What's new in IBM Lotus Notes 8.5

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This article covers what's new in the IBM® Lotus® Notes® 8.5 release. Lotus Notes 8.5 marks a major milestone in the Lotus Notes history and is a significant release in terms of new features, appearance, programmability, and functionality.

Editor's note: Know a lot about this topic? Want to share your expertise? Participate in the IBM Lotus software wiki program today.

Introduction

Lotus Notes 8 is a major upgrade to Lotus Notes with a new user look and feel. The client is now built on an open standards, Eclipse-based architecture that allows for greater flexibility for customization, thereby fitting better into the service-oriented architecture that IBM proposes and supports.

Version 8 was the "0" release that early adopters tend to use. It brought in all the features but did require some improvements, included in the 8.0.1 and 8.0.2 releases. Both these modification levels made dramatic improvements on the memory footprints and the user interface.

Version 8.5, which shipped January 6, was developed at the same time as version 8.0.2. The main difference in 8.5 is that it includes a host of new features in addition to the improvements provided in 8.0.2. Clients have asked me to help them determine which version to use when upgrading to the Notes 8 client. This is what I tell them: "If you want to upgrade from an earlier version of Lotus Notes to the new version 8 interface with minimum user disruption due to new features, then choose version 8.0.2. If you want (or can't live without) all the new features, then choose version 8.5." The choice is simple: An upgrade to version 8.0.2 is easier to support in the organization, and an upgrade to version 8.5 offers many new functions that might prove difficult to manage if, for example, the upgrade is from Lotus Notes R5.

The new functionality in Lotus Notes 8.5 covers the following areas:

- General and user interface enhancements
• Mail
• Calendar
• Contacts
• Other: things that don't fit into any of the preceding categories

Download a trial version of Lotus Notes, Lotus Domino Designer, and Lotus Domino Administrator 8.5.

**General functionality**

New features of general functionality include the following:

• Context menus, which display when users right-click the item, are streamlined for mail, contacts, and to-do views.

**Figure 1. Context menu for a mail message**

The context menu in figure 1 shows the window that displays for a mail message (from Galley Sarai in this case).
The menu shown in figure 2 displays for a calendar entry.
What's new in IBM Lotus Notes 8.5

Figure 2. Context menu for a calendar entry

Context menus change based on the item they are associated with and are now more meaningful.

Users can navigate Lotus Notes preference fields and can move through the preferences windows by using the Tab key.

• Lotus Notes now can automatically compress the images pasted into documents.
  • Note that bitmap (BMP) images that are imported into a Lotus Notes document are compressed; bitmap images that are pasted into a Lotus Notes document are converted to GIF or JPG format.
  • To compress images pasted into documents, select File - Preferences - Basic Notes Client Configuration, and then select the appropriate setting under Additional options. The setting shown in figure 3, Compress images pasted into documents, is selected by default.

Figure 3. Automatic compression of images in documents

• Drag-and-drop has been enhanced. You can drag between rich text fields in Lotus Notes documents (Microsoft® Windows® only), you can drag IBM Lotus Sametime® contacts names or groups to Lotus Notes name fields and rich text fields, and you can drag names from external applications to Notes name fields.
• A roaming user for the Lotus Notes standard configuration is introduced in this release.
  • A new roaming policy settings document is included to support this functionality, as are two new roaming-specific databases, a Feeds subscription database and an Eclipse plug-in data and preferences database.
• User files configured for roaming now display in a single Roaming Applications folder on the Lotus Notes replicator page.
• A new Roaming preference panel is available for Lotus Notes users who are configured for file server-based roaming.
• The live text function and context menu are improved. When you hover over Live Text and the display of the cursor changes, you can left-click the Live Text instance to start an action. If a default action has been assigned, the action runs. If no action has been defined as default, a window of options opens.
  The right-click live text action available in Lotus Notes 8.0.1 has been replaced with a live text context menu that you can access by clicking on the hover icon that displays when you hover over any live text instance. Widgets and live text support on the Linux® and Mac OS operating systems are introduced with this release.
• Lotus Notes 8.5 adds support for installation and use on Mac OS.
• Lotus Notes 8.5 adds support for installation and use with Citrix software.
  • Support for 64-bit operating systems (for Citrix) is included.
• The Lotus Notes basic configuration Allclient installation kit is no longer available; however, the Lotus Notes-only basic configuration installation kit remains available.
  • Customers looking to install or upgrade to the IBM Lotus Domino® Designer 8.5 or IBM Lotus Domino Administrator 8.5 clients must use the Lotus Notes standard configuration Allclient installation kit. This kit is applicable on the Microsoft Windows operating system only as there is no Lotus Notes basic configuration installation kit for the Mac OS or Linux operating systems.
• Lotus Notes start-up sequence has been reordered as part of a performance enhancement in this release.

