LDD Today

Level: Beginner
Works with: Lotus Workplace
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by
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By now, most people within the IBM/Lotus Software sphere of influence have heard of IBM Lotus Workplace. You may have seen some of the press releases on Lotus Workplace or heard about it while attending events, such as Lotusphere 2003. Perhaps you have tried our Lotus Workplace Messaging live showcase, in which many thousands of users have signed up for temporary accounts. If so, you may already know that Lotus Workplace offers you a set of collaborative tools, presented within a personalized, portal-based view. With Lotus Workplace, you can quickly navigate between email, instant messaging, on-line learning courses, and content publishing. But "the proof is in the pudding" as they say, so many of you have been looking forward to the day when you can see a real live version of Lotus Workplace. Good news—that day has arrived.

This article introduces you to Lotus Workplace. We start with a brief overview of Lotus Workplace and the latest release of its products, including Lotus Workplace Messaging 1.1, Lotus Workplace Team Collaboration 1.1, and Lotus Workplace Collaborative Learning 1.1. Then we dive a little deeper into each product and finish with an overview of Lotus Workplace administration. Our goal is to leave you with a good overall understanding of Lotus Workplace, what it does, and how you can use it. We assume no prior knowledge of Lotus Workplace, although familiarity with IBM/Lotus collaboration tools, such as Notes/Domino and Lotus Instant Messaging and Web Conferencing (Sametime), may help you understand some Lotus Workplace concepts.

Lotus Workplace overview

Lotus Workplace consists of flexible, portal-ready collaboration products that you can customize to fit your specific needs. These products provide features similar to those found in the core IBM/Lotus Software portfolio, including Lotus Instant Messaging and Lotus Team Workplace (QuickPlace), but are built on different underlying technology. Lotus Workplace products include the following:

IBM Lotus Workplace Messaging
IBM Lotus Workplace Messaging integrates with your existing email infrastructure, to route mail and to manage users using your LDAP directory. Those of you familiar with Lotus Workplace Messaging 1.0 will note that V1.1 has been significantly enhanced—for example, it now offers a personal calendar for keeping track of your appointments.

IBM Lotus Workplace Team Collaboration
IBM Lotus Workplace Team Collaboration lets you initiate and participate in on-line meetings and chats, and work with other members of your project team through discussion forums and document sharing. Lotus Team

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Collaboration includes the following:

- Team Spaces are named places in which team members communicate and share information.
- Instant Messaging and Presence offer chat and presence awareness.
- Web Conferences let you conduct on-line meetings in which a moderator delivers an on-line presentation to other conference attendees.

IBM Lotus Workplace Collaborative Learning

IBM Lotus Workplace Collaborative Learning allows you to manage classroom-based and e-learning activities, resources, curriculums, and courseware catalogs across your enterprise. Features include an authoring tool to develop course structure and content, as well as learning management and delivery systems to manage learning programs, resources, and settings through an administrative interface. In addition, Lotus Workplace Collaborative Learning gives students an interface for accessing courses and related information. This includes functionality familiar to LearningSpace users, such as searching for, organizing, and enrolling in courses.

IBM Lotus Workplace Web Content Management

IBM Lotus Workplace Web Content Management can be purchased along with Lotus Workplace to provide end-to-end Web content management through multiple Internet, intranet, extranet, and portal sites. To learn more about Lotus Workplace Web Content management, see our live showcase.

People Finder and My Contacts

People Finder and My Contacts are portlets that help you find anyone in your organization. These are available in all Lotus Workplace products.

Each of these products and portlets is described in more detail in the following sections. User access to the products is controlled by the Lotus Workplace administrator. (See this tip on controlling access through user policies.) Administrators can also customize products and make additional ones available to users.

