



SharePoint Collaboration – An Essential Requirement for Enterprises

A **White Paper** illustrating the importance of SharePoint in an Enterprise – business advantages, challenges and the role of experts in implementing the Microsoft SharePoint Technology. The paper also provides a preview into SharePoint 2013.

Summary

SharePoint is a web application platform from Microsoft. It can be used to provide intranet portals, document & file management, collaboration, social networks, extranets, websites, enterprise search, and business intelligence. Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2010 allows people across an organization to link with each other and to work as a team. A SharePoint enterprise platform consists of both SharePoint Portal and Windows SharePoint Services and is built upon WSS technology. SharePoint Server is also highly useful in collaboration between teams in a medium to large enterprise.

Key Advantages of SharePoint

As an enterprise grows, the volume of their data and files grows simultaneously. Eventually, it becomes difficult to keep track of the increasing number of documents and their locations. SharePoint solves this by letting you store and share your files in a central site. There are several other benefits of having SharePoint within an organization as mentioned below:

- While the traditional process of sharing files through email was a cumbersome process. SharePoint gives the advantage of storing the files in a centralized location. It allows the team members to easily access all the stored files.
- Traditionally, Business Intelligence was accessible only by the top management and a few decision makers within the organization. It has always been the goal of BI providers to get the necessary information available to all the employees within the organization. Finally with the help of Insight feature in SharePoint Enterprise version, the goal of getting information available to all has been achieved. Now instead of a few people, information is available to all the members in an organization and thus they can participate in the decision making process.
- In today's scenario, the functioning of an organization is not confined to a single location. In fact the work is carried out at multiple departments, offices and often in different countries. To meet this challenge, SharePoint gives an opportunity to the employees to connect and collaborate together irrespective of their location.
- While thinking about a site, we think of an expert who has the capability of building it. Traditionally, a site has been a complex subject. However, with SharePoint anyone can easily create sites within the company's Intranet. Now one can make a personal site, team site, departmental site, survey site, document libraries or discussion board. This is tremendously valuable in organizing work products, building collaborative artefacts and managing version control.
 - Searching for data and information has always been a time consuming process for the employees. Study

shows that employees spend nearly 30% of their time in searching for data. SharePoint can eliminate this time wastage by providing a highly responsive search option.

Capabilities of SharePoint

For several years Microsoft has clearly dominated and set the standard for the corporate environment both on the network and desktop. Microsoft has been spending billions of dollars in developing and innovating SharePoint technology, as a result, SharePoint is an industry leader in the enterprise portals segment today.



SharePoint is a web based Collaboration solution which is powerful and provides several functional benefits as mentioned below:

- It provides a Platform for the management and tracking of documents. It also provides assessment tracks of these documents.
 - SharePoint provides unmatched features on sharing of documents within a group.
 - With the help of SharePoint a proper management of process can be done.
 - SharePoint Workflow provides the benefit of automated approval of a process. This feature allows individuals to approve and forward automatically to the next person.
- It provides a unique platform for new application development.
 - SharePoint acts as a foundation for several Microsoft technologies like Microsoft Office. These can be integrated for a single working platform in an organization.

SharePoint allows you to:

- Form groups within an organization located in same or different locations.
- Generate performance dashboards with comprehensive Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
- Integrate with SQL Server to provide business intelligence for better decision making.
- Save the overall IT expenditure. With a marginal cost of traditional solutions, SharePoint allows to build office workflow solutions which are highly cost efficient.
- Manage a cost effective IT solution, providing you a competitive advantage in terms of IT cost savings.

Sites - SharePoint sites are easy to create

1. Making your own Site on SharePoint Server is an easy and powerful feature which provides you single solution for all the organization's business Web sites. Now, an employee working in an organization can make individual or team sites. Also internet sites for customers and extranet sites for partners can be made with ease.
2. SharePoint sites require no html coding and are very easy to create. You can create and modify pages, add interaction and even customize your site with available design themes.
3. SharePoint Sites can be integrated with other technologies easily.
4. SharePoint works well even if not connected to internet. One can access sites, documents and list with SharePoint Workspace and changes made can be easily synchronized when connected again to internet.

5. Integration with mobile application and cross-browser support gives you an ease of access and content sharing, in the office or outside.

Composites – SharePoint is code free Platform

1. SharePoint gives you a code free capability to create extremely customized sites and solutions. You can share Microsoft Access databases and Microsoft Visio diagrams. You can also Publish Access databases in SharePoint.
2. SharePoint gives the convenience of working with data from other systems as if it lived in SharePoint. Now you can create, read, update, delete, and search the data using external lists.
3. Work on SharePoint Workspace offline and synchronize the changes made whenever you are reconnected to internet.
4. With SharePoint you can centralize Access databases and Excel workbooks and organize them from SharePoint. It also provides controlled access to the company data by providing well-defined access rules.