The order of the startup sequence is now:

**Splash**
Login dialog (unless shared login)

Progress window

Mail functionality

Improvements to mail include multiple email addresses and new inbox icons.

- Multiple email addresses have been added. The type-ahead function includes all email addresses stored in a user's contacts. More frequently used addresses display at the top of the list. See figure 4.

Figure 4. Multiple email addresses
• Inbox icons are improved. A new Folder column in the mail All Documents view displays any mail folders that a document is in. See figure 5 for a comparison of the inbox icons used in Lotus Notes 8.0 and 8.5.

Figure 5. Inbox icons

Calendar functionality

New features of the calendar include federation and a horizontal scroll bar.

• Federation has been added. A new calendar window allows users to add calendars from Google Calendar entries, another Lotus Notes user’s calendar, or an iCal feed. See figure 6. Federation of calendars allows multiple different calendars to be overlayed together on your own calendar display. You can select check boxes to remove and add specific calendars.
Figure 6. The new calendar window

Figure 7 shows the Add a Calendar window, in which you can select the type of calendar to add, as shown in figure 7.

Figure 7. Add a Calendar window

This window updates its entries each time the view is opened. You can select the "View this calendar when offline or on a mobile device" option to take your Lotus Notes calendar offline. When Lotus Notes synchronizes your calendar with a mobile device, such as a BlackBerry, it includes 45 days before and 45 days after the current date.
• A horizontal scroll bar for Calendar views has been added. When all the header information for calendar entries cannot be displayed completely for a day in a calendar view, the day displays a horizontal scroll bar. You can use a mouse or the keyboard left and right arrow keys to scroll with the bar, and you can display the rest of the header information for calendar entries.

Contacts functionality

Several new functions have been added to the Contacts feature.

• To import external contacts to your Lotus Notes Contacts, from Contacts, select File - Import Contacts. The window shown in figure 8 displays. If field remapping is required, it can be done first or done in Contacts after the import.

**Figure 8. The Import Contacts window**

To export your contacts and to filter which contacts and fields to export, from Contacts, select File - Export contacts. The window shown in figure 9 displays.
Figure 9. The Export Contacts window

• You can also forward contacts as a vCard from Contacts. Select the contacts that you want to forward as a vCard and select the Forward vCard option. See figure 10.
• You can add international sets of alphabet tabs. Select the menu icon at the bottom of the tabs column, and then select from Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, Thai, Vietnamese, Japanese, or Cyrillic. See figure 10.

Figure 10. The Forward vCard and alphabet options
Other functionality

Other new functions include a notebook, more seamless failover in the mail client and composite applications, offline integration with activities, replication and synchronization, and new functions for Lotus Sametime and IBM Lotus Symphony™.

Personal journal

A new Notebook template (formerly the Personal Journal template) is included.

Figure 11. The Notebook feature

The Personal Journal template has a new name and a new look as shown in figure 11. When you install or upgrade to Lotus Notes 8.5, any new Notebook that you create uses the new template (Notebook8.ntf). In addition, any existing journal template is updated automatically if one of the following conditions is met:

- It is named journal.nsf.
- It was created from the default home page.
- It was created manually by selecting File - Application - New and was subsequently linked to your default home page by selecting the Set Journal option. Journals created this way but not linked to your default home page are not updated automatically. Select File - Application - Replace Design to update existing journal templates manually.

