THE BUSINESS VALUE OF OFFICE 365 TO THE ENTERPRISE

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The Business Value Of Office 365 To The Enterprise

In today's complex, data-driven enterprises, the productivity and profitability of your business depends on your ability to communicate, collaborate, produce content and share knowledge. And with today's mobile team members and remote workers, you need tools that meet the technological challenges of moving these activities forward in a digital workplace.

Just think of all the different interactions that go into creating a single document or deliverable. All those emails and meetings. All those changes and file versions to track and manage. Office 365 channels these activities through a single platform that's designed to improve productivity for geographically dispersed organizations.

Moving Productivity To The Cloud

Microsoft Office 365 bundles a suite of products into one entirely cloud-based solution that you deploy with the click of a button. The productivity suite combines the familiar tools that most companies have used in one form or another for the past decade with powerful new capabilities, including unified communications through Lync Online and social networking through Yammer. The suite also offers a large amount of inexpensive cloud storage for documents (one terabyte per user) through OneDrive for Business.

Unlike previous Office software you purchased in a shrink-wrapped box and maintained on your own servers and desktops, Office 365 is hosted in the cloud through Microsoft's global network of data centers. Since it uses the cloud's popular subscription-based licensing model, small businesses as well as large enterprises have access to cutting-edge productivity tools without the need to invest time, money and physical space in the infrastructure.

Your enterprise most likely uses Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Exchange, Outlook and may also be interested in creating a corporate intranet or integrating instant messaging with searchable components. For enterprises, managing software licensing is often complex and costly. With Office 365, Microsoft has made it easy and cost-effective to subscribe to an entire suite of products on a per-user basis without having to dive into the nitty-gritty details for each individual component.

For example, some large corporations have started using the Office 365 bundle to move their corporate intranet operations into SharePoint Online, bring their Exchange servers into the cloud, and take advantage of the latest collaboration and communication tools, such as the social enterprise tool Yammer.

The cloud subscription model takes the complexity and cost of managing these tools and securing your data and puts the onus on Microsoft. Many organizations are required to make considerable investments to protect their data from cyber-attacks, increasing the costs of hosting your own data and applications. With cloud platforms like Office 365, securing your data is included in the service.

While this is particularly appealing to small businesses with limited IT resources, Office 365 also presents a large ROI value for businesses with thousands of employees.

When you're considering the business value of Office 365, the real benefit comes from the fact that Microsoft has already done the hard work of integrating these applications. This bundle of services is more cost-effective and efficient than purchasing, installing and integrating the individual applications on your own.

Improve Your Department With Office 365

The Office 365 productivity suite supports a variety of functions, whether you're running a small businesses or an enterprise with over 10,000 employees. Here are a few examples:

Human Resources

Whether your HR department needs to collaborate on the upcoming year's benefits package or communicate with employees about compensation and services, Office 365 provides the tools to collaborate across your group and deliver information to your user base.

You could use a Yammer newsfeed to quickly address issues and answer questions about benefits enrollment, for example, or use SharePoint Online to create online forms and automate data on compliance.

Marketing And Sales

Marketing and sales professionals may find that SharePoint templates are an efficient way to start new documents as well as record and archive your business activities. For sales, specifically, combining visuals and data into a SharePoint dashboard helps support effective decision-making.

Finance, Accounting And Legal

Office 365's combination of SharePoint Online and cloud storage through OneDrive for Business helps you store business information while managing and processing a variety of data. And the robust enterprise search functionality makes finding that information faster and easier than before.

IT Support

Office 365 helps your organization's IT team to collaborate and work together in providing services to users. SharePoint Online also helps to create sites, intake forms, collaboration areas and other self-service functions for the user base.

Operations

For operations, corporate communication and the ability to leverage brand and culture are important functions. With Office 365, you're able to create sites with a consistent look and feel, and extend that experience beyond the firewall in a secure network.

8 Benefits Of Office 365 For Your Enterprise

Here are eight ways this powerful platform boosts productivity across your enterprise:

1. Streamlined knowledge-sharing through document management:

Many organizations already use SharePoint for document management, which frees business data from file shares, improves searchability, and offers tools for managing versioning history and user access. On their own, these capabilities help to improve productivity and knowledge-sharing, but Office 365 takes them a step further.