Lotus Workplace runs on top of WebSphere to take advantage of the J2EE platform. It requires WebSphere Application Server, WebSphere Portal, and DB2. The Lotus Workplace server is available for:

- SuSE Linux 7.2 and 7.3 for Intel 32-bit
- IBM AIX Version 5.2
- Microsoft Windows 2000 Server

The Lotus Workplace client runs on Microsoft Windows 2000, Microsoft Windows XP, and SuSE Linux 7.2 and 7.3 on Intel. Supported browsers include Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.5, Microsoft Internet Explorer 6.0, and Mozilla 1.3 on supported versions of SuSE Linux.

My Workplace

Navigation in Lotus Workplace is designed to be straightforward and simple. To access Lotus Workplace, you open a URL in the Web browser and log in using a user ID and password. (Before logging in for the first time, users must obtain their user ID/password combinations and the Web address for Lotus Workplace from their administrator.) You then navigate to the My Workplace portal place. This is the main entry point for Lotus Workplace:
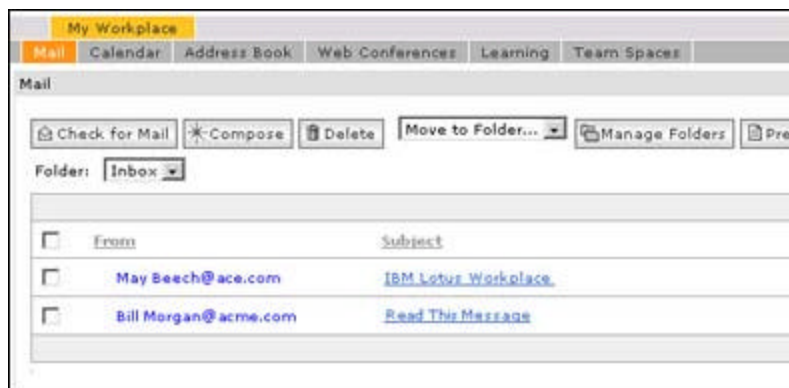
As you can see, My Workplace consists of tabs that correspond to main areas of Lotus Workplace functionality. The tabs displayed in My Workplace are determined by the access you have to Lotus Workplace products. For example, in the preceding screen, you have access to Lotus Workplace Messaging (Mail, Calendar, and Address Book), Lotus Workplace Team Collaboration (Web Conferences and Team Spaces), and Lotus Workplace Collaborative Learning. If, on the other hand, you only had access to Lotus Workplace Messaging, you would only see the Mail, Calendar, and Address Book tabs in My Workplace. And if you have Lotus Workplace Web Content Management installed, its tab would also appear in My Workplace. (As mentioned previously, the Lotus Workplace administrator controls access to these products; users can't select these products themselves.) To navigate to a product, click the tabs that belong to it. For instance, click the Mail tab to access Lotus Workplace Messaging.

In the upper right corner of the My Workplace interface (not shown in the preceding illustration) is the following action bar:

Use this bar to perform the following basic Lotus Workplace tasks:
- *Logging in and out*
- *Changing your on-line status*
  You can change your on-line status through the drop-down list that appear when you click your current status indicator.
- *Editing your profile*
  Lotus Workplace automatically creates a profile that captures your user preferences as you work. To view or modify this profile, click Edit my profile.
- *Accessing the on-line help*
  Click the question mark symbol to display context-sensitive help about the Lotus Workplace feature you're currently using.

Also on the right side of the My Workplace interface are the People Finder and My Contacts portlets:
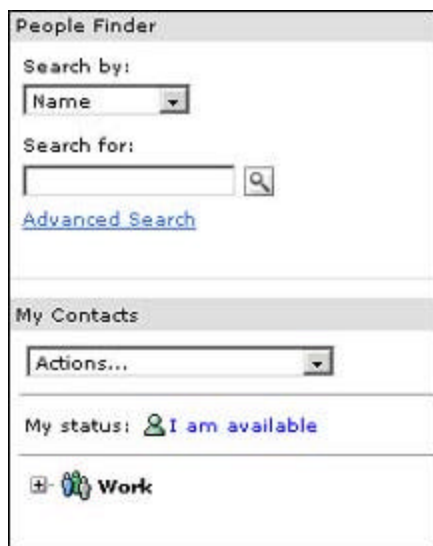
People Finder lets you find and select names from your company directory. You can then add these names to your My Contacts list, so you can check whether or not they are on-line and available to receive an instant message from you. In addition, presence awareness is incorporated across all Lotus Workplace products. On-line status indicators appear next to names wherever they are displayed, so you can see at a glance who is available to chat. Clicking a name displays a menu of interactive actions, such as sending email to that person or adding the name to your address book.

