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Works with: Notes 6
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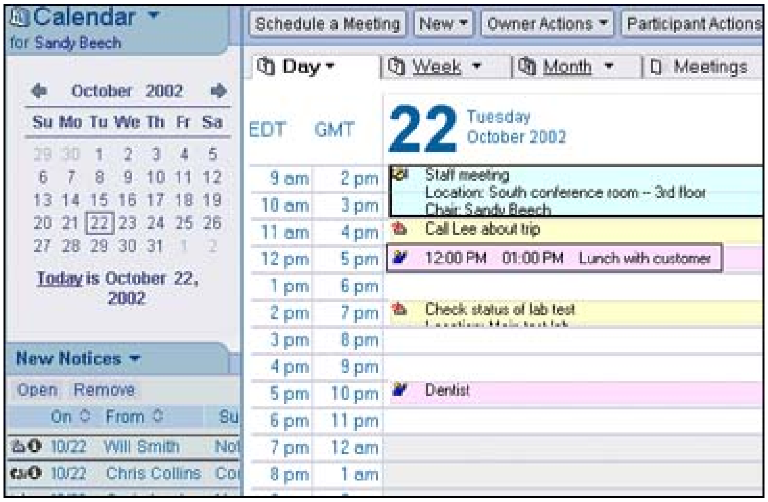
When talking about the new release of a product, it's tempting to get wrapped up in the new features—wow, look at all these bells and whistles! Aren't they cool? It would be easy to just go right down the list and tick them off one after the other, marveling at the technological sophistication of each. But even those of us who develop software for a living recognize even the most amazing suite of functionality is of little value if it doesn't address one critical question: How does this product help me to do more, with less time and work?

We kept this question foremost in mind when designing Notes 6 Calendar and Scheduling (C&S). Every step of the way, we considered how our users think about and perform their jobs. Most important, we listened to what you were telling us and were strongly guided by these suggestions. The result is an enhanced, more intuitive, and "natural" C&S, which not only provides you with more features, but also is easier to learn and use. And above all, it helps you save that most valuable and irreplaceable commodity—time.

In this article, we describe Notes 6 Calendar and Scheduling. We explain how each new feature works and how it fits into our overall theme of helping you do more with less effort. We assume you're an experienced Notes user and are familiar with its basic use and terminology.

Expanding your view

To help you manage your time faster and more easily, Notes 6 C&S lets you perform more tasks from the view level. Perhaps the best way to illustrate this is to imagine you're a Notes 6 user just starting your morning. As with many of us nowadays, there never seems to be enough time to get all your work done. So the first thing you do is open your calendar and see what's in store for today:



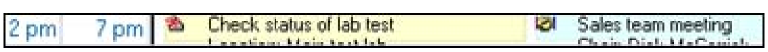
Even the most cursory glance at the preceding screen tells you we've made some significant changes to the C&S interface. For example, you can color-code entries by types so that, for instance, all meetings are highlighted in blue, appointments in purple, and so on. You can also display two time zones simultaneously, in this case, Eastern Daylight and Greenwich Mean. We'll talk about these and other formatting features later in this article.

Calendar mini-view

But first, direct your attention to the lower-left corner of the calendar view:

This is the calendar "mini-view," and it's one of the most important new additions to Notes 6 C&S. You can think of it as an inbox for your calendar. The mini-view displays meeting invitations or reschedule notices that need your attention. You can also toggle between your notices and your To Dos from the drop-down list next to New Notices. If you're an experienced Calendar user, you'll appreciate not having to go through your mail, looking for notices that require your action. (This could be especially time-consuming if you've been away from your mail file for an extended period.) Instead, you have one convenient, readily accessible place to take care of these.

