaboration.

The expanded IBM Lotus Sametime family of solutions

In 2007, IBM announced and delivered new releases of IBM Lotus Sametime software, designed to deliver more functionality and enable you to choose the features best suited for your particular organizational and user needs. IBM Lotus Sametime Standard 8 software is the follow-on release to IBM Lotus Sametime 7.5.1 software and is the upgrade path for entitled Lotus Sametime customers. Lotus Sametime Standard software is ideally suited for companies needing a rich, encrypted, full-feature instant messaging (IM) and Web conferencing solution, as well as a platform for integrating communications, collaboration and business applications in realtime. Lotus Sametime Standard software includes Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), supports many mobile devices and can be federated with supported public IM networks with no additional cost. Plug-in capabilities can help you extend the software even further.

IBM Lotus Sametime Advanced software

IBM Lotus Sametime Advanced software, a new offering, builds on the capabilities found in Lotus Sametime Standard software to include groundbreaking functionality for realtime community collaboration such as persistent group chat, a suite of broadcast tools, instant screen sharing and geographic location services. The solution is designed for organizations that require advanced collaboration capabilities within specific departments or across the entire global enterprise. With Lotus Sametime Advanced software, employees and teams can:

- *Search for experts and get the answers they need, even when they don't know who to ask.*
- *Share, capture and reuse knowledge in realtime, potentially reducing the burden on a company's help desk.*
- *Maintain ongoing conversations and share information in dedicated forums.*
- *Instantly share screens, desktops and applications with co-workers, helping to speed communication and understanding.*
- *Know where other colleagues are at any given time by using the software's geographic location awareness feature.*
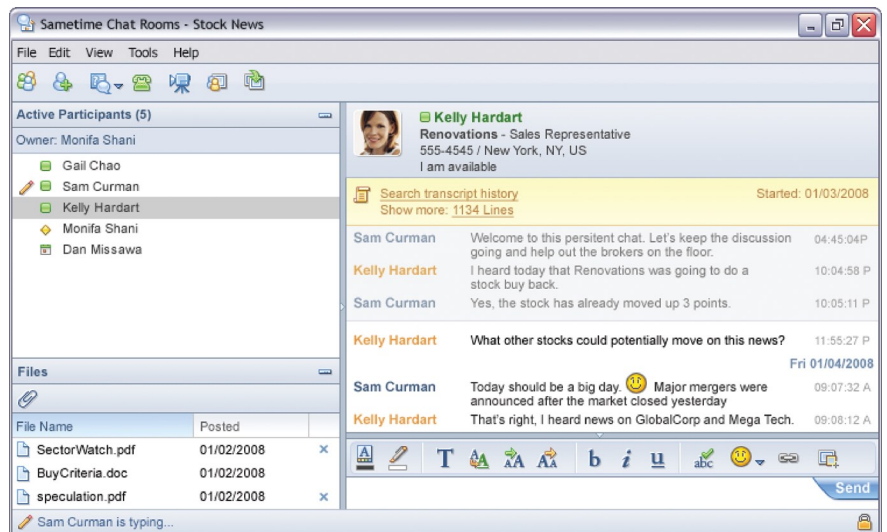
Highlights

Using persistent group chat, teams can stay more informed, helping to improve decision making.

Keep conversations going with persistent group chat

Persistent group chat, an innovative new capability found in Lotus Sametime Advanced software, allows employees to keep a continuous chat discussion running on a specific topic. Using persistent group chat, teams and individuals can stay more informed about projects, events and topics of interest, thereby helping to improve decision making and reduce the disconnectedness that can result from one-off or hallway conversations. As new people join the discussion, they can see the entire history of the conversation and be brought up to speed quickly. And since chat rooms can be accessed from a Web browser or from the IBM Lotus Sametime Connect client, users can easily join and view chat rooms so they're never out of touch.

With persistent group chat, employees can keep a continuous chat discussion running about a specific subject.

Functionality within persistent group chat, such as monitoring, helps people stay on top of what's going on — but without distracting them from their daily work. For instance, monitoring capabilities let users know if there are new messages to read, while keyword alerts can be set up to notify users of conversations taking place on their topics of interest. This allows employees to focus on their jobs and join a chat room only when something requires their attention.

With persistent group chat, employees can keep a continuous chat discussion running on a specific subject, helping to keep everyone more informed about projects, events and topics of interest.

Persistent group chat also enables people to store information for future use, which can potentially reduce IT help-desk support. For instance, frequently asked questions (FAQs) about how to use an application or how to resolve a technical problem can be added to an FAQ list. Other users with the same issues or questions can then review the FAQs and find the answers they need, without having to contact IT.