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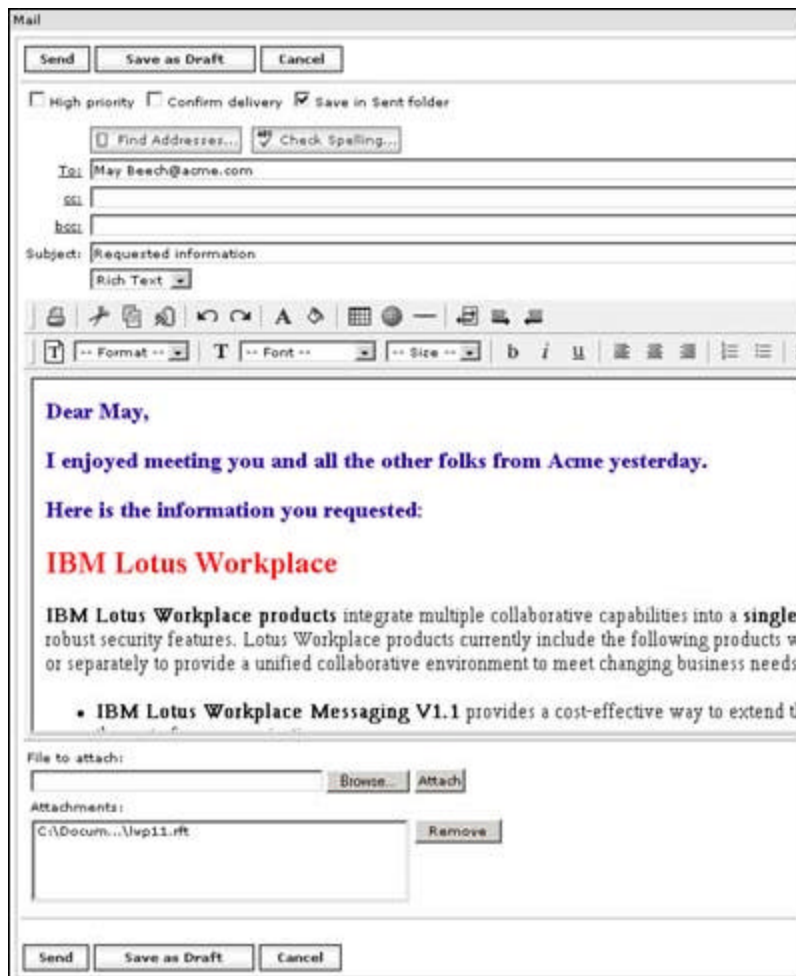
Lotus Workplace Messaging 1.1

Lotus Workplace Messaging lets you extend your messaging infrastructure across your entire organization. Built on industry standards, Lotus Workplace Messaging readily integrates into an existing email environment (such as Notes/Domino) as well as with portals, browsers, standards-based e-mail clients, and other Lotus Workplace products. It can be used for mail only or with other functions, including personal calendaring. As we mentioned earlier, Lotus Workplace Messaging 1.1 now includes a personal calendar. It also offers expanded client and server platform support and an updated interface that incorporates WebSphere Portal technology.

