LotusLive Executive Summary

By [Chuck Connell](#)

LotusLive from IBM is a set of software-as-a-service offerings that perform a wide range of business functions, without the need for any local servers. This article gives a summary of the LotusLive products, and discusses whether the price charged is worth what you get.

The two hottest buzzwords in information technology right now are "cloud" and "software as a service". There is considerable confusion between the two. I distinguish them this way:

- Cloud – a distributed, amorphous collection of computing resources available via the Internet.

- Software-as-a-service (SaaS) – a business model for delivering application from the cloud.

LotusLive from IBM is a set of SaaS offerings that address areas typically associated with Lotus products. These items include email, calendaring/scheduling, online meetings, screen sharing, file sharing, project coordination, online discussions, and instant messaging. LotusLive comes in eight flavors, and you generally get more of these features as you pay more.

The LotusLive web site contains a series of tables that present the eight offerings, but I found this display to be unnecessarily confusing. There is no single chart that compares all the flavors on one page so that you can quickly see which you might be interested in. To help solve this confusion, I created my own chart (below) using information drawn from LotusLive's multiple tables. I have arranged the products in approximate order of increasing price. My chart is a summary of the features and pricing, with details glossed over, so be sure to see the LotusLive site for full information.

Name	Features	Price
iNotes	Browser-based webmail	$3/user/month
Notes	Email with Notes client or browser	$5/user/month
Connections	Basic social networking for business, instant messaging, no online meetings	$6/month, unlimited collaborators
Collaboration + Webmail	Basic social networking, instant messaging, webmail, no online meetings	$7/month, unlimited collaborators
Engage	Expanded social networking, instant messaging, online meetings	$8/user/month, unlimited collaborators, up to 200 meeting attendees, all internal attendees must subscribe $46/month, unlimited collaborators, up to 15 meeting attendees
Suite	Expanded social networking, instant messaging, online meetings, webmail	$10/user/month, all internal users must subscribe
Meetings	Online meetings	$6/user/month, all internal attendees must subscribe $39/month, up to 15 attendees
Events	Online meetings, meeting event management	$79/month, up to 1000 attendees

If you already have an email solution, one of the most attractive options is LotusLive Connections. It mimics many of the features found in the standard (locally installed) Lotus Connections product. I wrote a review of LotusLive Connections with more detailed information.

So is LotusLive worth the price? Remember that with SaaS you keep paying every month, since you never own the servers or software. I believe LotusLive *is* worth its price, if you can accept its main drawback.

Consider a company with 10 employees. LotusLive Suite costs about $100 per person per year. This company would pay about $1000 per year for email, instant messaging, shared contact lists, calendaring, project tracking, online meetings, etc. The question is, "Could a company of this size run their own email and application servers for less than $1000 per year?" The answer is clearly NO. That $1000 has to cover server hardware, floor space, software licenses, and employee (or consultant) time to install and maintain the infrastructure. That is simply impossible for $1000.

What is the drawback to LotusLive? Customizability and control. When you use LotusLive, you accept it as it is.

How about an organization of 100 people? They will pay about $10,000 per year for LotusLive Suite. Could the organization run their own servers and software, to deliver these same services, for this amount? No. This money is less than 10% of a standard full-time IT employee, taking into account office space, benefits, taxes, etc. Could someone run an IT department for 100 people on one-tenth of their time? No chance. And they still have to pay for the server hardware and licenses.

How about a company with 1000 employees? LotusLive Suite will cost about $100,000 per year. This is serious money, but the answer, in my judgment, is the same. There is no way to buy and maintain the needed IT infrastructure for this amount. I have never seen one person alone meet the IT needs of 1000 people, and that does not include paying for servers and software and a room to put them in.

I should add that for an organization of any size, I would expect there to be a "LotusLive administrator" who sets up new accounts, handles training, interfaces to IBM, etc. For 10 employees, this could be a small part of someone's job. For 1000 employees, there may be several LotusLive administrators/troubleshooters. I still maintain that my conclusion holds, even taking into account this expense.

For further information…

www.lotuslive.com -- LotusLive home page
www.lotus.com/ldd/bhwiki.nsf -- Official LotusLive wiki
www.chc-3.com/pub/BeginnersGuideToConnections.pdf -- My article on LotusLive Connections

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