

Adobe To Shut Down LCCS, Customers Badly Affected

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After several recent announcements around Adobe's LiveCycle platform, it may not come as a surprise to some that the LiveCycle Collaboration Service (formerly Cocomo, formerly Flash Collaboration Service) will be

shut down at the end of 2012. What may be a surprise however is the relatively short notice that Adobe is giving existing customers and a total lack of a migration path, leaving many people in a real tight spot.

Remember that LCCS is a hosted collaboration service, effectively cloud based, that allows developers to build real-time communications right into their Flex applications. The work that has gone into LCCS is impressive, and the platform offers a range of great features such as room provisioning APIs, live and audio and video communications (both over RTMFP and RTMP) and even screensharing capabilities (but let's not warm that topic up again...).

Put yourself into the shoes of an existing LCCS customer who has made a significant investment into the product - they are pretty much on their own going forward. It is no mean feat to engineer a similar service on top of FMS (a suggested migration path by the LCCS Product Manager), irrespective of the license fees that FMS would attract. Says one poster on the Adobe forum: "Companies may very well go out of business because of this decision. It's a pretty shameful act."

Make no mistake, FMS is not a straight forward alternative if you are used to LCCS, and suggesting so only confuses people. This is already evident in the forums where one user asks: "Will you be offering the code/installation instructions so that we can get this set up on FMS?"

Clearly the complexities of building a large scale collaborative application on top of FMS is not being grasped by some. There is no way to simply 'install' an LCCS app on FMS. Instead you are looking at weeks, more likely months, of engineering effort.

Some of my readers may know that a large part of my time is spent developing and maintaining Scribblar.com, a live collaboration app built on top of Flex and FMS. When LCCS first launched I carefully considered whether or not to port my product away from FMS to LCCS - I decided to stick with FMS. With hindsight that was the right decision - had I ported to LCCS then Adobe would just have introduced major costs and headaches at best, or killed my entire product at worst. What a mess.

I do need to add a few words about screensharing since forum users have asked about it. The screensaver add-on for Flash Player is not simply a feature of LCCS, it also requires Flash Player hooks to work. This means that even if Adobe was to open source LCCS (which they have stated already they will not do) you would not simply have screensharing features magically appear and work with FMS. No doubt this could be done with if Adobe wanted to make it happen, but I doubt very much that they have any interest in this.

Remember we have been asking for screensharing support for FMS for more than 10(!) years (remember my post about [vendor lockout?](#)). Yet FMS has stood still since its 1.0

launch as far as real-time communication features are concerned - instead time and effort was spent on the LCCS side to build an entire new platform plus component set, something we have not had in FMS since FCS 1.0.

I am gutted about the missed opportunities and I feel sorry for those businesses affected by the LCCS shutdown. If there is one positive takeaway from this then it should be the lesson of **caveat emptor** when building a business around a hosted service. If reliance on a single provider can make or break your product or service then it is time to make some backup plans.

Have you been affected by the LCCS shut down? What are your plans going forward? Please leave a comment below.