

THE VIEW

How Lotus Notes and Domino Professionals Succeed™

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The next level of IBM Notes and Domino administration: How to streamline and automate administration processes

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How to streamline and automate administration processes



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Despite the new enhancements that accompany every new release of IBM Lotus Notes and Domino, there are still various functional gaps regarding administration processes. The Domino Administrator client remains simply a tool that administrators use to “get things done.” What is needed instead is a process-oriented environment that allows them to implement and support corporate user and group management constraints, as well as to meet increasing security restrictions.

As an infrastructure management expert, BCC has accomplished numerous projects in this area and now offers a comprehensive range of tools for administrators to elegantly solve typical Notes and Domino administration problems. Using tools from BCC, you can streamline all relevant processes, automate maintenance tasks, and establish audit-proof documentation, all of which results in enhanced security and compliance — and reduced costs. Most importantly, it eases everyday hassles for administrators.

Domino administrator vs. the real world

In addition to governing the infrastructure, administrators must also deal with organizational issues. They are forced to play the “telephone game” with users and requestors, depending on inconsistent or imprecise task descriptions. In addition, the same tasks don’t always produce the same

outcomes, resulting in a lack of process reliability: It’s difficult to prove who is to blame if something goes wrong.

Native Notes and Domino provide limited documentation and traceability of the administrator’s work. Monitoring administration tasks within the AdminP database is quite time-consuming. Auxiliary monitoring methods, such as manually created log files or printed and archived e-mail requests, do not provide reliable and analyzable documentation that can satisfy a strict compliance audit.

Security weak spots — about being the potential bad guy

The need to equip administrators with high access levels results in a single point of administration, which may potentially undermine system security. It also complicates adherence to ID management standards (e.g., standards based on the “four eyes” principle¹), as a single person controls sensitive personal data. Several concerns stem from this single-point administration practice:

- Because the system identifies a Notes user by the certificate within the ID file (unlocked by the password), whoever holds the user ID

¹ The “four eyes” principle means that two people independently approve a particular transaction or task.

and password can fully take over the ID owner’s identity.

- The common practice of not protecting the server ID with a password opens the floodgates to misuse, giving trespassers the ability to create “mirror servers” with the same name. This allows manipulations to hosted applications and data without any chance to track the changes made. It is then difficult for administrators to prove that they’ve kept out of mischief.
- Administrators can make undocumented changes to Domino server configuration documents — for example, adding a user name to the “Full access administrators” field or modifying the members of the LocalDomainAdmins group.

Workload — or the dream of a 28-hour day

A single point of administration results in a heavy administrative workload, creating a bottleneck and leading to delayed response times. It’s often not possible to redistribute these responsibilities — the processing of routine work still requires the administrator’s technical skills. A large number of single-step administrative tasks and lack of support for communication processes ties up costly human resources. These factors definitely lower administrator motivation.

BCC's approach to Notes and Domino administration

More and more companies realize that they need additional solutions to manage all their administration tasks. Implementing separate solutions for specific application areas — as provided by dozens of IBM business partners — may solve certain problems, but this approach does not necessarily ensure the improvement of overall administration processes.

To optimize Notes and Domino administration, organizations need to think in terms of processes, not available functions. BCC pursues a process-oriented approach and provides a range of interlinked infrastructure management tools (see sidebar).

BCC provides an administration framework that goes beyond simple technical integration of single tools. Implementing continuous processes (e.g., enabling new users to work with their notebooks) for all administration entities (Domino Directory users and groups, databases, and Notes clients) allows organizations to tap into the full potential of process automation, resulting in cost savings and enhanced security. BCC's product philosophy includes the following principles:

- **Establish process reliability through standards and documentation:** Implementing sufficiently defined organizational processes using the appropriate BCC tools prevents flawed results due to human error and relieves skilled personnel from the need to perform routine jobs. Since every tool is equipped with a seamless logging component, administrators

can easily meet the demands of regulators.

- **Close security gaps:** BCC's tools are designed to maximize system and process security. Reducing the need for manual actions and enabling the "four eyes" principle prevents fraudulent use. Only giving access to those who need it results in the strengthening of system security. For administrators, this means no longer being labelled a potential bad guy.
- **Optimize administration through automated processes:** BCC's tools observe predefined standards for administration tasks and lock in the steps of the processes so they are always performed the same way; as a result, the administrator no longer has to carry out his work manually. Shifting administration tasks to responsible people within the organization can also lessen an administrator's load. User management processes are especially good candidates for shifting, as BCC's automated tools are valuable for enabling user self-service and workflow-based processing.

About BCC

BCC is a leading supplier of IBM Lotus Notes and Domino management tools. Based near Frankfurt, Germany, BCC has helped its customers for 12 years to increase security, automate administration, and reduce the total cost of ownership (TCO) of their IBM Lotus Domino infrastructures, following the motto "SAVE, SECURE, AUTOMATE."

Approximately 600 customers, with more than 3 million users, trust BCC's products. BCC's tools portfolio is divided into three product segments:

System:

- **BCC_AdminTool** — User and group management
- **BCC_DBTool** — Database management
- **BCC_DominoProtect** — Server security

Client:

- **BCC_Zip** — Attachment management using ZIP compression
- **BCC_ClientGenie** — Notes client management

Communication:

- **BCC_Charon** — Pure Domino-based fax and Short Message Service (SMS) server
- **BCC-MailProtect** — E-mail management, secure server-based messaging, and compliance with Pretty Good Privacy (PGP) and Secure/Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions (S/MIME) standards

Conclusion

BCC's tools help organizations reduce administration efforts by optimizing processes, relieving skilled personnel from performing routine jobs, and maximizing system and process security.

To explore BCC's offerings, please visit www.bcc.biz.

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