Mail

Click the Mail tab to open your mailbox. Folders in the mailbox let you organize your messages. Basic mail functions include:

- Checking for new messages
- Opening, reading, and replying to a message
- Creating a new message
- Moving messages to a folder
- Sorting and deleting messages
- Creating, renaming, and deleting folders
- Navigating the message list
- Emptying the trash
- Checking mailbox space

Similar to Notes mail, the Lotus Workplace Messaging 1.1 mail editor supports Microsoft rich text formatting. It also offers spell checking, a new feature in V1.1:

Note that if a status indicator appears next to a name in the message list, you can click the name to start a chat with the person if you have also deployed Lotus Workplace Team Collaboration. If the number of messages in the list exceeds the number allowed on a page, the message list is automatically presented in multiple pages.

Deleted messages appear in the Trash folder. Older messages in the Trash folder are automatically removed, based on an interval set by the administrator. You can restore messages from the Trash before they are removed. Emptying the Trash folder permanently removes all the messages it contains from your mailbox. If your mailbox has a size limit, emptying the trash increases the amount of available space.

If your mailbox has a size limit, a Usage link and a blue thermometer appear at the top of the message list. Clicking the link displays the amount of space remaining in your mailbox. If your mailbox is approaching or has reached the size limit, you'll see a Check usage link instead of Usage, and a red thermometer appears instead of the blue one.

Calendar
The new Lotus Workplace Messaging 1.1 personal calendar offers many of the same time management features available to Lotus Notes calendar users. These include the ability to keep track of appointments, reminders, all-day events, and anniversaries. To open the Calendar, click its tab in My Workplace.
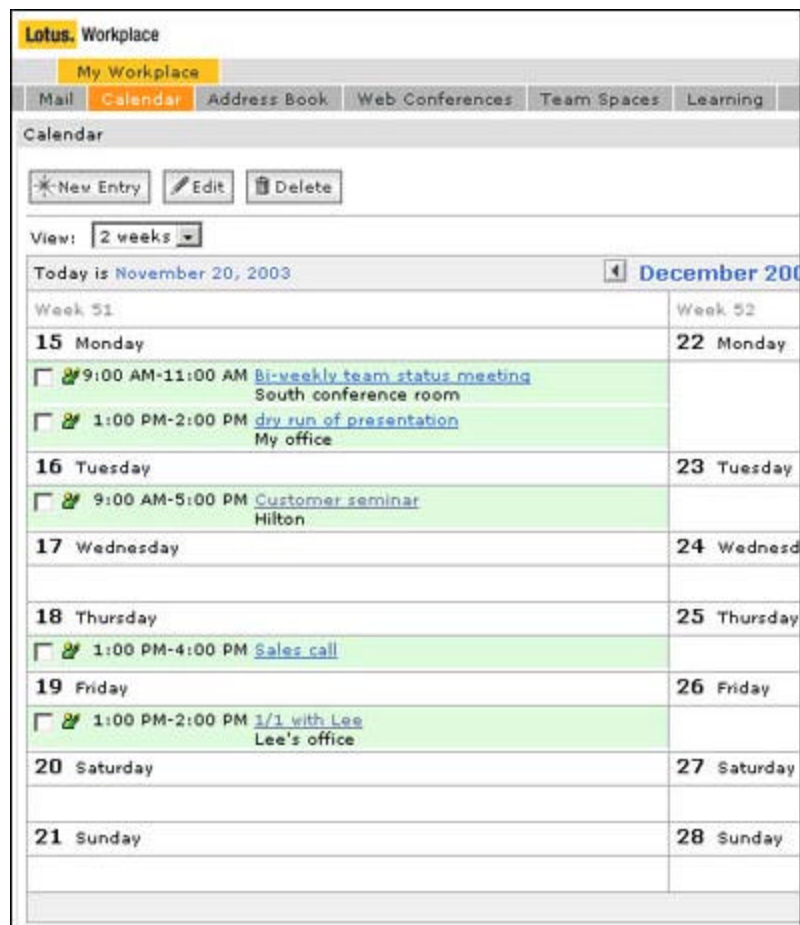
The View drop-down menu at the top of the Calendar lets you select the three available displays: 2-day, 2-week, or 1-month. To examine a particular calendar entry, click it. A black horizontal bar appears next to entries with conflicting times.

