



Enabling Enterprise Communication in the Linux Environment

Enterprise Groupware Solutions (EGS) can greatly enhance the level of inter- and intra-organisation communication. Use this guide to find out the groupware solutions that work on Linux.

Groupware is a computer-based collaborative software that helps users work co-operatively by sharing information. It allows people in an enterprise to participate in three broad classes of activity—communication, collaboration and coordination.

While communication involves information and data sharing, collaboration seeks to build and

develop a shared understanding in an organisation. Such teamwork is put to order by proper coordination. Workflow, task delegation and notifications during shared document

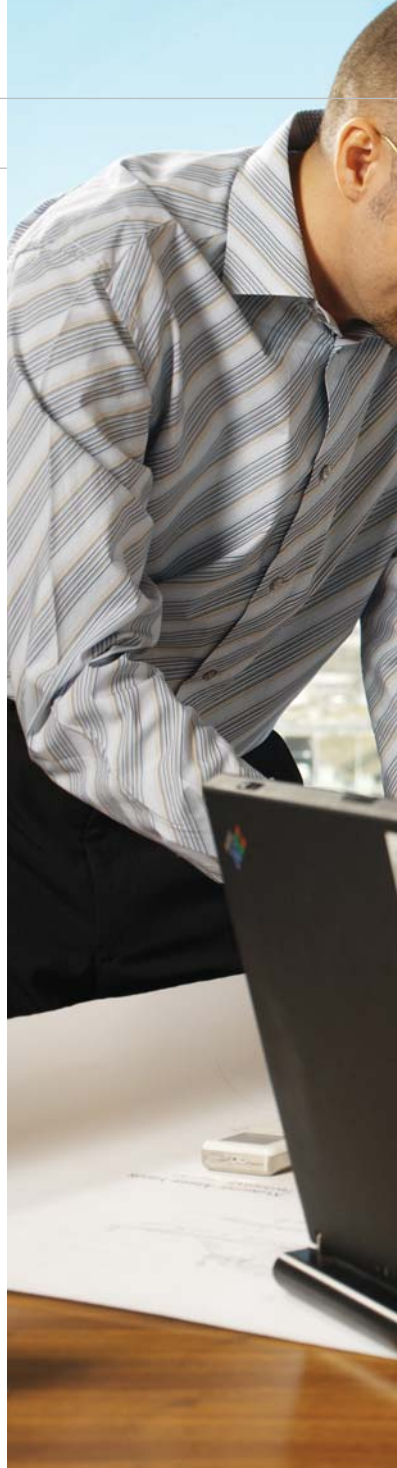
authoring are examples of coordination activities. E-mails, discussion forums, instant messaging, blogs, etc, facilitate workflow building.

Enterprise groupware

Kalyan Sridhar, general manager, WPLC (workplace, portal and collaboration software), IBM India, explains, “A ‘knowledge accident’ occurs when two or more people get together by chance and share some timely and useful information—perhaps a good idea, an update, or an answer to a question. Being an ‘accident,’ there is no infrastructure to properly ‘manage’ the knowledge that emerges under these circumstances. Applying technology to the situation often makes this interchange occur on purpose. It

starts with creating a place and a process in which the right people are brought together with the right things. By linking people, places and things, communities that foster efficient and purposeful collaboration are created. An enterprise groupware solution thereby can improve operational efficiency by bringing people together and getting them to work together.”

Enterprise groupware solutions constitute software systems like e-





mail, calendaring, IM, chat, Wiki, etc.

Linux-based EGS

Realising the need for EGS and the potential of Linux, a number of companies offer groupware solutions for the Linux environment. IBM offers Lotus Notes, and Domino has two platforms for integrated collaboration solutions. IBM has recently ported these offerings on Linux.

Workplace targets the contextual collaboration gap with a modular, flexible architecture that includes IBM's server-managed client, standards-based e-form support, alignment with the Websphere application server, and Java development and design tools.

Tetra Information Services Pvt Ltd also offers implementation, support and customisation on eGroupWare, the free enterprise-ready groupware solution. As Mukul Mahajan, who heads the marketing and sales operations at Tetra, conveys, "eGroupWare enables organisations to manage contacts, appointments, 'to-dos' and application integration with the project manager, time sheet, Wiki, knowledge base, a trouble ticket system and a workflow engine. There are also a couple of other utilities like the message board, headlines, instant



ENTERPRISE GROUPWARE SOLUTIONS

Company Tetra Information Services Pvt. Ltd	Product Name eGroupWare	Price offering Between Rs 30,000 to Rs 80,000 for base implementation and 15 days of customisation support inbuilt
IBM	Lotus Notes and Lotus Domino	Competitive price offerings according to customer requirements. Express offerings for enterprises with less than 1000 employees.
Carizen Software	Rainmail	Is based on a per user licence for an enterprise edition and so depends on the number of users. Offers significant cost savings (50-80 per cent) in comparison to the proprietary solution when comparing the total cost of ownership over a 3-5 year period.
Mithi Software Technology Pvt Ltd	Connect Server	

IBM Lotus Domino server provides is an enterprise-grade collaboration capability that can be deployed as a core e-mail and enterprise scheduling infrastructure (IBM Lotus Domino Messaging Server), as a custom application platform (IBM Lotus Domino Utility Server), or both (IBM Lotus Domino Enterprise Server). With Lotus Notes and Lotus Domino software, you can build and run collaborative solutions, such as project management tracking and customer support processes.

While Lotus Domino 7 server with its new and advanced administrative performance and security features helps lower the total cost of ownership, Tetra's eGroupware comes with a native Web-interface that allows you to access data from any platform. Besides enabling contact management, appointments, 'to-dos,' etc, there is a choice to access the eGroupWare server with a favourite groupware client (Kontact, Evolution, Outlook) and also with a mobile or PDA via SyncML. What is important to note, however, is that eGroupWare is platform-independent with the server running on Linux, Mac, Windows and many other

messenger, etc."

