



WHAT IS IT AND HOW CAN MY BUSINESS BENEFIT FROM USING IT?

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INTRODUCTION.

You you're a business owner or key decision maker that's unfamiliar with SharePoint and how it can benefit your organisation, then you are not alone. Our latest article provides you with a general overview of SharePoint and how it can be used to empower your business.

MICROSOFT SHAREPOINT IN A NUTSHELL.

It's quite difficult to explain SharePoint in a nutshell because it's such a versatile platform that can be used for SO many different business activities.

Fundamentally, Microsoft SharePoint is a browser-based collaboration and document/data management software solution that's designed to connect all of your employees and business resources together. SharePoint allows everyone to collaborate and synchronise daily business tasks and responsibilities from a centralised software platform.

Typically, SharePoint is used for one or more of the following purposes:

Collaboration

Customer Relationship Management

Document Management

Marketing

Project Management

Human Resources

Business Intelligence

Website integration/management

To use SharePoint, all you need is a web browser (Internet explorer, Firefox, Chrome etc.) or access to the dedicated Microsoft SharePoint mobile app.

SHAREPOINT ONLINE AND SHAREPOINT SERVER OPTIONS.

SharePoint online is installed and managed on a hosted server in Microsoft datacenters and accessed over the internet. SharePoint online is included with Office 365 for Business, Business Premium, and Enterprise E3 subscriptions.

SharePoint server is installed and maintained on your company's network infrastructure. All features and applications are accessed over your local network instead of over an internet connection.

SharePoint Hybrid is a combination of SharePoint online and SharePoint server.

A BREAKDOWN OF SHAREPOINTS MOST POPULAR USES.

DOCUMENT ORGANISATION.

Businesses use SharePoint to store documents in a shared space that can be accessed through a web browser. Your Administrator can setup different levels of permissions for users to access specific documents, in addition to setting up document modification alerts that are sent via email.

COMPANY INTRANET.

SharePoint can be used to establish a company intranet where your employees can login to locate a variety of information such as scheduled tasks, announcements, the latest news, and more. Each SharePoint site is customisable to meet the individual needs of every department.

Again, Administrators can set different levels of access so everyone can access specific information they need such as ongoing project status, customer history, employee performance, and more.

IMPROVING COLLABORATION.

Companies are using SharePoint to improve employee collaboration and interaction.

With SharePoint, you can login securely from any device and instantly have access to information such as scheduled tasks, project status, co-worker location, calendars, documents, and more.

SharePoint simplifies collaboration by providing tools that are just as effective as the communication and interaction of workers located in a single office space.

COMPANY WEBSITES.

In addition, SharePoint can also be used build and manage an external website for your company. The intuitive Content Management System allows you to perform updates to your page, create new pages, add graphics and text, and make other changes as well.

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (CRM).

SharePoint easily integrates with Microsoft Dynamics CRM and other CRM solutions. This creates high visibility for critical data such as customer information, sales, marketing, suppliers, and other information pertinent to the unique needs of your business.

Access to documents and information without having to switch applications fosters better communication between company employees and your clients.

CRM integration with SharePoint means faster team communication and collaboration and a 360 degree transparent view of all activities. This boost in productivity means better customer service, improved customer retention, and increased sales.

SOCIAL NETWORKING.

SharePoint is used to improved employee communication using social networking tools such as wikis, planning workshops, meeting rooms, and other real-time resources that keep employees in sync.

IMPROVED BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE AND DECISION MAKING.

Companies use SharePoint to improve access to business intelligence for improved decision making.

SharePoint provides easy search features to help you quickly locate all company files. The search tools also help decision makers to easily view larger patterns.

SharePoint business intelligence uses graphs and charts to help you easily spot relationships and trends over specific periods of time.

Once business intelligence is gathered and you have a course of action, SharePoint assists you with organising team members to work on new implementation.

MICROSOFT SHAREPOINT SPECIAL FEATURES.

SOCIAL FEATURES.

SharePoint social features offer three different hubs located in a navigation bar. The purpose of the hubs is to unify RSS Newsfeeds, Sites, OneDrive, and My Site to make social network with SharePoint a fully integrated experience. Employees can easily post a message to the newsfeed on a team site or public newsfeed and view updates on other activities.

Microblogging features are new for 2016 and allow you to use your newsfeed to participate in conversations. The new newsfeed apps allow you to continue with conversations and interact with newsfeeds using your mobile device.

SharePoint integrates with Skype for Business to allow your employees to easily communicate with co-workers. Skype for Business provides an array of communication tools that include videoconferencing, IM (Instant Messaging), VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) calling, collaboration, and online meeting capabilities.

BUSINESS SEARCH ENGINE.

SharePoint provides an intuitive business search engine that simplifies document organisation and makes information easy to locate. SharePoint offers features that extend beyond traditional document searches to allow employees to easily locate, conversations, announcements, users, and more.

OUTLOOK INTEGRATION.

When integrated with SharePoint, Outlook has extended capabilities using a folder hierarchy that can be accessed both online and offline. Your employees can synchronise folders with SharePoint and then use drag and drop or copy and paste to move emails to the folders. Users can drop email attachments from Outlook into SharePoint and then access the attachments both online and offline.