Insights: Business Intelligence available to all, for better decision making

1. SharePoint allows you to decentralize BI. It lets everyone access the data and business information for better decision making.
2. With the help of powerful features like interactive dashboards and scorecards, people can easily use the information in databases, reports, and business applications to solve a particular problem and make better-informed judgments.
3. The interactive dashboards and scorecards available with SharePoint Insights help people to define and measure success: key metrics can be matched to specific strategies and then shared, tracked, and discussed.

4. Since SharePoint Insights uses well known interfaces and application, so people are very comfortable in accessing and using the database.
5. To avoid the chance of getting flawed data and version control problems, everyone can save, publish and access data from a centralized location, providing a 'single source of truth'.

Communities: A highly Integrated Collaboration Platform

1. SharePoint brings people together at work through full set of collaboration tools like wikis, workflows, team sites and tagging
2. It provides better security in working together with platform's granular security and privacy controls, centralized policy setting, detailed reporting and analysis.
3. It integrates well with Microsoft Business Productivity infrastructure, including Microsoft Office applications, Microsoft Exchange Server, Microsoft Office Communications Server, Microsoft SQL Server, and Microsoft Dynamics.

Content: Enterprise Content Management available for everyone

1. SharePoint is closely connected to Microsoft Office. Due to its familiarity, it is easy to use and manage the information.
2. With SharePoint it is much easier to tag content, enforce retention schedules, declare records, and apply legal holds.
3. With SharePoint you can manage documents, records, web content and rich media on a sole platform, thus helping you reduce IT costs. SharePoint in the longer run gives you more value from your investment.

Search: Gets you more relevant and refined results

1. SharePoint powerful search option helps you find the most relevant and

refined information to get the job done. On a single, cost effective infrastructure platform, you get the features of intranet search, people search and a platform to build search-driven applications.

2. SharePoint allows you to even customize your search options on a single platform. – It allows you to add your own search words, tune relevance, and can use a person's unique information to achieve a great search result.

Impact of SharePoint on Business

Increases the efficiency, productivity and Management Governance

SharePoint makes the work easier for the employees. They can easily retrieve data from databases, solve a given problem and share the information with others through a centralized platform. The unique Search option allows you to search more relevant and refined results. Since its easy and fast, it increases the employee work efficiency as well. For the management, out-of-the-box workflows for starting, managing and reporting business activities such as document review and approval, tracking activities, issues and laying out directions allow for a streamlined management governance.

Strengthen Team Work and Sharing Knowledge

SharePoint allows the team to create team spaces where the individuals in a team can place and share the new ideas and existing information with other members. This leads to increased capability in solving a given problem and innovating.

Better Decision Making through Business Intelligence

Traditionally, the decision making information was only available to a few people in an organization. Now with SharePoint the

Business Intelligence is available to much wider population. The increased partnership in Business Intelligence paves a way for much more efficient and effective decision making.

Regulation of Process per Legal compliance

Any process can be regulated well through a broader control over content and information. By setting up the security measures, storage policies, auditing policies and terminating time line policies for a particular business activity based on applicable compliance regulations, you can ensure that the events, activities and subtle information are managed and controlled efficiently. This would help avoid legal issues for the organization.

Easier Access to Information and Minimized Information Loss

SharePoint removes the hassle of sharing the information through mail or any other one-to-one process. Now the important information can be shared and automatically accessed by all through a centralized location. The chance of losing critical knowledge and information is also reduced when an employee leaves the organization.

Ease of Gathering Critical Information and Data

SharePoint is a code free Platform. You can generate several custom applications without any coding. You can use electronic forms to gather important business information from customers, vendors, partners and other stakeholders without usual accompanying coding activity.

SharePoint 2013 Preview

Recently, Microsoft shared the details of its most augmented version, SharePoint 2013. Although a definite release date has yet not been disclosed but as per the details shared by Microsoft, it is expected that SharePoint 2013 will contain numerous additional features and improvements to its earlier versions.

We recommend that if you're considering a new SharePoint deployment or upgrading from a previous version, now is the time to understand the new features on offer and use this as the basis of any assessment you might make. Some of them are discussed below:

"My Documents" in a new Avatar

The option of saving personal documents in My Sites, rather than local drives, is a great feature: You can always access your files from various devices as well as you can easily share files with colleagues using links, instead of sending copies via email. Storing documents in My Sites also allows you to keep track of necessary documents and remove not useful or obsolete documents. So unlike saving in a local hard drive, saving documents in My Sites allows you to manage your document well.