You can set calendar preferences through your profile. For example, you can define the preferred calendar type
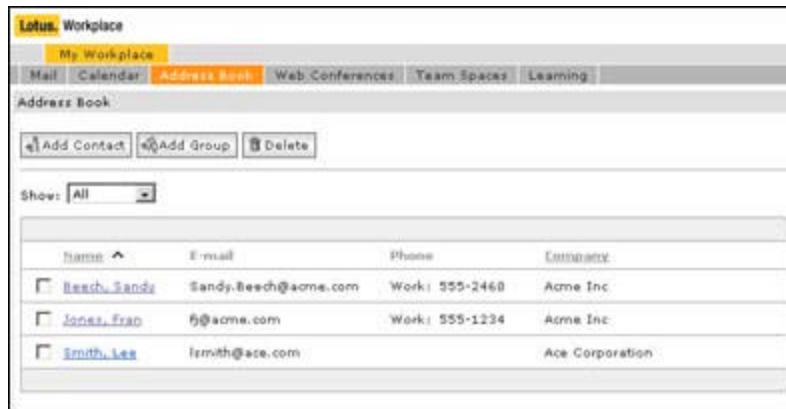
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(such as Gregorian), the first day to display for every week in the date picker and first day to display for every work week.

Address book
The address book lets you manage contact information and group mailing lists. To open this feature, click the Address Book tab in My Workplace.

The Lotus Workplace address book offers features similar to the Notes Personal Address Book. These include creating and displaying contacts and groups, opening and editing entries, sorting entries, and removing names from the contact list or group.

Lotus Workplace Team Collaboration 1.1

Lotus Workplace Team Collaboration combines instant messaging/presence awareness and Web conferencing available in Lotus Instant Messaging and Web Conferencing with the discussion forums and document management of Lotus Team Workplace. Lotus Workplace Team Collaboration helps users gain instant access to the right people and information, bringing together geographically distant team members to help them work more productively.

With Lotus Workplace Team Collaboration, you can instantly access people and information, giving you more time to focus on important business tasks. This helps increase overall team efficiency, as well as your ability to respond quickly to customers, colleagues, and suppliers. As a result, you can now make faster, more informed team decisions, based on timely and accurate information.

Lotus Workplace Team Collaboration 1.1 consists of:
 • Web Conferences for conducting on-line Web meetings
 • Team Spaces for creating and managing team-related discussions and for file sharing

Each is accessible though its own tab in My Workplace.

Web Conferences
Web Conferences handles all Web conference activity in Lotus Workplace. Web conferences are on-line meetings in which a user acting as moderator delivers an on-line presentation to a group of conference participants. To open Web Conferences, click its tab in My Workplace.

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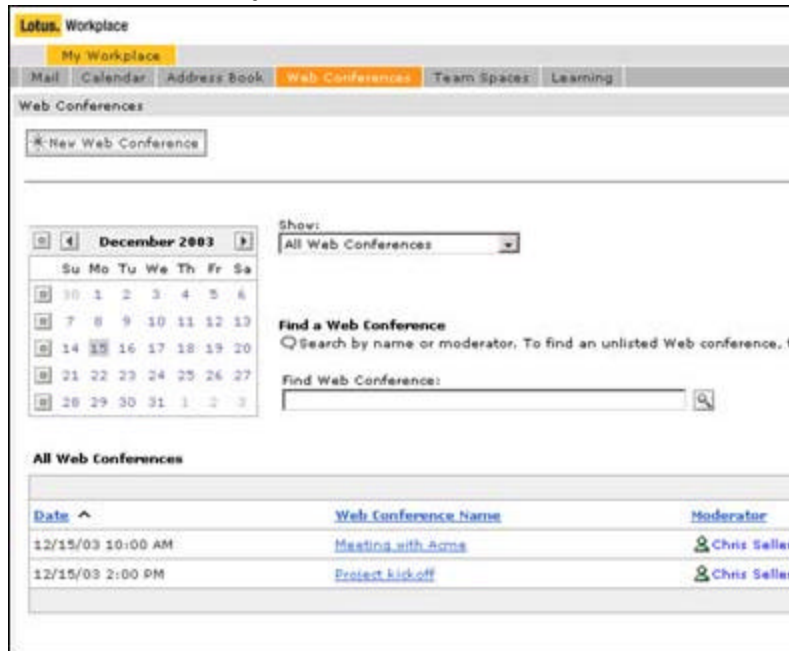
Use the Web Conferences page to find a Web conference, to view the details of a Web conference (and optionally join the conference), and to create a new Web conference.