Seamless application failover

More seamless failover in mail client and composite applications is now included. Since version 8.0, the Lotus Notes client is itself an example of a composite application involving both Java™ and non-Java components. In the Lotus Notes client for this release, regardless of which part
(component) of your mail client you are in, initiating an action when your mail server is down
causes that component to fail over to another server in the cluster.

For example, if you are working in the Follow Up or Calendar miniview, which is an NSF
component of your mail application, and your mail server goes down, the miniview fails over.
Moreover, the failover of one component triggers all related components to fail over; in the
previous example, the failover by the miniview triggers the Inbox to fail over as well.

Offline integration with activities

Table 1 details the offline integration of Lotus Notes with activities. Activities are designed to
handle short-term, ad hoc collaboration. You can include email, documents, chats, Web links, and
more in an activity and then give access to other people to allow them to see the current status of
the activity.

Table 1. Lotus Notes and activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lotus Notes</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What goes offline? Entire application or database Many choices for parts</td>
<td>What goes offline? All current activities Prioritized activities Selected certain activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stored in NSF file</td>
<td>Stored in a Derby (formerly Cloudscape®) database, in the Lotus Notes directory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On by default Administrator can make mail available offline (local replica) through a policy</td>
<td>Off by default; set a property in plugin.properties Edit this file: &lt;Notes&gt;\framework\shared\eclipse\plugins\com.ibm.openactivities.client.common.service_3.0.1.2008MMDD-HHMM\plugin.properties Change the final setting to this value: # Enable offline mode activities.enable.offline=yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Replication and synchronization

Lotus Notes user replication (as before) and now activities and IBM Lotus Quickr™ use
synchronization to do the following:

- Can manually synchronize activities' data using a menu item
- Set schedule for activities separately from the replication schedule
- Cannot stop synchronization after it is started (unlike replication)

Lotus Sametime

Drag messages to add names to your Sametime contacts list. You can drag a Mail message to any
personal group in your Sametime contacts list and add all the members of the group to your list at
one time. This action can also be done with calendar and to-do entries that have recipients (such
as meetings or group to-do assignments), and with contacts entries.

IBM Lotus Symphony

Lotus Symphony 1.2, the latest version of the software, is built into Lotus Notes 8.5. It has new
features including the following:
Performance enhancements including ODP and PPT file format save, application start up, new document creation, spell checking in ODP and ODS, Presentation page painting, and an optimized sidebar refresh.

- Interoperability with other file formats
- Improved support for chart rendering, numbering, and bulleted with Microsoft Office documents
- Support for opening and playing the Microsoft PowerPoint PPS file format
- Support for displaying the presentation table in OpenOffice.org
- Improved support for graphics and layouts in IBM Lotus SmartSuite® documents
- Function enhancements in three editors
- Support for the page slider function in presentation mode
- Support for the validity list function in spreadsheet mode
- Improved support for the table of contents function in document mode
- Improved support for spell checking in presentation template files
- Improved support for configurable default file types when creating new documents

**Conclusion**

As we can see from the preceding features, the newest version of Lotus Notes is rich with additional functionality while at the same time presenting itself in a modern and effective interface.
Related topics

- Read the IBM announcement letter for IBM Lotus Notes and Domino 8.5.
- Read the white paper, "IBM Lotus Notes and Domino 8.5 Reviewer's Guide."
- Refer to the IBM Lotus Domino and Notes information center
- Refer to the Lotus Notes and Domino wiki
- Read the developerWorks® Lotus article, "IBM Lotus Domino going green: The new Lotus Domino attachment and object service"
- Refer to the IBM Lotus Notes and Domino product page
- Download a trial version of Lotus Notes, Lotus Domino Designer, and Lotus Domino Administrator 8.5.

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