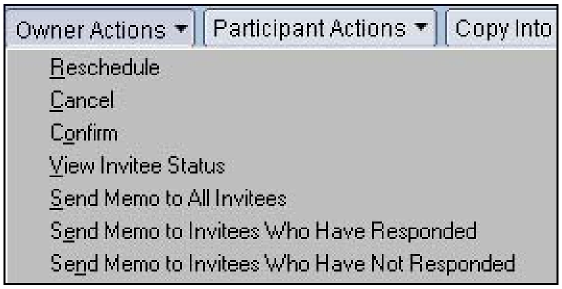
In our example, the mini-view shows you've been invited to a Sales meeting today at 2:00 local time. So you double-click on the entry in the mini-view to open and process it. The meeting now appears in your calendar. However, you notice the entry for this meeting doesn't appear on its own line. Instead, it shows up next to a previously scheduled calendar entry.



This dual entry indicates you have scheduled two entries for the same time slot. (Perhaps your mind was on that dentist appointment later in the day.) By displaying such entries side-by-side, C&S helps you immediately recognize schedule conflicts. And fixing these conflicts is easier than ever. Just left-click on the entry, hold down the mouse button, and drag it to the desired time slot. This lets you reschedule entries without having to open their documents (which you can still do if you want). You can also use this click-and-drag feature to reschedule meetings on-the-fly. If you're chairperson for the meeting, you are asked whether you want to send reschedule notifications to attendees. And if you're an invitee, you're prompted to send a proposed reschedule email to the chairperson.

Returning to your calendar, you see you've scheduled a lunch date with a customer 12 to 1 PM. There's a lot to talk about today, and one hour may not be enough to cover it all. So you decide to add 30 minutes to the lunch appointment, again using click-and-drag. Click the bottom edge of the entry, and drag it to the 1:30 time slot. In just a few seconds, you've rescheduled your appointment. Providing this functionality at the view level allows you to process calendar information much more quickly, so you can get on with your day.

Invitee status
Now you turn your attention to your staff meeting. There are a lot of important topics to cover there today as well, and you want to be sure all invitees have responded. To find out who has and who hasn't, you *could* open your inbox, sort though your messages, find out who sent back meeting confirmations, subtract them from your meeting invitee list, and send email to the remaining names. But if you prefer to do all that in a few quick steps, you can click the meeting entry to highlight it, and then click Owner Actions. This displays the following menu:

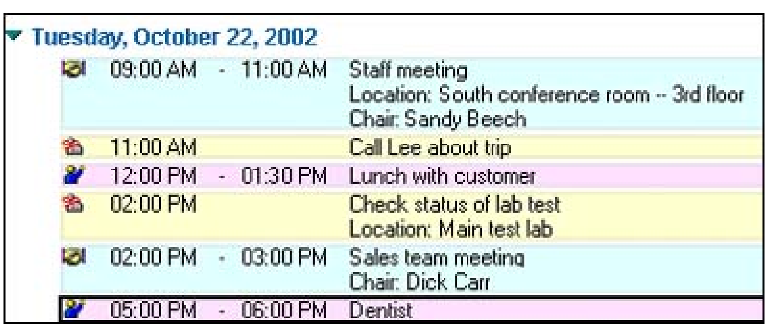


The Owner Actions menu includes four options for viewing the status of invitees and sending them notification emails. To see who has accepted, declined, or not yet responded, click View Invitee status.

Three other options allow you to send a memo with additional information to invitees. For example, you can send a reminder note to people who have yet to respond, without bothering those who have.

Then there's the rather cryptic calendar entry "Call Lee about trip." Now, what trip was that again? The title made sense at the time, but now you're not sure. Fortunately, you don't have to open the entry document to learn more. Instead, hover the mouse pointer over this calendar entry, and a box with more explanation appears. You can even edit the title without opening the document.

Summary view
Now that you've got today's agenda squared away, you can view it in summary form, showing just the entries and their pertinent information in a neat column format. To do this, choose View - Show - Summary. Your calendar now looks something like this:

