



BUSINESS PARTNERS SPEAK OUT

Why I recommend Domino over Exchange

By [Ron Herardian](#)

Customers often ask me about the pros and cons of Domino versus Microsoft Exchange. After evaluating each customer's requirements, I am often compelled by the data to recommend Domino. There are several factors that differentiate companies with respect to the appropriateness of messaging and groupware technologies. There is no single, somehow correct solution. Factors such as company size, in-house application development, network infrastructure, staffing and facilities, and budget are all examples of key considerations.

As a consultant working with both Domino and Exchange I see four main advantages to Domino:

- integrated infrastructure;
- groupware development;
- knowledge management;
- return on investment.

Mature integrated infrastructure solution

Compared with Exchange, Domino provides a more tightly integrated infrastructure, a more coherent user experience, and a consistent administrative framework. Through a single set of servers, Domino delivers an intelligent combination of messaging and online discussions, calendaring and scheduling, directory services, security administration and access control, intranet and groupware applications, database and database integration facilities, Internet standards-based technologies, forms and workflow; and application development capabilities. Domino delivers all these services through a single, tightly integrated server infrastructure and a single client application.

The breadth of capabilities and the depth of integration offered by Exchange is markedly less comprehensive. This is understandable given that Exchange is a less mature product. The concept of integrated infrastructure solutions is relatively new to Microsoft. Microsoft's Back Office suite of servers is, in marketing terms, a duct tape bundle. The only thing the servers have in common, outside of a few APIs, is that they all run on Windows NT. Also, NT itself may not deliver the performance or the scalability needed for large messaging systems.

Other examples include public key infrastructure technology (PKI) and database connectivity. Microsoft has almost no plan for the integration of PKI technology with Exchange while Domino already supports X.509 certificates in the NAB. Domino has the ability to integrate with a variety of back end-database systems using enterprise technologies such as DECS as compared with a non-scalable workstation-side API such as ODBC.

Robust groupware development platform

From the development perspective Microsoft offers industrial-strength, general purpose development tools and attempts to link these with Exchange to create a groupware application development environment. With Domino, specialized development tools, a rich and powerful set of built-in functions, and native APIs expose the workflow and database capabilities of the Domino engine directly to developers. Despite their myriad development tools, Microsoft remains far behind Lotus in this area.

Superior knowledge management by design

In my opinion, Lotus has been and still is the established leader in the areas of groupware, business process reengineering through technology, and knowledge management. While many software companies have jumped

on the knowledge management bandwagon, Lotus has been at the genesis of this discipline. Though much underrated by the press, products like Sametime, which will be tightly integrated with Domino, demonstrate Lotus' sophisticated and expanding vision for knowledge management. Microsoft, on the other hand, has flooded the marketplace with client-side communication and collaboration tools without a coherent plan for the back office other than NT, SQL Server, IIS, and Exchange; but even these products lack integration when compared with the sophisticated simplicity of Domino.

Microsoft's version of knowledge management is frankly simplistic. Microsoft would have customers believe that email, calendars, shared folders, bolt-on workflow engines, general purpose development tools, and a lot of marketing add up to "knowledge management" but it seems apparent from this approach that they are still learning in this area.

Return on investment

CIOs hoping to achieve a return on investment through integrated infrastructure solutions should look to Domino, particularly if they are developing or planning to develop in-house applications. If, on the other hand, the organization foresees several years to come in which only basic email and groupware capabilities are needed, then there could be an argument for Exchange, although the differences in total cost of ownership between Domino and Exchange are not typically decisive factors in themselves.

If a company invests in Domino, they are spending perhaps more than they would for Exchange but the potential benefits are much greater. A number of readily available studies show impressive ROI for companies willing to go all the way with Lotus Notes and Domino. It is important to note that for a business to be successful with Domino there must be a high-level commitment to the integration of this technology with fundamental business processes.

Conclusion

The development tools and capabilities of Domino for groupware and intranet applications are superior to those of Exchange. Domino represents a much more complete knowledge management framework benefiting directly from Lotus' years of experience in this area. The real power of Domino derives from delivering applications and data through a single, integrated infrastructure. Total cost of ownership is not sufficiently different between Domino and Exchange to be a decisive factor. Companies willing to act decisively and to persist in achieving an enterprise-wide implementation of Lotus Notes and Domino are likely to realize a substantial return on their investment.

Ron Herardian is CEO & Chief Systems Architect at Global System Services (GSS). You can reach Ron via email at rherardi@gssnet.com, or via his web page at <http://www.gssnet.com>.