

Nutra-Flo drives global business with robust collaboration platform

Overview

■ **The Challenge**

Relying on e-mail when working with teams around the world resulted in slow response times and version-control errors on business-critical documents

■ **Why IBM?**

IBM offers a robust, easy-to-manage collaboration platform that transforms the inbox into an integrated workspace and offers innovative team collaboration

■ **The Solution**

IBM® Lotus Notes®, Lotus® Domino® 8 and Lotus Sametime® software integrated with IBM Lotus Quickr™ team places creates a complete global collaboration environment

■ **Key Benefits**

- *Lotus Quickr team spaces help increase accuracy and efficiency by means of centralized document libraries and version control while reducing the impact of large attachments on e-mail systems*
- *Lotus Notes and Domino 8 collects collaborative applications in a single customizable interface and conveniently groups communications, helping to improve staff productivity*
- *Built-in RSS and blogging capabilities provide cutting-edge communication tools for richer, more timely information access and sharing*
- *Lotus Sametime instant messaging and Web conferencing help increase productivity*



It's no secret that we are what we eat—but what about our crops and livestock? Since 1928, Iowa's Nutra-Flo Company has developed high-performance nutrients to make sure distributors, agridealers, farmers and ranchers around the world are feeding crops and animals only the best. Supported by continuous research, the company's cutting-edge products help its customers remain competitive in an ever-changing marketplace.

Although the company's Nutra-Flo Protein and Biotech Products division has a reputation for quality and innovation that extends around the world, its IT systems were ill-prepared for the demands of global business. "As a medium-sized company, IT wasn't a focus area beyond our own office,"

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*—Eric Lohry
President
Nutra-Flo Company*

Key Components

Software

- IBM Lotus Notes and Domino 8
 - IBM Lotus Sametime
 - IBM Lotus Quickr
-

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explains Nutra-Flo President Eric Lohry. “But growing relationships with overseas distributors made it obvious that we needed tools that could help us turn partnerships into real collaboration.”

Collaboration is especially critical to Nutraferma, the company’s latest and most extensive joint venture. Nutra-Flo is working with Genebiotech, a Korean biotechnology firm, to create a high-tech soy facility in North Sioux City, Iowa—the first of its kind in the United States. “Relying on e-mail to communicate with the Asia Pacific region meant a lot of wasted time—they were asleep while we were awake and vice versa,” says Lohry. “We needed to increase productivity with a more effective way to work with a dispersed team.”

Nutra-Flo also found itself mired in document management challenges resulting from its new global project. Product registration issues and planning for the Nutraferma plant necessitated lengthy trips overseas and generated vast amounts of paperwork. “The volume of technical, construction, registration and sales information was overwhelming,” says Lohry. “Without a central place to store, exchange and search these crucial documents, we risked version control issues and expensive project slowdowns.”

Lotus Notes and Domino 8 fosters collaboration inside and outside the office

Lohry and his team saw an upgrade to Lotus Notes and Domino 8 software as an opportunity to give Nutra-Flo the latest tools for supporting global collaboration. Lotus Notes and Domino 8 can help Nutra-Flo staff work more productively, access information more easily and collaborate more effectively than ever before.

The Lotus Notes 8 client features a new customizable interface, which can boost productivity by giving Nutra-Flo team members access to many of the tools they need in one place. In addition to integrated instant messaging, the new release of Lotus Notes includes Lotus Symphony productivity tools for creating documents,

spreadsheets and presentations. There is also tight integration with document management capabilities. Improved communications management allows users to group and quickly find all interactions with a given person, whether they occurred via e-mail, instant message, calendar entry or shared document. “The conversation threads add a whole new level of organization to my inbox,” says Lohry. “Less time spent searching allows me to spend more time on action items.”

With Lotus Notes and Domino 8 software, Nutra-Flo can now better support its workers regardless of location. Team members on the manufacturing plant floor or those who fly regularly to Asia Pacific, Europe or South America can use RIM BlackBerry mobile devices to access critical business information and stay in touch with headquarters. “Beyond remote access to information, Lotus Notes 8 saves us time by allowing us to easily synchronize contacts from three different address books—a process that we used to do manually,” adds Lohry. “I can now connect with my team from anywhere business takes me.”