You can use the Search feature to find a Web conference, or you can view a conference by opening the calendar and using the Show feature. The search results include all listed conferences with a conference name or moderator name that contains the search text. The results also include unlisted conferences with a conference name that exactly matches the search. To view information about a Web conference, click its name in the Web Conferences list. Note that some conferences are restricted to a list of specific participants; only these people can view or attend the conference.

You can join a Web conference 15 minutes before its scheduled start time. To join a conference, you must be using a supported browser with JavaScript enabled.

The My Web Conferences view is for anyone associated with the conference as moderator, creator, or participant. After you create the conference, click its name in the Web conferences list to create the agenda, to specify the participants, and to change conference information. The names of conferences in which you are a creator, moderator, or participant appear in bold. By default, you are the moderator of any Web conference you create.

Notice that each moderator name in the Web Conferences list displays the person's on-line status, another example of the presence awareness feature incorporated throughout Lotus Workplace. Click a person's name to open a menu from which you can contact the person and perform additional tasks. For more information about on-line status and the menu, click the help (?) button in the upper-right corner of the Lotus Workplace page to open on-line help.
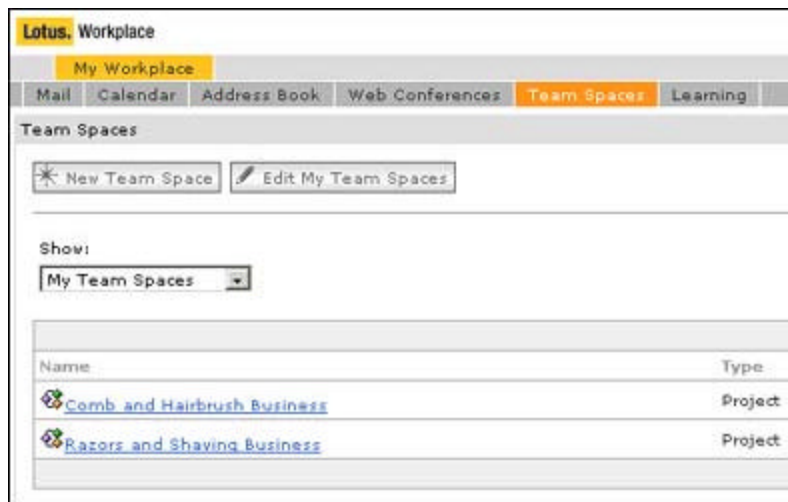
Team Spaces
Lotus Workplace Team Spaces are named places that team members use to collaborate. They are built upon features provided by the existing Lotus Team Spaces collaboration software. There are two types of team spaces: Projects and Discussions. A project lets team members share documents and participate in discussion forums. A discussion is dedicated to project-related discussions. Projects and discussions are distinguished by icons appearing next to their names:
- indicates a project
- indicates a discussion

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You open Team Spaces by clicking the Team Spaces tab in My Workplace:

You can perform the following from the Team Spaces page:
- Show public team spaces
- Sort the team spaces list
- Find team spaces
- Open a team space

When you create a team space, you are automatically designated as the team space's moderator. This allows you to perform team space management functions, such as determining membership, editing the team space home page, creating and deleting forums, editing forum topics and documents, and so on. (The Lotus Workplace administrator controls who can create and use team spaces.)