Persistent group chat takes direct aim at helping people communicate and collaborate by allowing employees to share what they know with other people — whether those people are down the hall, across the country or around the world. The capability helps break down information silos and makes it easier for teams and individuals to share their knowledge and expertise.
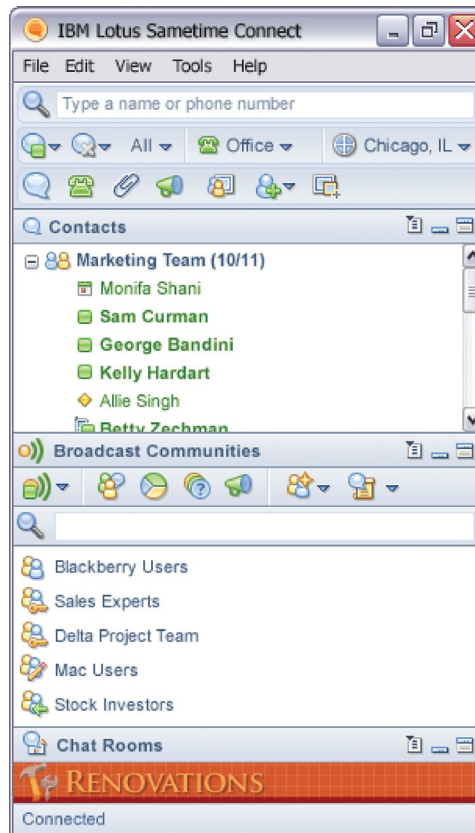
Broadcast tools help employees get the information and answers they need by reaching out to a community of experts—even when they don't know who the experts are.

Tap into community expertise with broadcast tools

Broadcast tools are a set of new and unique capabilities that help employees get the information and answers they need by reaching out to a community of experts—even when they don't know who the experts are. Broadcast tools let employees get the realtime knowledge and information they need—information that might be otherwise difficult to find. Plus, they can store the information for themselves and for others for future reference.

Broadcast tools help employees get realtime information and knowledge from communities of experts that they may or may not know.

Broadcast tools from Lotus Sametime Advanced software provide four key capabilities, including:

With skill tap, people can ask questions to a specific community of experts, and in turn, members of that community can volunteer their help.

- *Skill tap. Skill tap capabilities allow people to request information from or direct questions to a specific community of experts and colleagues and let members of that community volunteer their help. When an individual sends a request to a community—for instance, one formed about a particular technology—members of that community receive a notification alert. Members can then choose to ignore the request or chat with the sender. Responses and conversations can be archived in FAQs for future reuse, and answers can be rated based on value. With skill tap, employees build an organic, searchable, reusable knowledge base over time that can be referenced again and again.*

Skill tap lets employees tap into the knowledge and expertise of others, and get the information and answers they need fast.

Instant poll capabilities let people gather answers and opinions from other community members.

- *Instant poll. Instant poll allows employees to poll other community members and gather answers and opinions that can be used to help make faster, more informed decisions. For instance, a software developer may send a poll asking the software users if a particular feature is working. Or a business-line manager might poll his or her employees about a new incentive program being developed. Using instant poll, people get the answers and insight they need fast, without having to schedule meetings or talk to team members individually.*

Broadcast chat lets employees invite an entire community to join an online conversation, and broadcast announcements help keep everyone informed of upcoming events.

According to an IBM internal usage survey, respondents agreed that broadcast tools are vital to their jobs, citing the immediacy of response, the expertise of other users and the ability to reach practically anyone in the global IBM corporation as key reasons.

- *Broadcast chat. Using broadcast chat, employees can invite members of a community to join an online group conversation. For example, a leader of a globally dispersed project team may want to share thoughts and ideas about work in progress. Using broadcast chat, the team can be simultaneously invited to the conversation, without each member having to appear in the leader's buddy list or being invited individually. This ensures that no one is left out, and allows everyone to participate, respond and get involved quickly.*
- *Broadcast announcements. The broadcast announcements capability helps keep everyone in the loop and informed of upcoming events. For instance, a plant manager could use the tool to notify workers that power in a given facility will be shut down for maintenance over the weekend. Without having to rely on e-mail or voicemail, the plant manager can make sure people are notified quickly of what's going on.*

IBM employees benefit from broadcast tools: yesterday and today
IBM employees began using broadcast tools several years ago as part of a social computing research study — and long before the tools were officially part of Lotus Sametime software. Even during the testing phase, the tools were found to be indispensable. Skill tap in particular was valued for enabling people to access IBM's huge technical community and to get instant answers to technical questions — more quickly than search engines or calling the help desk. Plus, answers came in from all over the world — India, Beijing, London — exposing users to new information and unique perspectives. Surveys on IBM's usage also showed that active users agreed that broadcast communities delivered these benefits:

- *Provided business value (90 percent) and personal value (80 percent)*
- *Helped them connect with other employees (68 percent)*
- *Helped them do their jobs more quickly (65 percent)*
- *Enabled them to meet other employees around the world (45 percent)*

With instant share capabilities, people can say "Let me show you what I'm looking at," and instantly share their desktops, applications or a portion of their screens in realtime.

