

How To Get More Value From SharePoint Online

Insight 

 Microsoft



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What is SharePoint Online?

For almost two decades, Microsoft SharePoint has been a valued collaboration tool in the business world. Originally part of the on-premise Microsoft Office, SharePoint allowed users to share files with other members of an organisation or a specific team that would have their own 'site'.

Typically, a site hosts documents, lists, libraries and other content such as help guides. This functionality, combined with a high level of customisation, meant SharePoint was used to host company documentation and to power company intranets or websites.

SharePoint Online builds on these capabilities with the power of cloud technology and by leveraging the full range of Microsoft Office 365 applications. Collaboration is further enhanced with the inclusion of calendars, tasks and notifications for a particular group of people.

Updates are rolled out automatically, reducing the maintenance burden on IT departments and ensuring end users always have access to the latest features. If used effectively, the powerful collaborative capabilities of SharePoint Online can transform how organisations work.



How to maximise the value of SharePoint

1. Use SharePoint as your repository

A SharePoint Online environment is populated by sites in which groups within an organisation can share and edit documents with one another. Sites can be used to store essential project files or to host key documentation for the entire company. A simple upload process allows users to add metadata for easier searching, while alerts and document trails help to track changes. Site owners can add and remove users and set permissions for sharing and collaboration. Azure Active Directory Groups integration means existing teams can be used on SharePoint Online.

2. Maximise collaboration with Office 365 and Microsoft Teams integration

Office 365 integration means multiple users can work on a document simultaneously as long as they have permission to access and edit the document. Word, Excel and PowerPoint files can be edited in the desktop client or on Office Online and active collaborators are visible on the top right-hand of the screen. Any changes are seen in real-time. SharePoint Online also integrates with [Microsoft Teams](#) to ensure users can access relevant files.





3. End users should make use of productivity features

Aside from file sharing and collaboration, SharePoint Online offers the ability to create a group calendar to schedule meetings and see team member availability. Project task lists also make it possible to assign different tasks to different members of a site and set a deadline for completion.

4. Identify relevant SharePoint Add-ins

SharePoint Add-ins are self-contained applications and plug-ins that integrate with SharePoint Online to add additional capabilities. Examples include custom forms for timesheets or annual leave requests, access to an online IT helpdesk, or even YouTube video embedding. These can be added to SharePoint Online via the Office Store.

Share and manage content, knowledge, and applications to empower teamwork, quickly find information, and seamlessly collaborate across the organisation.





5. Visualise data with Power BI integration

A relatively recent addition to SharePoint is the ability to embed interactive Power BI reports in SharePoint Online. Power BI presents data visually in the form of interactive reports that can allow a group to make more sense of information. Report authors can get an embed link from the Power BI application and simply add it to the desired page within a SharePoint site.

6. Use workflows to drive productivity

SharePoint workflows allow for the automated movement of files through a series of actions or tasks that relate to a business process – such as the drafting, approval and submission of a legal contract. This can save time by eliminating the need for some human interactions and through automatic alerts for anyone that needs to take action. Tasks can be performed either in SharePoint Online itself or the relevant Office 365 application.

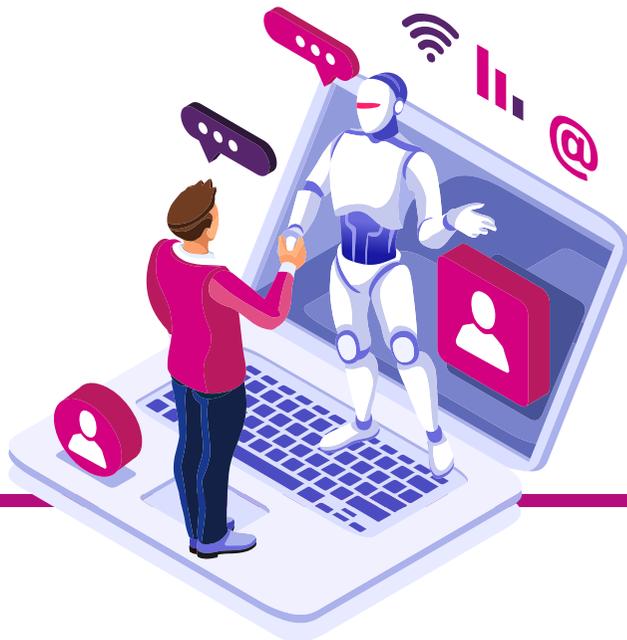
Harness collective knowledge and transform business processes.



7. Harness the power of AI to enable further automation

Almost every application included with Office 365 now has a degree of intelligence thanks to Microsoft's investments in cloud and AI technology. SharePoint Online uses AI to actively analyse video, audio, and visual content to add tags that improve search and storage while also providing an automated transcript.

The intelligent Microsoft Graph learns user behaviour and relationships with colleagues to recommend the most relevant files and even suggests the sharing of a presentation with meeting attendees. AI helps organisations make the most of their assets. It also saves employees' time, and helps to identify how files are being used in order to drive efficiency.



8. Protect and collaborate with powerful security tools

In addition to the automatic installation of security updates, SharePoint Online includes settings that help organisations identify a balance between protection and collaboration, supported by Microsoft's multi-billion pound investment in cloud security. In addition to individual user and group permissions for access, editing and sharing, organisations can set sensitivity labels to protect highly confidential files with encryption and strict permissions.

Existing Azure Information Protection labels can be used as well, assisting Data Loss Prevention (DLP) features in preventing the accidental or deliberate sharing of sensitive information. Meanwhile compliance is boosted through the inclusion of retention labels and document trails. This level of capability and control makes SharePoint an inherently secure platform.



Cloud-based collaboration

SharePoint Online is a significant upgrade that can help your organisation become more collaborative and leverage the full power of the Office 365 suite.

With automatic updates, intelligent capabilities, enhanced security and the ability for teams to collaborate on files in real time, SharePoint can enable businesses to transform the way they operate.

For tips and tricks on how to utilise the application more effectively, read ['The Smarty Pants Guide to SharePoint!'](#)