With the new feature of SharePoint 2013, it will be even easier to save your documents. Now when integrated with Office 2013, it will be the default location for saving your documents. There will be only one document library instead of two as it was with SharePoint 2010. Moreover the permission constraint has been simplified to share documents with your colleagues easily.

The new SharePoint 2013 has made working offline more convenient. You can access the documents even when the server is unavailable. With the My Site document Library you can access the documents and then later sync with the local drive when connected to the server.

Introducing the Apps Store

A new innovative addition made by Microsoft in SharePoint 2013 is the Apps Store. With this new feature the user would be empowered to experiment with the new apps available. It was disclosed by Microsoft that initially the apps would be promoted by Microsoft only but we expect this to be a significant opportunity for application developers in the long run.

Social Enterprise Capabilities

With the SharePoint 2013, users will like the amazing feature of extension with Social sites. SharePoint will now be extended to social community sites, activity feeds, blogs, followings, likes and many more.

This will allow team members to be better connected amongst themselves. They will also be able to like or follow people, share documents, topics, discussions and sites.

Mobility

Looking at the rising trend of mobile platforms and devices, Microsoft could not have stayed away from including support for mobility. SharePoint 2013 will provide more ease in accessing the information from mobile devices. Along with the existing classic view, SharePoint 2013 will offer two new views for mobile devices. There would be a contemporary view for optimized mobile browser experience and a full-screen view gives a complete desktop view of a SharePoint site on a smartphone device.

Site Permissions

It's a known fact that the strength of SharePoint success lies in its level of security and safety. SharePoint has the ability to have a distributed governance model, providing the security and administrative rights to various smaller units. However, practically the whole process of requesting and granting access to a site in SharePoint 2010 is highly complex and

many times can be a source of confusion for site owners.

SharePoint 2013 will take away the pain of managing the security of Sites from site owners. SharePoint 2013 will be more simplified with a sharing-based model for site permissions management. Handling permission issues is expected to become easier for IT support personnel.

Addition of Richer Themes

Lastly, SharePoint 2013 will give the users control over the visual styling of site. The SharePoint 2010 only has standard styling options but SharePoint 2013 will enable the users with wider range of themes, also allowing adding background image to the page.

SharePoint Implementation

It's a well-known fact that roughly 50% of all SharePoint implementations fail to deliver the anticipated business benefits. This is due to one of the following reasons:

- Businesses often fail to run the implementation as a project that involves all key stakeholders, thus not all requirements are collected or included in the design
- Office workers are expected to know how to use SharePoint with little or no training
- Internal IT staff are expected to know how to implement with little or no experience on the platform

Since SharePoint is a high impact platform that is used by key business users, it is imperative to design and implement it so that it aligns to the business needs of an enterprise. This will often require hiring a consulting company that has the requisite expertise and experience with SharePoint.

Why Consider Alcor Solutions

Alcor is a niche technology company focusing exclusively on SharePoint Collaboration. We have invested significantly in building SharePoint capabilities, accelerators and solution assets.

What makes us different: Unlike traditional IT companies, we do not do 'everything' in IT solutions. Also, our approach to SharePoint implementation is based on a methodology that has been designed exclusively for SharePoint and leverages 'Out of the Box' design to the extent possible. **As a leader in SharePoint platform, Alcor is able to assess and recommend an implementation strategy in a just a couple of weeks**, whereas traditional consultants without deep SharePoint expertise often take months of information gathering to be ready. We do it by leveraging our extensive pre-built SharePoint design templates that allow us to very rapidly capture business requirements and align with your IT strategy. The result is a set of customized roadmap and recommendations to optimally leverage SharePoint's diverse capabilities across your organization.

Alcor delivers following benefits to our customers:

Unique Project Delivery Process

- Industry experts in SharePoint Collaboration. Alcor's resource pool is extensive and is highly experienced in collaboration.
- Leverage an optimum level of Out of Box features for a rapid implementation
- Utilize pre-built accelerators and blue prints that were developed after years of experience to collect requirements and jump start the design & implementation.
- Provide cost effective solutions by passing on the cost advantage of our global delivery as well as pre-developed IP to our clients. Alcor's

costs are usually significantly lower as compared to traditional IT companies.

For More Information

To learn how Alcor is working with organizations worldwide in designing, developing and implementing SharePoint and mobility solutions, please contact us at information@alcortech.com or visit us at www.alcortech.com