Your files can be transferred from Outlook to SharePoint simply by using drag and drop to move files from Outlook folders, Windows desktop, and other applications. Users can easily update content in SharePoint directly from Outlook by using the preview and edit windows in a specific application or in Outlook.

MOBILE APP INTEGRATION.

With mobile app integration, you can carry your company intranet with you on the go using SharePoint's mobile app.

The SharePoint mobile app allows you to use your mobile device for quick access to business resources, co-workers, team sites, recent files, and more. Users can access a broad range of resources regardless of whether they are online or on the premises.

Enterprise Search is included in the SharePoint mobile app and provides you with organised access to files, sites, and co-workers.

ONEDRIVE FOR BUSINESS.

OneDrive is Microsoft's cloud storage resource, previously known as SkyDrive. OneDrive for Business is different from the consumer version because it is based on SharePoint and is meant for storing business documents and files.

OneDrive for Business is the default document library for users 'My Sites' used in SharePoint Server 2013 or SharePoint Online. Users have the option of synchronising the contents of their document library with multiple computers and devices.

With OneDrive for Business, all of your business files can be stored in a central location, which makes it easier for staff to share and collaborate on resources and documents.

AZURE SEARCH.

Azure Search is a new service that uses advanced search functionality with customised applications. The program provides additional search horsepower across SharePoint server, Azure, and Office 365.

Using drag and drop search functionality, you can search using hit highlighting for text heavy files, keywords and phrases, faceting which is website hit counts by category, and auto complete which makes suggestions during searches.

MICROSOFT SHAREPOINT SECURITY ADVANTAGES.

SharePoint Online is offered from Microsoft's datacenters which are required to meet security and compliance requirements. This can otherwise be a costly proposition for small businesses that need to maintain security and compliance.

Microsoft is known for its world class security technologies and strategies and this includes delivery of SharePoint Online. Your company receives applications that increase agility and productivity while Microsoft maintains the required security and compliance certifications.

Comprehensive data protection services are included in your SharePoint Online subscription to prevent data loss. Data protection includes regular backups and redundancy with a copy of data stored in different locations.

Data protection for SharePoint includes disaster recovery that provides immediate retrieval of data following a catastrophe.

THE ADVANTAGES OF USING MICROSOFT SHAREPOINT.

Every business has requirements that are unique, which means your software and applications should be too. SharePoint applications and services are completely customisable without the upfront costs of developing and managing the infrastructure on the premises if you choose SharePoint online.

You still retain complete control over your data and information while a datacentre IT team of professionals worries about infrastructure management and security.

COST CONTROL.

When using SharePoint Online, you only pay for what you use. The solutions and functions are both flexible and scalable so you can scale up or down at a moment's notice without having any upfront IT costs.

SharePoint licenses also help you to reduce and control costs associated with expensive licensing fees.

ANYWHERE ACCESS.

SharePoint is designed for anywhere access, helping your staff to stay productive regardless of where work takes them. Access from anywhere does not mean you have to compromise security. Microsoft provides best-in-class security. Plus, you are provided with the ability to maintain information management over a Virtual Private Network (VPN).

EASY COLLABORATION.

SharePoint provides a unified content hub. Instead of information being distributed across departments, team members gather in real-time to get things done using the same business applications they would use in an office on a daily basis.

SHARE DATA AND INFORMATION WITHOUT SACRIFICING SECURITY.

Using SharePoint, your company employees are able to access and interact with business applications in real-time. Applications are accessed using a web browser using application services that run on SharePoint.

Employees can then update and share the same version which keeps everyone on the same page, so to speak. Any sensitive information is embedded into the document to prevent unauthorized access.

BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE AND ACCURATE DECISION MAKING.

SharePoint empowers companies using advanced business intelligence and insight tools. This provides improved and accurate decision making to help you plan more efficiently for new initiatives.

Thanks to the activity feeds and other tools, team members can easily start collaborating which makes time to market much faster.

ENTERPRISE GRADE SECURITY AND COMPLIANCE.

Security and compliance can prove to be costly for small businesses, yet it is an essential requirement.

Many small businesses use SharePoint because it provides access to enterprise-grade security and compliance without the excessive costs.

DATA MIGRATION.

Microsoft makes it easy for you to easily migrate your files and data to OneDrive for Business, which integrates with SharePoint. Files and data can be moved from just about any application including Dropbox, file sharing programs, Google Drive, and many others.

CONSTANT ACCESS TO UPGRADES.

With SharePoint Online, there is no need to purchase a new license when new upgrades are released. SharePoint customers automatically have access to the latest updates. Plus, you can schedule the updates to occur on your own terms. The busiest time for your organisation may not be the best time to start using new SharePoint features.

DO YOU HAVE MORE QUESTIONS ABOUT SHAREPOINT?

Our IT Department specialises in the deployment and ongoing support of Microsoft SharePoint services in a commercial environment. If you'd like to find out more about what Microsoft SharePoint can do for your business then contact a Business Development Manager today by calling 020 8501 7676, or speak with your Technical Account Manager.

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