New IBM Lotus Connections Software Brings Consumer Social Networking Features to the Office

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IBM today announced an expanded set of social software tools and capabilities for enterprise collaboration that brings popular features like micro-blogging from the home into the business environment.

Realizing the benefits of Web 2.0 and Enterprise 2.0, IBM is bringing a comprehensive social software platform to businesses with the debut of Lotus Connections 2.5. The new software is being announced at an IBM worldwide collaboration summit in Cambridge, Massachusetts attended by hundreds of customers, partners and IBM experts gathered to discuss future developments in enterprise collaboration.

Today's Lotus Connections news is also taking place in conjunction with IBM's Center for Social Software Symposium this week, marking the one-year anniversary of the launch of the Center for Social Software. Lotus Connections, which originated at IBM Research, is an example of the types of technologies that result from the Center for Social Software's incubator for innovative technologies.

The new release of Lotus Connections expands on IBM's commitment to bringing a business-grade social software platform to the market. With the extranet, Internet and intranet collaboration services provided by IBM and IBM customers, Lotus Connections enables tens of millions of users worldwide to connect and collaborate.

For Lotus Connections beta program participant Sogeti, a Capgemini subsidiary specializing in technology services, there was a great need to connect the firm's 20,000 people spread across 200 offices in 14 countries. Following an extensive analysis, where all available options were reviewed, Sogeti turned to Lotus Connections for its social networking and collaborative functionality.

"Our people are our only and most valuable asset. We needed a powerful tool to connect our people all over the world, providing them with a social platform that would allow them to share information and collaborate," said Michiel Boreel, CTO at Sogeti Group. "We chose Lotus Connections because it is a powerful collaboration platform that goes way beyond simple sharing of documents and furthermore, it is people centric instead of project or document centric. We believe that this is the future of collaboration and we want to position ourselves in the frontline of this new trend."

Lotus Connections 2.5 includes an enhanced Communities experience with new features and capabilities. Community owners can now customize the appearance of their community and move widgets around on the community home page. Community owners can add activities, blogs, wikis, and file sharing services to their communities in addition to bookmarks, feeds, and forum capabilities. This significantly enhances the options for community members to collaborate on projects and content.

Additionally, the user interface of the community discussion forum now displays threads in a more conversational format with user photos. A statistics feature indicates the most popular discussion topics in a community and provides insight into which users are the most active participants. Important discussion topics can be highlighted with the capability to pin them at the top of the forum.

The new Wiki service allows designated users to create, view, edit and contribute to content that is uploaded to the intranet-style collaborative Web site. As many people may be editing a single page, the wiki has automatic versioning and a "show changes" view so that users can easily view the latest versions and edits.

The Profiles service is enhanced with a micro-blogging feature that allows users to post status updates on tasks they are working on. This enables users within their professional network to see what they are working on and offer comments. A new message board feature offers a place on a user's profile page where colleagues can post messages and comment on status updates. The combination of the message board and micro-blogging capabilities provides a simple and easy way for people to maintain active connections to their colleagues.

The latest version of Lotus Connections provides a new, Web-based file sharing library for users to easily upload and securely share content such as presentations and documents. Utilizing social software features such as tagging, ratings, recommendations, and the ability to comment, the solution offers an effective way for colleagues to share, view and provide feedback on content.

New integrated mobile support for iPhone and Nokia S60 devices allows access to the Lotus Connections Profiles, Activities and Blog services. Now professionals that travel frequently or work remotely can update their status and locate people in their profiles directly from mobile devices.

Additionally, the new Lotus Connections release offers a number of enhancements to existing services including Home Page, Blogs, Bookmarks and Activities offered in the previous version of the platform.

"With Lotus Connections, we have merged document sharing and [social networking](link) capabilities to create a comprehensive collaboration platform for businesses," said Jeff Schick, vice president of social [software](link), IBM.

Since Lotus Connections is based on industry standards, it offers integration with Microsoft SharePoint. This integration allows users to perform Lotus Connections Profile searches from within Microsoft SharePoint, integrate Lotus Connections Business cards within Microsoft SharePoint and provides access to a Lotus Connections tag cloud Web part for use in Microsoft SharePoint.

Lotus Connections 2.5 is available now in 25 languages. For more information on Lotus Connections, visit [ibm](link).com/lotus/connections" target="_blank">www.[ibm](link).com/lotus/connections .

Source: IBM

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