



## Lotus Domino Smiles for the Camera

**A**s IBM continues to tailor their software solution offerings to the Small-and-Medium Business (SMB) market place, there may be no better software investment for these customers than Lotus Domino. This product offers a multi-platform foundation for collaboration and e-Business, providing solutions from messaging to Web-based applications. During these current economic conditions, companies are only willing to invest in solutions that provide a quick return on investment, as customers want a large "bang for their buck". This is especially true for a photography studio located in Plymouth, Michigan: Special Moments Photography.

Patrick Abel, President of Special Moments Photography, understands the importance of providing his employees with the appropriate tools to do their jobs effectively as well as providing his clients with timely information and personalized service. This understanding has made Special Moments one of the most successful wedding photography services in the metropolitan Detroit area.

As a company known for its high quality of work and service, Special Moments wanted to automate several processes that were essential to the photography studio's everyday business. There were several tasks that were done manually which relied on customer service personnel to successfully accomplish. Special Moments envisioned a system that automatically responded to certain actions using advanced workflow technology and, at the same time, they wanted collaboration between their photographers and clients with the Web being the central meeting point. Patrick Abel consulted Datanational Corporation, and after reviewing these requirements, Lotus Domino was the best platform to develop a solution that would meet Special Moments' vision and business requirements.

*"We're creative people, not IT folks, and the Domino solution lets us focus on the warm and fuzzy side of life, which is vital in our business."  
Patrick Abel*

### **Special Moments' existing system included:**

- An Intel-based main system that handled all of their customer contract information written in a custom Microsoft Access application. This system stored all of the customer data such as contact information, event details and the specific services being contracted to the customer.
- Eudora and Goldmine were being used for email and calendaring, which offered no integration to their system and also caused severe challenges in creating workflow applications that were required to achieve Special Moments' goals.
- Special Moments also had several processes that were done manually such as sales follow-ups, payment notifications, and many other activities that included contacting customers via the phone. These processes needed to be managed and delivered by an automated system.

### **About Special Moments Photography**

Founded in 1992, Special Moments Photography is one of Detroit's most successful specialty photography firms, doing about 200 weddings per year. According to the company President and founder, Patrick Abel, they are a group of photographers who specialize in wedding photography that reflects the newlyweds' love, hopes, and dreams.

### **Special Moments wanted to conquer several challenges, including:**

- Providing photographers in the field with timely information about their scheduled events and clients. This includes up-to-date customer contact information and event details, with accessibility 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

- Improving the operational efficiency of manual processes such as sending automated email notifications on deadlines and payment due dates. By automating the types of tasks, the Special Moments' staff is able to focus on other activities to achieve higher customer satisfaction and to market to more prospects.
- Requiring a system that the photography studio could tailor and build onto in the future as new requirements surfaced. Without having a large IT budget, a phased approach was necessary. It was important to have an infrastructure that would allow them to add new functionality when a new requirement became necessary and cost effective.

Datanational implemented a standard Domino Application Server with a range of IBM Lotus Domino web-based and workflow applications. The Lotus Domino Application software allowed Datanational to design and create a high-value business solution that included workflow, content management, and highly flexible security. Datanational was able to leverage Special Moments' existing system and infrastructure, where Lotus Domino served as a web-enabled front-end application which was fully integrated with the back-end Microsoft Access database and retrieves contract information on request.

**Key benefits of the new solution include:**

- Critical information about customers' and event details are more widely available to photographers as they are able to access this data at any time.
- Improved customer responsiveness and streamlined business processes that usually took several days to complete are now automatically managed by the system.
- Customers are able to view contract information and various details of their scheduled occasion. They are also able to communicate directly to the studio or to their photographer.
- Several customized reports have been developed to provide detailed information to management regarding the status of existing projects.

The implementation of this project has provided Special Moments with higher customer service and increased project bookings.

**Why Lotus Domino?**

- Users may increase collaboration and human interaction by bringing people together with messaging, calendaring and scheduling applications, while lowering the total cost of a messaging and collaboration infrastructure.
- Lotus Notes and Domino provide a foundation for future, more complex applications and for incorporating instant messaging and Palm integration.
- Lotus Domino is platform independent. If Special Moments decides to migrate off the Intel platform and move to a mid-range system like the IBM iSeries, they wouldn't need to make any changes to the code or programs for the transition.

**Why Datanational?**

- Datanational is a twenty-five year veteran in the computer systems industry specializing in delivering expertise, creativity, vision, and innovative business solutions to companies throughout North America.
- Datanational is a company that provides "turn-key" solutions. We understand the importance of providing a solution that fully integrates with your existing systems.
- Datanational has satisfied clients who will share their success stories with you, and we will provide you with a list of references upon your request.

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