Lotus Workplace Collaborative Learning 1.1

Lotus Workplace Collaborative Learning lets you create on-line training courses and make them available to your employees. For example, you can use Lotus Workplace Collaborative Learning to offer training in business-related topics, such as new products and technologies, government regulations, and corporate guidelines and standards. These courses are delivered through a portal-style user interface. Lotus Workplace Collaborative Learning incorporates technology developed for Lotus LearningSpace and Lotus Learning Management System (LMS) and offers features for developing and delivering course content; for importing and assembling existing content based on industry standards, such as SCORM; for enrolling and participating in courses; and for managing courses.

To open Lotus Workplace Collaborative Learning, click the Learning tab in My Workplace:

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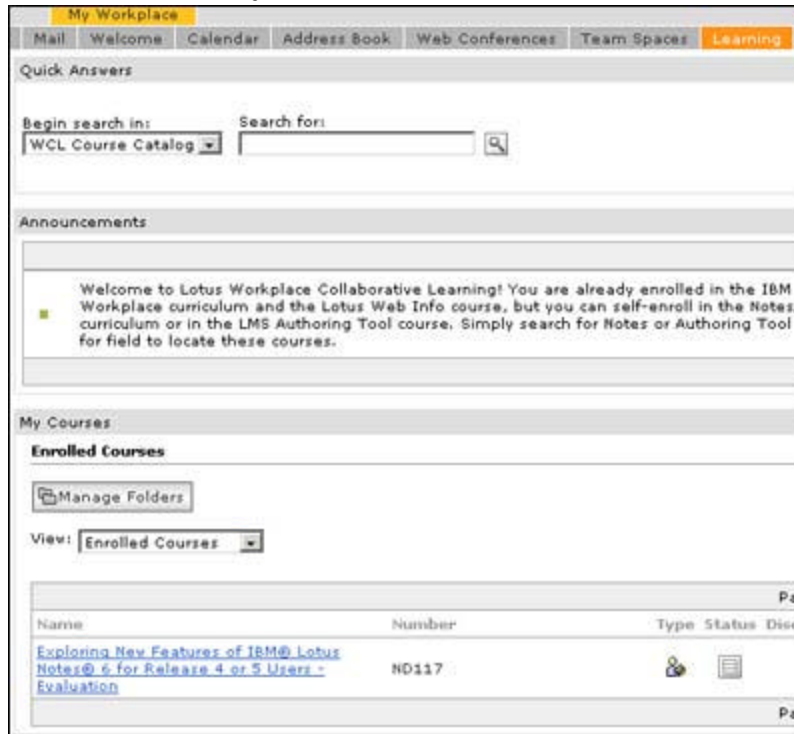
You can search the Course Catalog to find available courses, curriculums, and certificate programs. You can also search other Internet data sources for courses. (The administrator defines which data sources are available to users.)

Lotus Workplace Web Content Management 1.1

Lotus Workplace Web Content Management offers you a creation-to-presentation tool for managing your organization's content. With Lotus Workplace Web Content Management, you can publish and update information across your corporate Internet, intranet, and extranet sites. This product provides:

- Complete content management functionality, including personalization and workflow (useful for documentation review processes)
- High scalability
- Easy-to-use features

Lotus Workplace Web Content Management 1.1 is available as a separate add-in to Lotus Workplace. It is packaged with WebSphere Portal 5.0.2, DB2 Content Manager 8.2, and Domino 6.5.1 and is also available as a stand-alone product. For more on Lotus Workplace Web Content Management, see this Lotus Labs Exposed article describing our Lotus Workplace Web Content Management showcase.