There is also Connect Server, the messaging and collaboration solution from Mithi Software Solutions, which claims to enable the creation of a reliable, scalable and flexible messaging and collaboration infrastructure at an affordable cost, using OSS. It helps the enterprise customer undertake a wider deployment of the messaging and collaboration software (even those with budgetary constraints), resulting

in a faster ROI from larger savings in communication costs and productivity improvement.

Rainmail Groupware, offered by Carizen Software, has webmail, a calendar, address book, infolog and discussion forum. Besides, it also includes a project manager, file manager, bookmarks, headlines, news admin, FTP, chat, a trouble ticket system, knowledge base and polls.

Each of these solutions is unique. The most important feature that the

FREELY AVAILABLE GROUPWARE SOLUTIONS

Here's a sneak peek into the groupware solutions available freely on the Internet.

OpenGroupware.org

OpenGroupware.org is a free collaborative software (groupware) server for multiple clients. Open Source Groupware server integrates the leading open source office suite products and all the leading groupware clients running across all major platforms, and provides access to all functionality and data through open XML-based interfaces and APIs.

eGroupware

eGroupWare is a free enterprise ready groupware software. It manages contacts, appointments, to dos etc. It comes with a native web-interface which allows to access data from any platform. A choice can be exercised to access the eGroupWare server with Kontact, Evolution, Outlook and also with mobile or PDA via SyncML. The server runs on Linux, Mac, Windows and many other operating systems.

Open Exchange Server

The Open-Xchange Collaboration and Integration Server Environment allows to create, store and link appointments, contacts, tasks, email, bookmarks, documents, forums and many more elements and share them with other users. This environment can be accessed via any modern web browser and multiple clients like KDE Kontact, Apples iCAL, Konqueror, Mozilla Calendar, and others, based on open standards and interfaces. This comes in two versions. While Open-Xchange 0.8 is the free downloadable version, Open-Xchange 5 is the paid commercial version.



operating systems.

Mithi Software's Connect Server has been designed to co-exist with other mail server applications such as Microsoft Exchange or IBM's Lotus Notes, and with popular e-mail clients such as Microsoft Outlook, Outlook Express, Novell's Evolutions, Thunderbird, etc. Offering features such as group calendaring, contact management, etc, software supports the POP3, SMTP, IMAP4, HTTP, HTTPS, LDAP protocols, has built-in on-server virus and spam scanning, content filtering, policy control, a firewall, a Web mail client, address books, directory service, etc, and can support multiple domains on a single server. The solution is built using open and flexible system architecture providing sufficient freedom to design an optimal solution for the enterprise's messaging needs.

Rainmail, on the other hand, is a multi-user, Web-based software that works across multiple locations. It is compatible with all browsers like IE, Firefox, Mozilla, Konqueror, Kontact, Evolution and Outlook. Functional with mobile phones and PDAs, it has a flexible Access Control List.

The support offering

That the job of solution providers does not end with equipping enterprises with

the products *per se* is well appreciated by these companies.

Tarun Malaviya, CEO of Mithi Software Technology Pvt Ltd, asserts that the mail and messaging server is also a complex system that needs adequate resource provisioning, maintenance and management for trouble-free performance. Mithi, hence, provides requirements understanding, solution designing and implementation, training, remote management support and upgrades.

Tetra Information Services offers support at three levels—implementation, on-going support and customisation. The support factor becomes even more critical in Tetra's case since their offering is totally support-based. Tetra aims to support customers at all levels of eGroupWare usage.

IBM too dispenses a vast range of online service offerings, toll-free telephonic support and region-specific assistance (via their Software Labs) to their customers.

Carizen offers multi-location support, with its branch offices located at Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Mumbai and New Delhi. Support is provided through e-mail, phone, chat, online and a unique SRTS (Secured Remote Technical support). "Regular updates and upgrades are also provided as a part of our support

offering," states C.R. Sriram, GM, marketing, Carizen Software.

The road ahead

This is just the beginning. To serve the augmented needs of the business today, firms are striving hard to enrich their EGS. As Tarun Malaviya states, "With mobile phones proliferating at a rate faster than PCs in India, the company is planning to enable software to access mail on mobile phones and handheld devices."

Customisation is the order of the day. And Carizen has understood the need very effectively, since it plans to include customised workflow in the next upgrade of its groupware.

As far as Tetra is concerned, they are into the business of providing enterprise ready business stacks on open source to organisations. They look forward to integration with other applications.

IBM plans to come up with Lotus Notes and Domino 7.5 very soon. "With the releases packed with a whole lot of new functions, the emphasis will be clearly on improving productivity and bringing down the total cost of ownership," affirms Sridhar.

Each of these new releases will be easy to upgrade and will provide backward compatibility as well, to protect the investments made on the applications developed on earlier versions of Notes and Domino.

Enterprise groupware solutions help build better communication channels in an organisation. With companies like IBM porting their offerings on the Linux platform, more and more players are expected to port their existing applications and launch newer solutions for this platform. So the current list of Linux-compatible solutions could be much larger by next year. Till then, you could choose from the solutions that are already available and are listed here. **END**

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Web Collab

This is a collaborative web-based system for projects and project management. The software is ideally suited to track multiple projects. Web Collab is released under the General Public License (GPL).



Zimbra

Zimbra Collaboration Suite (ZCS) is a groupware product created by Zimbra Inc. It consists of both server and client components. Two versions of Zimbra are available: a community-supported open-source version, and a commercially supported version ("Zimbra Network") with closed-source enhancements.



—Courtesy: Tetra Information Services