

Legacy to Low-Code: Key Reasons to Migrate from Lotus Notes to Mendix



Once upon a time, Lotus Notes was a pioneer of enterprise software. But as technology evolved, Lotus Notes stalled and better alternatives appeared in droves.

If the time has come for your business to move on from the antiquated product, you're in the right place. Here's a look at the history of Lotus Notes and how Mendix makes moving on easy and efficient.

What is Lotus Notes?

When introduced in the 1980s, Lotus Notes was revolutionary. During its heyday in the 1990s, Lotus Notes was a leading player in the collaboration space, and was one of the first platforms to provide organizations with a way of developing custom apps.

HCL Notes and HCL Domino are the client and server, respectively, of a collaborative client-server software development platform previously sold by IBM, now owned by HCL Software since 2019.

"Notes was Salesforce before Salesforce. It was Dropbox before Dropbox. It was SharePoint before SharePoint. It was Atlassian before Atlassian. It was Zendesk before Zendesk. It was ServiceNow before ServiceNow. It was Workday before Workday. In some implementations, it was even GitHub before GitHub," says [David Gewirtz for ZDNet](#).

At its peak, Lotus Notes was a powerful tool allowing for building applications, but now business needs and corresponding technologies have grown considerably — and using technology that is nearly 30 years old is counterintuitive.

This is why in today's digital and agile world, businesses and organizations that are still using Lotus Notes technology should look for a new modern application development platform.

Lotus Notes today

IBM sold Lotus Notes to HCL Software in 2018. Many of the applications built in the 80s and 90s are still widely used by enterprises today. Some of these apps include:

- Claims handling for insurance companies
- Holiday and paid leave apps
- Timesheet applications
- Asset tracking and management
- Personnel and HR apps
- Expense management
- Purchasing and contracts management

According to HCL Software, "These Applications are still core and proving value to businesses. Since the 90's and still up to today there are **15,000** existing customers and **10 million** Apps using Lotus Notes/Domino."
<https://www.hcltechsw.com/domino>

The majority of the apps still in use are predominantly custom apps used by finance departments due to the fact the finance teams originally used Lotus 1-2-3. These custom apps are business critical and were built by power users, therefore proving difficult to change without the knowledge of these users. Many of these apps were also built to provide additional functionality that core systems couldn't provide or couldn't be changed.

In a twist of irony, these systems themselves are no longer able to support the core systems, mainly because of changes in business processes. Additionally, these legacy apps are out of warranty, and extended support and new licenses are expensive.

Legacy apps like Lotus Notes and the associated infrastructure around them do not meet the modern business needs of cloud, mobile, modern UI/UX, and branding. It's also impossible to guarantee high availability of applications (24/7/365) with high levels of both RPO (Recovery Point Objective) and RTO (Recovery Time Objective) that modern businesses demand.

Legacy migration options

There are a number of options available when considering the next steps for migrating your legacy Lotus Notes applications as you would with any other legacy migration approach. You could replace the application with a commercial SaaS tool and work your processes to fit around the new software, or completely retire the old apps if they are no longer in use or provide no value.

Alternatively, you could take the smart option and redevelop your application in a modern all-in-one low-code application development platform like Mendix.

Why Mendix?

Mendix is a natural fit for migrating your legacy Lotus Notes applications for a number of reasons. With the legacy apps, you are not getting the level of flexibility that businesses need. For example, you don't have the ability to go mobile that modern workforces demand and there is little control over the applications. Another driver for migrating from legacy systems is that with low-code apps you can quickly migrate niche applications for specific local requirements.

Let's look at more reasons below.

Cost

Many of these apps are running on unsupported and outdated Lotus Notes versions. The change of ownership of Lotus Notes and all the associated contracts around this has led to an increase in ownership for technology that is decades old and not providing value for money.

This is further compounded by the fact that Lotus Notes developers are a dwindling minority and expensive to hire. With Mendix you can not only migrate your old Lotus Notes apps (more on this later below), but you can also use Mendix as part of your application development landscape to build other applications for your businesses. Then, you can holistically move away from traditional development methods to a more modern, agile development framework using Mendix.