With the cloud-based SharePoint Online in Office 365, the improved user interface and interconnectivity makes it easy to transfer documents to the SharePoint library and offers seamless document sharing.

And since Office 365 integrates SharePoint Online with Exchange Online, Lync Online and Yammer, it also helps employees communicate efficiently during document creation and management tasks. When an employee has questions about a document change, for example, it's easy to send an instant message to a colleague through the integrated Lync features. Other team members have the option to find the document in a Yammer group newsfeed and comment on updates or changes.

2. Enhanced mobile access for anywhere, anytime productivity:

Office 365 combines the power of cloud computing with a full suite of mobile apps, making it easier for employees to stay productive while traveling, on site or working remotely. Microsoft's Office 365 apps focus on individual applications (Word, Excel, Lync, etc.) and are free for mobile devices with screen dimensions no larger than nine inches.

Depending on the needs of your enterprise, however, you may want to look beyond these standard apps in order to create a truly mobile digital workplace. For instance, when you pull up a SharePoint Online site on your smartphone, the site may not have the same appearance or all the functionality you require. In particular, document libraries and lists often aren't mobile-friendly in Microsoft's standard apps.

Some organizations use third-party applications to extend the mobile capability of SharePoint lists and libraries, making it easier to produce, collaborate and edit documents with mobile devices. Another way to improve mobile productivity is to develop responsive designs for SharePoint pages and sites, so that the layout and capabilities adapt in specific ways that are tailored for any mobile device type and screen size.

3. Social enterprise capabilities that support innovation:

Social enterprise tools give people in your organization the ability to interact with business content at the speed and fluidity of social media. Since most employees are already proficient with using tools like Facebook and Twitter in their personal lives, offering similar technology in the enterprise applies that pre-existing proficiency to business tasks.
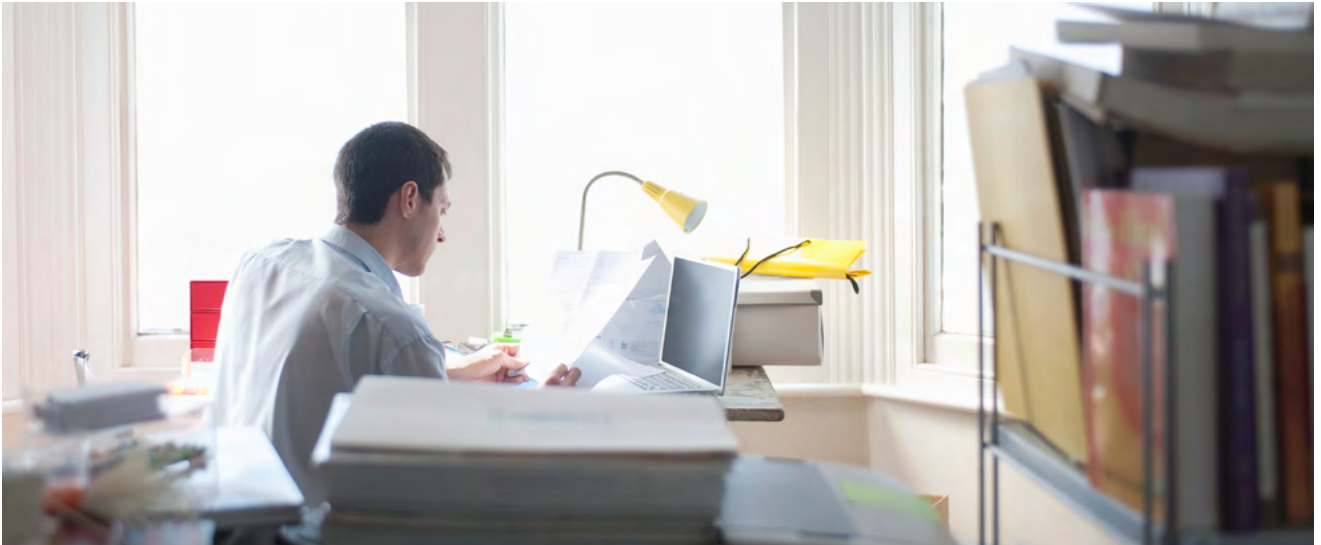
For most users, the social enterprise tools in Office 365 should present no real learning curve and require no new training. It's easy to "like" a piece of content, comment on site contents, have a forum-like threaded conversation or embed a personalized newsfeed that aggregates different discussions across your organization.