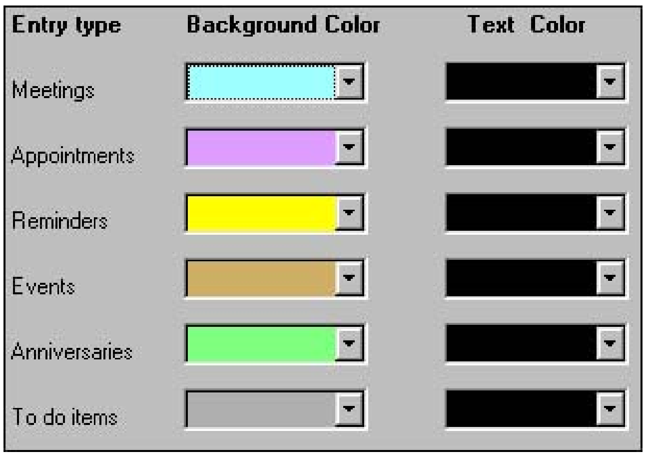


You can also summarize all other calendar views, including week and month. Speaking of which, in R5 we introduced the Work week view, where users could set their preferences to view just the days they want to see. For example, a job share employee could select Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. In Notes 6 we have extended this view type to include Two Work Week and Work Month views.

Colors and time zones

Before leaving the subject of views, let's look a bit more closely at colors and dual time zones, two features we briefly mentioned earlier. In Notes 6, you can select background and text colors for each type of calendar entry so that meetings appear in one color, appointments in another, and so on. To do this:

1. Open your calendar.
2. Choose Actions - Tools - Preferences.
3. Click the Colors tab to see the following dialog box:



For each calendar entry type, you can choose both the background color and the text color. When selecting colors, you can pick from the Notes palette, or use RGB "sliders." To restore colors to the original defaults, click the Restore default Calendar colors button.

As we've already shown, you can display two different time zones, in any "gridded" calendar view (views that show individual time slots). This includes One Day, Two Day, and One Work Week Calendar formats. The dual time zones display lets you determine at a glance mutually convenient meeting times for remote locations. To display an alternate time zone:

1. Choose File - Preferences - User Preferences.
2. Click International and then click Calendar.
3. Select "Display an additional time zone."
4. Enter a label for the alternate time zone in the Time Zone Label field. (In our previous example, we selected GMT as the label for Greenwich Mean Time.)

There are also new icons that show on the calendar view. There's an icon for penciled-in entries, for which you have not booked busytime. There is also an icon for draft entries, which serves as placeholders for invitations you are composing but have not yet sent. Also, there's a new icon for private entries. If you designate an entry as private, you will see a small key icon next to that entry. If others have access to your calendar, they see that time slot grayed out and labeled as private. This will help ensure that you are not invited to a meeting for which you have already privately booked yourself.

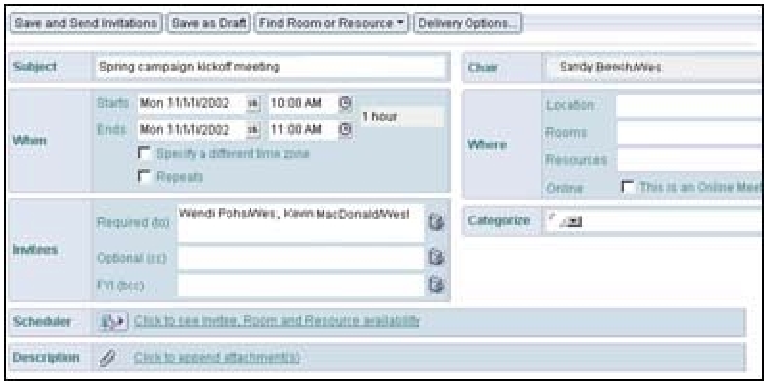
In this discussion of Notes 6 C&S views, we've touched on several of the most important new features. In addition, there are a number of other view features that help further our goal of saving you time by helping you do more with less work. These include:

- Many new printing options, including the ability to print a calendar to a Notes document
- New formatting options for views
- Clickable month and year in the date picker and pop-up calendar, so you can quickly change either the month, the year, or both
- A scroll bar at the bottom of the screen to quickly move to other dates in the view you're in
- An option to view a secondary, non-Gregorian calendar (for example, Jewish or Japanese 6-day)

Rounding into better form: calendar forms

As we explained in the previous section, we've clearly spent a lot of design effort to provide you the ability to perform much of your C&S work from within your calendar views. But we didn't stop there. We also gave a great deal of thought to calendar forms, again with an eye towards improving the ease-of-use. This includes making it easier to find free time more quickly and providing the option of scheduling a Sametime online meeting.