Web 2.0 features incorporated into Lotus Notes and Domino 8—including RSS feeds and blogs—offer Nutra-Flo employees cutting-edge communication tools for richer, more timely information access and sharing among teammates. In the future, Nutra-Flo could use these capabilities to better communicate with customers and partners. For the Nutraferma project, the company is using an internal blog to track project status; workers can simply read recent posts to get the latest news. Nutraferma is also syndicating the blog’s content via RSS feeds, enabling team members to get updates automatically by subscribing to the feed and using the RSS reader built into the Lotus Notes client. The RSS feeds and internal blogs help eliminate mass mailings and the recipient list maintenance they require. “We easily customized the standard Lotus Domino blog template to create a unique communications tool, and we didn’t need IT support to do it,” says Lohry. “We’ve even extended that capability to external blogs that allow us to interact directly

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Real-time communication enables close interaction for globally dispersed team

Lotus Notes 8 software features an integrated Lotus Sametime client for instant messaging and presence awareness, and licenses for the full Lotus Sametime product mean Nutra-Flo can take advantage of Lotus Sametime Web conferencing. With these capabilities, Nutra-Flo can stay in contact with its Korean partners without the time delay issues of e-mail and can communicate more effectively in between face-to-face meetings. Plus, instant messages are now saved within the e-mail database, so users can view chat histories from within the Lotus Notes 8 client.

“Instead of wasting time watching my inbox or leaving a voice mail, I can simply click to see if a team member is present online and then open an instant messaging session to connect,” explains Lohry. “Plus, team members can carry this capability with them on mobile devices, so they can stay connected with colleagues via instant messaging even when in the field. For example, Sametime enabled me to check on production issues with the plant while I was on a recent trip to Thailand.” With Lotus Sametime Web conferencing, Nutra-Flo can save travel costs to the Asia Pacific region. “Web conferencing allows us to stay in touch with partners around the world without being there in person, and owning this capability means we don’t have to rely on an external service,” says Lohry.

Lotus Quickr offers central global resource for critical documents

Nutra-Flo chose IBM Lotus Quickr software to centralize documents related to the Nutraferma project and facilitate easier management of international product registration and shipping processes—while freeing information trapped in e-mail silos. Instead of e-mailing files back and forth or working from a local version on the desktop, users store common files in Web-based Lotus Quickr software. Integration with

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Lotus Notes allows large e-mail attachments to be added directly from e-mail, which can then be replaced by links to materials in the Lotus Quickr content libraries that lead recipients directly to the most up-to-date file.

Now Nutra-Flo employees and partners can download and upload files on demand, rather than waiting for an employee or business partner to e-mail the files. This saves the company time while providing a secure method for retrieving documents. Eliminating large attachments can also help Nutra-Flo relieve the storage strain on e-mail systems and reduce the need to back up redundant documents spread across multiple inboxes.

Because Nutra-Flo team members around the world develop documents that can reach up to 30 revisions, adopting a more efficient data management system was a top concern. With Lotus Quickr software, team members no longer risk working on an incorrect version or losing progress in an e-mail mishap—comments and changes by the entire team are captured in a central location. “Lotus Quickr has been indispensable to the development of our global operations,” says Lohry. “The Nutraferma project manager can post updated files from the construction site and partners in Korea can respond immediately. We finally have a truly collaborative work environment.”

When connection speeds are slow or non-existent, work doesn’t have to stop—Nutra-Flo team members can access Quickr content using Lotus Domino Off-Line Services technology. “I was recently able to use Quickr offline in an Asian customer’s office to locate a presentation, which had been updated in the United States while I was asleep,” says Lohry. “All I needed to do was grab my laptop and I was ready to show the most recent version of the file without needing to connect again.”



Key to supporting Nutra-Flo's global efforts, Lotus Quickr is easy to set up and extend to partners around the world. "In a matter of days, we had set up Lotus Quickr to help us deal with global product registration," says Lohry. "After sending simple instructions to a representative in China, we were up and running on the other side of the world—without IT support or any phone calls at all."

Expanded capacity for collaboration fuels global success

Ultimately, Lohry feels that Lotus software helps Nutra-Flo focus more on its core business: the research that will drive product development and growth at home and abroad. "We no longer have to worry about how we collaborate," he says. "With Lotus collaboration capabilities, we can better harness the value-added information that comes as a result of collaboration—and we can continue to stay on the cutting-edge of our industry."

For more information

For more information on IBM Lotus, IBM Lotus Sametime and IBM Lotus Quickr software, please contact your IBM sales representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit ibm.com/software/lotus

For more information on Nutra-Flo Protein and Biotech Products, visit nfprotein.com

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