Yammer, included in the Office 365 suite, allows your organization to set up different groups and use discussion threads specific to a department, line of business or community of interest. It enables members of your organization to ask questions in an informal context while sharing their knowledge with a larger audience. Compared to asking and answering questions individually via email, Yammer makes it easier for the company to retain this knowledge and make it accessible to others with the same questions.

4. Workflow management and automation:

Many enterprises have difficulty when it comes to managing and automating workflows. Office 365 and SharePoint Online present you with out-of-the-box workflow management capabilities that help to automate business processes. And since Office 365 integrates so many tools, it enables you to pull in certain actions from email as part of the process execution within your workflow.

For more complex workflows and automation, your enterprise may want to use third-party products that interact with Office 365. Some of these tools offer a better user interface for creating online forms, processing information through a workflow and automation.

5. Efficient communication platforms:

In an enterprise, communication covers a wide range of activities, many of which begin with a corporate intranet. Among other communication tasks, an enterprise intranet allows you to deliver services and information, build your culture and brand through a public website, and provide a central hub for employees who want to learn more about overall initiatives and explore resources.

SharePoint Online is a great platform for developing a corporate intranet, and Office 365 helps to facilitate this communication tool without the technical burden of managing your own server and on-premises infrastructure. And for general communication outside the corporate intranet, Office 365's integrated services increase your ability to communicate effectively with colleagues in the digital workplace.

6. Internal and external collaboration:

Office 365's communication and collaboration tools allow your employee base to collaborate effectively with one another as well as with external partners. While email is great for certain tasks, such as recording information, sharing official documents and creating an electronic record of an action, it's an inefficient tool for other collaboration activities.

When it comes to quick questions and co-authoring documents, for example, instant messaging, Yammer and SharePoint sites offer better ways to share information. By integrating these tools, Office 365 enables organizations to have a multidimensional collaborative environment that puts knowledge in an actionable context and breaks down geographical barriers to productivity.

7. Powerful enterprise search:

Typically, users must browse through file-shares and folders to find the documents and information they've created, but this process is often frustrating and inefficient, as documents get lost in disorganized folders. Compared to browsing, search functions are often more effective tools for finding and using content.

The enterprise search capabilities within Office 365 and SharePoint Online have been developed over a long time for some of the largest companies around the world, and fine-tuned and integrated within the Office 365 platform to provide you with a robust and cost-effective search experience. This search capability enriches document management, social enterprise, communication and collaboration, helping users to find content quickly and easily, which improves productivity and reduces duplication of efforts.

8. Continuous updates:

Traditional on-premises software requires regular maintenance, patches and upgrades. With Office 365, Microsoft is providing an ever-evolving platform with new capabilities being released on a quarterly basis. With Office 365, your IT team doesn't have to upgrade your platform and can focus on providing key business services.

The Cornerstone Of A Successful Digital Workplace

Organizations used to think of the workplace as primarily a physical location, and provide different technology solutions for workers who sat at desks and those who worked in the field, on the retail floor or on a manufacturing line. But those distinctions are blurring as the digital workplace connects these environments and technologies.

Now, regardless of whether someone works at a desk or the shop floor, the digital workplace experience offered by Office 365 enables effective communication, collaboration and culture delivery across your company. This affordable productivity suite allows all employees to accomplish tasks and work with files, coworkers and partners to move the business forward, remaining productive and effective regardless of geographical location.

About Portal Solutions

Portal Solutions is a leading technology consulting firm that plans, designs and deploys effective digital workplaces that help organizations increase employee engagement and productivity and improve overall customer experience. Connecting people, data and information, Portal Solutions uses the Microsoft Office 365 and SharePoint platforms to help employees share what they know and find information they need — anywhere, anytime and on any device. Founded in 2003, Portal Solutions is a privately-held company headquartered in Rockville, Md., with a regional office in Woburn, Mass.

Learn more about the benefits of implementing Office 365 at your organization by contacting Portal Solutions.

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