For example, suppose you need to create a meeting. You can click Schedule a Meeting, as in previous releases of Notes. But now you can also double-click on any open time slot in the calendar view. You'll see the new Meeting form, with information about your selected time and date already filled in:

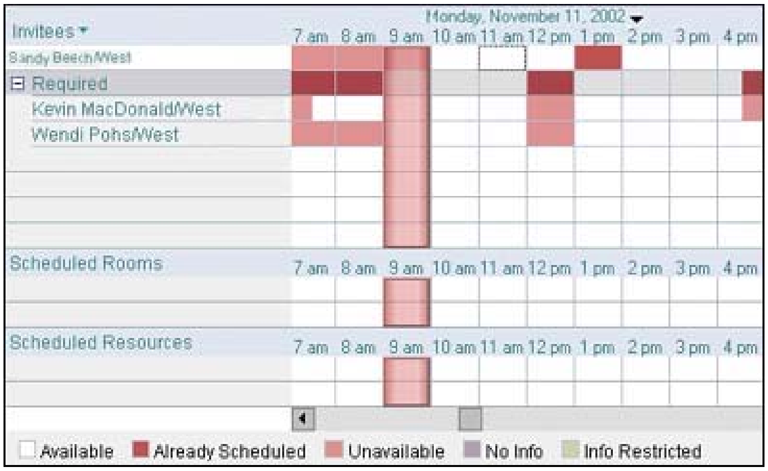


As with calendar views, we've redesigned the meeting form to lay the fields out in a more logical sequence, emulating the way users themselves would likely enter this information. And we've combined everything you need to schedule a meeting in a single place, so for instance, it's easier to invite rooms and resources to the meeting without having to tab through different sections. (As with most C&S enhancements, this feature was the direct result of customer feedback.) Time zone support has been improved so that you can choose a different time zone when you pick the start and end times for meetings. You'll also notice you can schedule meetings that span midnight, which is especially useful for International meetings (or for those who like to work particularly late).

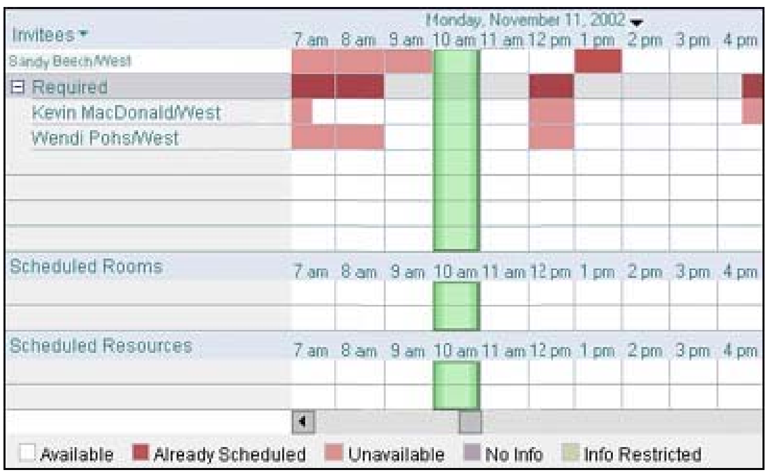
Scheduler

After choosing the start and end date and time for the meeting and filling in the required invitee names, you can click the Scheduler (which is now a collapsible section on the form) to find a mutually convenient time for everyone. This displays the Scheduler summary view:

As you can see, the Scheduler has found free time in the calendars of all required invitees. You can pick one of these times by highlighting it and clicking Use Selected Time. Or you can get the details of who's available when and schedule the meeting accordingly. To do this, you select the Details checkbox.