Poor usability with old technology

After over 30 years, Lotus Notes is facing many challenges. These include and are not limited to:

- Latency and bandwidth issues due to old client/server technology
- An outdated look and feel
- Limited integration capabilities
- Lack of documented APIs
- Lack of governance, and adherence to modern security standards compliancy

Here is how a modern low-code application development platform like Mendix can overcome some of the challenges posed by an outdated legacy system like Lotus Notes:

- Mendix is a high-productivity aPaaS (application platform as a service) environment built on a modern and open cloud-native architecture for scalability and the freedom to deploy to virtually any infrastructure, including Docker, Kubernetes, and Cloud Foundry.
- Migrating to Mendix allows for a much better and consistent use of UI design best practices to build rich user interfaces on a variety of form factors.
- Mendix supports connections to other apps and services through industry-standard interfaces and protocols such as REST, SOAP, JDBC, and OData APIs. The platform offers many solutions for ensuring that new applications can both consume and expose data and services in heterogeneous environments.
- You are also able to provide a much friendly and secure one click log-in experience by integrating your new apps with corporate identity, access management, and SSO technologies such as OKTA.
- Users of the new applications have a much better experiences since the correct and appropriate roles and profiles are applied according to needs. Mendix has implemented an information security management system (ISMS) according to the ISO/IEC 27001 standards as well as comprehensive security and governance features built into the platform itself.
- Mendix provides both web based and mobile (offline) applications.

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Understanding your current Lotus Notes apps estate

With a plethora of legacy Lotus Notes apps in all parts of many organizations, this has led to a situation where most of the apps are on unsupported versions of Lotus Notes. Some of the users don't even know that what they are using is a Lotus Notes application.

Once you have decided to change to a new modern low-code platform, the challenge is figuring out how to complete a successful migration. This can prove challenging and daunting, especially when looking at a full rewrite of applications and the associated costs with doing so.

This is when using Mendix to accelerate the process can be fruitful. By using low-code and Mendix, you have the chance to avoid conducting a bespoke like-for-like replacement of legacy applications. You should take advantage of rewriting the applications as if you are building a new app by capturing user stories, use cases, and scenarios (web, mobile, tablet) to understand reporting and dash-boarding requirements.

Here is also an opportunity to take advantage of the new Workflow feature and low-code process automation. You can also use Mendix Data Hub by enabling integration of available data sources from the different applications into your newly migrated Lotus Notes apps.

Summary

Legacy applications need not be a problem or a cause for concern since you can easily migrate your Lotus Notes estate to a single modern, intuitive system, rather than a plethora of different COTS and bespoke applications.

Mendix makes it easy to involve the users of the apps in the build process to drive a successful migration. This gives you the ability to easily remove redundant and legacy processes and functionality. By reviewing the process and close association of the users, you can also inherently improve data quality by adding validations where needed.

Once you have decided which apps you want to migrate, you can shorten the process further by creating a number of pre-built templates and components featuring security, UI, UX as a base line for all apps.

As said earlier, this is a chance to make massive improvements to the legacy applications by adding much needed functional and incremental changes when creating new apps in Mendix which are fit for purpose for today.

As one of our customers - a leading global pharma company who migrated nearly 30 apps from Lotus Notes summarized, the newly migrated application increased engagement by improved reporting and tracking, but most importantly, it was mobile.

"After the application went live, sales reps in the field were sending thank you emails to the team, saying that in the app's previous version, they would have to do work in the evening or on their way back home. Now, they can do it in real time and it's much easier and simpler to use."

Next Steps:

Hopefully you will find this info useful in deciding the next steps in migrating your legacy Lotus Notes applications. If you are looking for a modern agile, cloud native and scalable platform to build your new and rebuild your legacy applications, then you have come to the right place.

Please contact us for a more in-depth discussion around how we can help with this.

And don't forget to check out the additional material available below.

How Continental Replaced Lotus Notes and Domino with Low-Code

Boston Globe Standardizes on the Mendix App Platform

Lotus Notes Migration: 4 Reasons to Migrate Lotus Notes Apps to the Cloud