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# Open Source Exchange Rival in Works

by [Stuart Zipper](#)

Friday May 4th, 2001

Next month two-year-old WorkSpot will launch a Linux-based suite, built mainly out of open source code, aimed directly at Microsoft Exchange and Lotus Notes.

WorkSpot hopes to sell the thing, simply called Groupware, to ASPs and eventually corporate users. It estimates its total cost of ownership to be about 80% lower than the cost of either Exchange or Notes.

Groupware runs on Linux servers but on the client side users can use any operating system with a browser and proprietary programs such as Microsoft Outlook, Netscape Messenger and Eudora. Alternately, they can access Groupware via the Internet or any other IP network using standard VNC display protocol.

WorkSpot has included code for wireless access to Groupware via a SOAP-based wireless proxy server that supports Palm PDAs and other wireless devices.

Pretty much all the pieces needed to build an Exchange-like collaborative workgroup solution, including such essentials as e-mail, group calendaring, shared web folders and contact management are already available for Linux in open source, says WorkSpot CEO Kathy Giori. The trick, which is what WorkSpot is doing, is to write the glueware to meld them together.

The list of open source code that WorkSpot is using should be familiar to almost anyone in the Linux and open source



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community. It starts with the ubiquitous Apache web server. LDAP is provided by OpenLDAP, e-mail by Imap, the WEBDAV implementation is MODAV, calendaring uses the Net iCAL libraries from the Reefknot project on SourceForge and the e-mail web client is Squirrelmail. Various open source tool kits and libraries complete the picture.

Groupware is designed to run on Red Hat 7.0, a decision made solely because of Red Hat's market share Giori says, but could be easily tinkered with to run on almost any standard Linux distribution.

WorkSpot will open source any improvements it makes to the open source software it's using. However, it's not going to open source the glue and configuration code that melds the pieces into a coherent competitor to Exchange and Notes. "If we gave that away we'd have no business model left," Giori says.

It's a lesson Linux companies are learning.

Barring disaster, Giori says Groupware ought to move from its current 0.5 beta version to a 1.0 release at a rapid pace and be finished in June. The only key piece not finished is web-based calendaring, and that should be done in another week.

The kit has been going through alpha test at VA Linux, the Stanford and Palo Alto Veteran's Administration Hospitals and the state of Oregon. It's also being tested at WorkSpot financier Elevation Capital LLC and by FreeStandards.org, which is doing the Linux Standards Base project. Giori says the company is adding beta testers.

Giori plans to charge service providers, VARs and corporate end users per user/per month fees, mirroring the fees that service providers charge their customers. She figures that end users will wind up paying a base fee of about \$25 a month per user. The price will include the use of WorkSpot's AppSpot application server, which also uses VNC industry standard remote viewing protocol and competes with Citrix and Tarantella and hence with Microsoft's own RDP protocol. AppSpot web-enables any Linux or Unix program. End users will pay whatever additional fees are charged for any apps that run on top of AppSpot/Groupware.

In contrast to the projected cost of Workplace, Giori cites research papers that show the average cost of deploying Microsoft Exchange or Lotus Notes inside a corporation is about \$125 a user per month by the time the cost of software, hardware, support and IT staff is included.

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## *Newsflashes:*

### **CodeWeavers Exploits Wine To Take on Citrix, Tarantella Crowd**

Tue, 22 May 2001

Wine, the open source project to make Windows applications run on Linux, is now slated to finally reach the 1.0 stage sometime this summer. Like a fine vintage, Wine has been aging in the barrel since 1993.

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### **Novell Staff Face Layoffs Again, Sources Say**

Mon, 21 May 2001

Novell is expected to lay off as much as 20% of its staff starting perhaps as soon as tomorrow, the day it reports the results of its most recent quarter, according to sources close to the company.

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Fri, 20 April 2001

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