This view shows who's available, who's not, and why. Notice the vertical red time bar. This represents the time slot you've tentatively chosen for your meeting. The red color indicates this is not a time slot available to all attendees. To find a better time, just drag the time bar to another position on the calendar. It turns green when you've found a slot available to all. The beginning or end of the time bar can also be dragged to change the duration of the meeting. Note that as you work with the time bar, the meeting time fields at the top of the form dynamically update to reflect the new time you choose—another example of doing more, quickly and easily.



As a side note, developers will be interested to learn the Notes 6 Scheduler is fully programmable and can be used in custom applications. This code (written in LotusScript) can be found in the Notes 6 Mail template that ships with Notes/Domino 6.

You can also make this a Sametime online meeting, by clicking This is an Online Meeting. This displays fields relating to Sametime online meetings. This feature works in conjunction with the Notes Rooms and Resources database. This database contains a new resource type for online meeting places that connect the online resource (defined in the Resource database) with a Sametime Meeting server.

When defining an online meeting, you can choose the following:

- Use Type to specify the type of Sametime meeting that you want (collaboration, moderated presentation/demo, or broadcast meeting).
- Place should contain the place name for the meeting.
- Online Meeting Attachments lets you add one or more attachments for participants to view.

After you create the online meeting, it automatically reserves your Sametime Meeting server. In addition, your users will receive a clickable URL for the Sametime meeting in their invitation, making it simple to launch the online meeting. If you need to reschedule a meeting that has an associated online resource, calendar workflow ensures that the Sametime meeting server is notified and updated.

Again, we close this section by pointing out that we haven't covered every new feature available in Notes 6 C&S calendar entry forms. Instead, we've shown you how some of these can make your life easier by—is this getting redundant yet?—letting you do more with less work. But there's still an important area we haven't touched on yet, and it concerns people performing C&S tasks for others—for example, assistants managing executive calendars.

Managing management's time

When planning enhancements for Notes 6 C&S, we of course wanted to please all our users. But there was one group whose needs we were particularly sensitive to, people responsible for managing the calendars of one or more other users. So we listened especially closely to this group when talking to customers about their C&S needs and expectations. And before we released Notes 6, we turned to our own in-house group of executive assistants and asked them to work daily with these new features, which we collectively refer to as "enterprise calendar management." Much of what they had to tell us is now reflected in the finished product.

What enterprise calendar management offers is the ability for one person to manage the calendars of one or more other people. Conversely, multiple people can manage a single calendar for another person. Typical examples include an assistant managing the calendars of several executives or multiple assistants managing the calendar of a single (presumably quite important) executive. This all should happen in a way that allows assistants to stay productive within their own environments as well—in other words, with less jumping back and forth between calendars.

As usual, the best way to demonstrate this is through an example. Imagine you're responsible for managing Sandy Beech's calendar. To open Sandy's calendar, you click Calendar in the upper-left corner and choose Open Calendar for Sandy Beech. You'll see Sandy's calendar, with the mini-view in the lower-left corner. In the calendar view, time slots Sandy has marked as private appear greyed out, to let you know this is not free time.

When Sandy receives a meeting invitation, you will receive an email notification in your own inbox. This way you can monitor Sandy's incoming invitations without leaving your mail file. The email you receive includes a link to the invitation in Sandy's calendar so that you can open that invitation by clicking the link and processing it. Similarly, you receive accept and decline notifications with doclinks from invitees for meetings that Sandy is chairing.

Notes 6.0 Calendar and Scheduling: the time has come

Someone once said "efficiency is intelligent laziness." If so, Notes 6 Calendar and Scheduling will help make you very, very intelligent. (We of course would never imply any of our readers are lazy.) You can do much more of your work from within the view level, giving you a stronger sense of "one-stop shopping" for your C&S needs. The new mini-view, colors, and summary features help you zero in on the most pressing items. We're giving you multiple options for creating and editing meetings and other calendar entries. Rescheduling can be done virtually entirely through a new point-and-click interface. The meeting form itself is more intuitive, with a cool new Scheduler that you can even use in your own applications. And enterprise calendar management should be welcomed by everyone who has to manage someone else's calendar.

Efficiency—the art of producing more with less effort—is exactly what our new C&S is designed for. This in turn saves you time. And isn't time what calendars are all about?