

Secure, 3D Meeting Service Now Available with Lotus Sametime

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Employees at Manpower, Raytheon, Northeastern University, and Northcentral Technical College have pilot tested IBM's new 3D meeting service which is available now.

IBM today announced that a new service, Virtual Collaboration for Lotus Sametime, is now available. The service allows Lotus Sametime users to set up and use virtual meeting spaces securely behind-the-firewall with avatars.

Also known as "Sametime 3D," this service was created by [IBM](#) Research and made in its development labs.

Organizations in a variety of industries ranging from aerospace and defense, consumer products, staffing, manufacturing, and education,

including Manpower, Northeastern University, Northcentral Technical College, and Raytheon participated in Sametime 3D pilots over the last six months.

Findings from a recent survey by IT analyst firm ThinkBalm, say there is a growing business need for immersive technologies such as virtual environments. It said that more than half of business respondents expect to obtain a positive total economic benefit from immersive technologies this year. More than half of respondents said that immersive technology was less expensive than alternative options like Web conferences and meetings that involve airplane and hotel costs. Ninety-five percent of survey respondents said enabling people in disparate locations to spend time together is an important benefit of their recent projects.

"College students love to learn and meet in virtual worlds. Although we can already conduct class through other worlds, there is little classroom control or security. Instructors can't always tell who is present," said Chet Strebe, Chief Information Officer, Northcentral Technical College in Wisconsin, which offers on-line courses and has students globally.

"With IBM's new virtual meeting service, teachers would be able to tell which students are present and better control the environment." The college envisions using the service for cross-campus meetings and presentations.

Using Sametime 3D, people can select colleagues from their Lotus Sametime contact list, and then invite them to participate in a virtual meeting. Participants can meet in a boardroom, an auditorium or a collaboration space.

Once they enter the virtual meeting, avatars can use text or voice chat, or both, to communicate. They can then share presentations or other

materials, and take notes using virtual flip charts. In the collaboration space, they can share ideas and other information on a brainstorm wall. Participants can then store, update, prioritize and vote on this information. Content can be imported and acted upon both in and out of the virtual meeting space.

"Virtual Collaboration for Lotus Sametime is part of IBM's ongoing work to redefine the nature of on-line meetings," said John Alessio, vice president, IBM Software Services for Lotus. "Whether through improvements to Web conferencing capabilities or with tools such as VCS, IBM is offering new ways to engage and collaborate, making meetings more effective and productive. The timing is perfect for this new offering as it facilitates effective meetings and brainstorming without the time and expense of travel."

Additionally, IBM is working with Vivox to provide unique, optional, and integrated voice capabilities using Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). The voice would be spatial in nature, meaning that as participants in a meeting move closer or further away from each other, the voice gets louder or softer, just like in real life.

More than 2,500 IBM employees have voluntarily registered to test this out since February, as part of the IBM Technology Adoption Program. Meetings have been held by development, human resources, and product planning teams. Virtually any meeting which requires co-creation of content by a team of people can benefit from this capability, and IBM employees continue to discover new uses for these tools.

IBM is in the forefront in exploring virtual worlds. IBM researchers, consultants, and developers worldwide are developing and providing new ways of learning, collaborating and doing business in virtual worlds. IBM is helping clients to develop their [virtual world](#) strategies, and is providing them with offerings that enable adopters to better collaborate.

In addition, IBM is leading an initiative to help improve compatibility between disparate virtual worlds. IBM also uses virtual worlds to conduct research, host events, and to welcome new employees.

Virtual Collaboration for Lotus Sametime is an IBM Software Service for Lotus offering. Lotus Sametime 8.0.1 or later is required to use the plug-in, however, there is also Web-interface available. For a list of system requirements visit www.ibm.com/software/lotus/services/vc4sameworkspace.html .

Source: IBM

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