Lotus Workplace administration

As the preceding sections indicate, we obviously put a lot of functionality into Lotus Workplace. At the same time, we've designed it to be as easy to deploy and administer as possible. Part of this is due to Lotus Workplace's built-in flexibility. For example, the Lotus Workplace administrator decides which features are available to users—for those who will only use Lotus Workplace Messaging, My Workplace presents only messaging-related tabs (Mail, Calendar, and Address Book). If others need Lotus Team Collaboration and Lotus Collaborative Learning, they will also see the Web Conferences, Team Spaces, and Learning tabs. This way users have exactly the functionality they need—no more, no less—making it easier to find and use these features (and making it easier for you to manage and support these users). And if a group of Lotus Workplace Messaging users eventually needs additional Lotus Workplace products, you can add them to the My Workplace page.

Lotus Workplace is also "administrator friendly" in other ways. For example, Lotus Workplace Messaging offers

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you multiple choices of clients, including WebSphere Portal, Web browsers, and POP3 clients, so you can use the client with which you're most familiar. And it easily integrates with existing environments, helping you leverage your current infrastructure investment. (For instance, Lotus Workplace Messaging can use your existing LDAP directory, reducing the need to create new user documents for your email community.) Perhaps most important, Lotus Workplace is built upon proven and popular IBM technologies, such as WebSphere, DB2, Lotus Instant Messaging and Web Conferencing, and Lotus Team Workplace.

Lotus Workplace administration involves managing security, directories, user policies and accounts, and general installation, configuration, and maintenance. There are three primary ways to administer Lotus Workplace:

- WebSphere Administrative Consoles
- Lmadmin commands
- lwpprop.properties file

Each of these is described briefly in the following sections.

WebSphere Administrative Consoles
Use the WebSphere Administrative Consoles to administer Lotus Workplace servers and services, to add or change configuration settings, to make setting updates persistent, and to view the run-time status and performance of servers. (There are two Administrative Consoles, one for Portal and one for the WebSphere Application Server. Both function similarly.) Do this by configuring two types of Lotus Workplace settings: server- and service-level operations and general cell-wide settings. Select Servers - Lotus Workplace Servers and use the server property panels to view and modify Lotus Workplace server setup and services settings. In addition, the cell-wide settings in the Lotus Workplace section at the bottom of the WebSphere Administrative Console navigator can be applied across all Lotus Workplace servers in the domain.

Lmadmin commands
You can edit Lotus Workplace run-time settings by issuing Lmadmin commands at the server console. These commands can help you administer mail accounts and user policies and perform administrative tasks. Note, however, that the changes effected by most commands are not persistent across server sessions. To make permanent configuration modifications, use the WebSphere Administrative Consoles.

The lwpprop.properties file
During setup, you select the type of installation you want to perform: Install and configure, Install only, or Configure only. If you choose Install and configure or Configure only, you must enter a number of configuration settings. When you complete setup, this configuration data populates settings contained in a file called lwpprop.properties. You can later edit this file to change these settings.

For complete information on managing Lotus Workplace, see the administration on-line help.

IBM Lotus Workplace: Vanguard of a new generation
Those of you who have been following the development of IBM Lotus Workplace may recall that initially it was informally referred to as the next generation of Lotus products, or next gen, in our early announcements and presentations. This nickname was a good indication of how we viewed Lotus Workplace: the next generation of collaborative software tools, built on industry standards and core IBM/Lotus technologies, which our customers will reply on to develop and manage their critical business processes for many years to come. This release of Lotus Workplace is a clear realization of that original vision.

At the same time, we realize our customers have come to expect and demand an ever-higher level of functionality, reliability, and value from all IBM and Lotus collaboration products. With this in mind, we're already hard at work preparing the next releases of Lotus Workplace products, enhancing and expanding features to bring you even more value. As we do, we'll be here to fill you in on all the latest developments with this new, exciting, and very powerful technology.

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