Today the tools are as popular as ever. Employees cite the immediacy of response, the expertise of other users and the ability to reach practically anyone in the global IBM corporation as key reasons why broadcast tools are vital to their jobs. The broadcast tools also make time zones irrelevant. Users find that if they ask a question at 6:00 a.m. eastern standard time, many responses come from Europe and Asia. In this way, the tools act much like a 24×7 help desk. Making connections with other colleagues with shared interests, on both professional and personal levels, is also important to users, and it helps build teams and relationships around the world.

Share desktops and applications with instant share capabilities
With instant share capabilities, employees can share their desktops, applications or a portion of their screens in realtime, helping to minimize confusion, misunderstandings and delays. Now people can say "Let me show you what I'm looking at," and with a single click on the initiator's side—and no action required from the recipient—everyone can be on the same page. Users can also give control to other participants, allowing someone else to drive their PC and make changes to documents, spreadsheets or presentations.

In addition to speeding collaboration among knowledge workers, using instant share capabilities can also potentially help IT facilitate troubleshooting. When issues arise, support personnel can instantly enter a remote desktop session, take control of the user's PC and fix the problem. Security isn't a problem either. Encrypted, behind-the-firewall security support lets employees share and make changes to documents and confidential business information, while trusting that only those intended to see the documents, do.

Instant share capabilities let dispersed team members discuss and make changes on the fly, eliminating the misunderstanding that can come from verbal explanations.

With location services, people can quickly locate experts and coworkers in the area, making it easier to find out what's happening, to collaborate on issues and to make decisions.

Consider the case of a large manufacturer preparing to launch an innovative new product. News from a competitor drives the need for last-minute design changes. Without having to worry about arranging a formal Web conference, the project leader can use instant share capabilities from Lotus Sametime Advanced software to discuss and make changes on the fly. When individual team members want to make specific modifications, the team leader can pass desktop control to them, enabling each person to mark up and make changes to the plan quickly and easily, without having to explain the changes verbally. In minutes—not hours or even days—the team has a clear, updated and revised plan that will keep the company ahead of its competition.

Find people more quickly with location services
Lotus Sametime Advanced software is designed to take the geographic location awareness available in Lotus Sametime Standard software a step further by creating a central, shared repository of location information. This means that if an individual signs on to a Lotus Sametime client from a location that a co-worker has visited, it will recognize that location, even if the individual has never personally been there before. Location services are designed to help people locate experts and coworkers in a specific location, making it faster and easier to find out what's happening, to collaborate on issues and to make decisions. By pre-populating locations, Lotus Sametime Advanced software eliminates the need for employees to input their location each time they travel, a feature especially useful for companies with a remote salesforce or large, dispersed teams.

Highlights

Lotus Sametime software supports a wide variety of server platforms, helping organizations with multi-vendor environments preserve applications and systems.

Serving the needs of IT

In addition to delivering leading capabilities for end users and business-line constituents, Lotus Sametime Advanced software provides capabilities that help address the needs of IT.

- ***Robust security features.*** *Just as with Lotus Sametime software, which allows you to encrypt instant messages, VoIP chats and point-to-point video conversations, Lotus Sametime Advanced software enables you to encrypt persistent chat logs, broadcast tools conversations and screen sharing episodes to help you protect sensitive information. Authentication gives you the confidence of knowing that the people you communicate with are who they say they are.*
- ***Investment protection.*** *Protecting current IT investments is a leading objective for many companies. Lotus Sametime software offers support for a wide variety of server platforms, directories and clients, including Microsoft® Windows®, Linux® and Apple Macintosh systems, making it ideal for organizations with multivendor environments and helping to preserve your applications and systems.*
- ***Extensibility.*** *Application programming interfaces (APIs) and a software development kit allow you to extend the new capabilities in Lotus Sametime Advanced software, just as you can with the capabilities available today in Lotus Sametime Standard software.*

Get more functionality with IBM

According to Forrester Research, "IBM/Lotus leads with robust functionality." Forrester also states, "Key differentiators [of IBM] include integrated Web conferencing, VoIP and video support, and extensive industry partnerships that integrate [its] offerings with ancillary network, telephony, phone and teleconferencing solutions."[3]

With the extended IBM Lotus Sametime family of solutions, IBM continues its commitment to delivering innovative communications and collaboration solutions that help employees be more productive and efficient. By making it easier for people to find, connect to and collaborate with colleagues and experts, organizations can be more responsive to competitive threats and marketplace changes.

For more information

To learn more about IBM Lotus Sametime software, please contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit:

ibm.com/sametime

1 IBM, *Expanding the Innovation Horizon: The Global CEO Study 2006*, March 2006.

2 IBM, *Unlocking the DNA of the Adaptable Workforce: The Global Human Capital Study 2008*, September 2007.

3 "The Forrester Wave: Enterprise Instant Messaging, Q4 2007", Forrester Research, Inc., October 2007.