How do I use the dropbox.com Dropbox on the unified Linux systems?

Scope

This document provides information about using Dropbox from dropbox.com on the Unified Linux Systems running Red Hat Enterprise Linux 7 that are managed by the School of Informatics, Computing, and Engineering. There are other standalone Linux systems in the school that are not part of the unified configuration and, therefore, this document does not apply to those systems. If you have any questions about Linux systems within the school, please contact us.

The dropbox service is no longer supported and doesn't work on Red Hat Enterprise Linux 6 operating system. Dropbox also no longer supports Red Hat Enterprise Linux 7 but there is a published hack that lets it work on RHEL7 and Centos7.

Local vs Networked Storage

It is critical that you understand one key issue related to running dropbox on the unified linux systems. When you log into one of these systems, you get a network mounted home directory that follows you around on all of the unified linux systems. When you run dropbox, it wants to sync your dropbox files into your ~/Dropbox directory which lives in your networked home directory. The possible disadvantage of this is that you have a relatively small disk quota on the network file server and you may be at risk of hitting your quota if you have a lot of data on dropbox. So, you can decide whether you want to use local or remote storage for your Dropbox folder:

- **Networked Storage** - With this mode of operation, your ~/Dropbox folder lives in your networked home directory and follows you around on all of the unified linux systems. The files synced from dropbox will consume disk quota in your network home directory and hitting your disk quota may result in dropbox behaving badly. We do not recommend this mode of operation if you have a lot of usage on dropbox (eg. multiple GB of storage).
- **Local Storage** - The alternative to Networked Storage is for ~/Dropbox to live on the local disk on your workstation. This way it does not consume your disk quota but then it is only accessible from that one workstation.

No matter which storage method you choose it is critical that you not run the dropbox daemon on multiple systems. If you do run it on multiple systems, all of which are sharing a common home directory, you are going to get very unexpected (read: bad) results and it could result in data corruption.

Networked Storage Setup

If you have decided to go with the use of networked storage for your ~/Dropbox directory, please follow these steps:

1. **Dropbox installation** - Please contact us to have dropbox installed on your system. Please include the name of the workstation you are using in your request.

2. **Start the Dropbox Daemon** - If you have never used dropbox before on the SICE systems, you will first need to install and start the dropbox daemon. You can do this using the -i flag:

   ```
   dropbox start -i
   ```

   When prompted about installing the daemon, just click ‘OK’. Once the dropbox daemon is started, you will be asked to log in to your dropbox account. If you receive a prompt asking you for the root password, just click Cancel.

   After this initial setup, you will start the dropbox daemon without the -i flag:

   ```
   dropbox start
   ```
3. **Using Dropbox** - You now have a folder named `Dropbox` that you can use. Files copied to or modified in that directory are automatically synced with your Dropbox on the server. You can check the status of Dropbox by running:

```bash
dropbox status
```

The status values you may see are "Up to date" (all systems are go), "Dropbox isn't running" (you need to run `dropbox start`), or one of several status values indicating it is syncing with Dropbox (eg. "Indexing...", or "Downloading file list...").

4. **Stopping Dropbox** - When you are done using Dropbox, you can stop the service by running:

```bash
dropbox stop
```

Please note that you will need to restart Dropbox by running `dropbox start` whenever you log into the workstation where you have Dropbox installed.

---

**Local Storage Setup**

If you want to use local storage then you can do that as follows:

1. Please contact us and ask for a local Dropbox directory and to have Dropbox installed. Please include the name of the workstation you are using in your request. We will create a directory on the local system named `/home/username/Dropbox` for you to use.
2. Do the same config as above for the Networked storage
3. Stop Dropbox by running "dropbox stop"
4. Move all the files from `~/.Dropbox` to `/home/username/Dropbox` and create a symbolic link:

```bash
mv ~/.Dropbox/* /home/username/Dropbox
mv ~/.Dropbox/.d* /home/username/Dropbox
rmdir ~/.Dropbox
ln -s /home/username/Dropbox ~/Dropbox
```

5. Restart Dropbox with "dropbox start" and verify that "dropbox status" returns a status of "Up to date"