



BUSINESS PARTNERS SPEAK OUT

Domino goes wireless!

By [Ron Herardian](#)

To many people, the word "mobile" means lugging around a seven to ten pound notebook computer with another five pounds of gear, including everything from power supplies and spare batteries to network cables, telephone wires, and a jumble of connectors. In the past two to three years, two things have happened that could eventually save the backs, necks, and shoulders of mobile professionals from further abuse.

PDAs including Palm devices and IBM WorkPads have finally taken off. This is not your father's Sharp Wizard anymore. Everyone with an IT budget or a personal toy budget has one, either because they are a real-life traveling professional or because they are just too important to not be seen with the latest technology (of course, there are a few people that really find the things useful). On the other hand, real-life mobile professionals are far from out of the woods. Now, they cart around a notebook computer with all the extras, and a PDA, and the stuff to hook the two together. What's another two pounds when you can just buy a bigger computer bag?

MSD

So what do chiropractors and the Borg-like equipment arrays of so-called mobile hardware have to do with Lotus? Well, until recently, not much. Of course the Notes client on a Notebook computer has always been able to communicate with a Domino server, from a remote location, using a modem or a LAN protocol. But, until late 1999, the only Lotus product targeted at the mobile market was EasySync for Notes, which provided synchronization between Notes databases and Notes mail with devices running Palm OS (Palm devices and the IBM WorkPad). More recently, Lotus shipped Mobile Services for Domino (MSD) 1.0 signaling a bold new strategy aiming at the wireless market. MSD runs on Window 4.0 NT Service Pack 4 or later and requires Domino 4.65, or 5.01 and above.

Domino is so capable and so flexible that it has always been a product with an identity crisis. What is it? Is it workflow and forms; email and discussions/news; Web server; personalizable intranet server and virtual workplace; database server; document management system; PKI deployment and management system; middleware linking PCs with legacy databases; or realtime collaboration and instant messaging? And now, incredibly, Domino has somehow begun to morph, yet again, into an ASP (Application Service Provider) infrastructure technology.

But who is this for?

With MSD, ASPs and corporate IT in conjunction with wireless carriers can deliver plain text content from Domino databases to WAP enabled (Wireless Application Protocol) devices such as smart cell phones, two-way pagers, and eventually to PDAs (hybrid PDA/cell phone products are popping up everywhere).

MSD provides Domino shops with a way to extend Domino content via web-based technology and simple messaging to wireless devices. Essentially, it's a server-side Domino add-on designed to communicate with a range of wireless, handheld devices such as pagers and smart cellular phones. Basically, MSD provides access to text data such as entries in the NAB (address book content) and short message services (text only messages transferred using the Short Message Service protocol or SMS).

Sure, this tastes great but is it filling?

Based on the growing sales of PDAs and smart phones I'd say the answer is, well, a lot of people think so. Corporate IT departments can now leverage wireless communications to extend the flow of corporate information

and the range of business communications to encompass low-cost wireless devices that are destined to become ubiquitous.

Mobile Notes

The other side of Lotus' new mobile and wireless strategy is "Mobile Notes." This is just a fancy word for "client access license" which is how Lotus plans to make money on MSD. After all, they can't sell a Notes client that runs on a cell phone no matter how smart it is. What they can provide is microbrowser (Handheld Device Markup Language or HDML 2.0 and later) access to Domino content via HDML and integration of Domino messaging with SMS. But, to make any money on this outside of selling the server software and maintenance, Lotus has to get revenue on a per user basis. That's where "Mobile Notes" comes in.

In other words, the Mobile Notes client is not a client. It's someone else's microbrowser and SMS client burned into some cell phone's flash RAM. Actually, this is a pretty sweet deal for Lotus, imagine if you could charge someone money to use a device they already own to access content that already exists in a corporate Domino system. It's brilliant, actually. I wish I'd thought of it.

But seriously, it's a great idea to be able to get email on my phone when I'm 30,000 feet in the air. Of course if you've ever tried writing an email on your phone you'll know that this technology has some way to go. Nonetheless, this technology continues the pattern of businesses leveraging technology to accelerate the business process in the same way that email accelerates the business process compared to paper mail. Companies can sharpen their competitive edge by leveraging MSD and Mobile Notes to streamline communications and enhance their responsiveness to customers, market trends, and competitors.

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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>.

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