Microsoft SharePoint

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Introduction

Microsoft has developed a program that may revolutionize the way leaders and members of companies can work together. This collaborative software called Microsoft SharePoint offers a new way to discover strengths in team members, correspond within the business, and track success from a "big picture" vantage point. This software is entirely user-friendly and simple to institute in a workplace of any size. There are also components of this program that promote personal connections between colleagues such as SharePoint blogs, which allows for more effective team building. SharePoint is the ultimate tool for business professionals who want to strengthen their company's communication and provide for project prosperity (Pretty et al., 2013).

Background

In the past, the hassles of collaboration have produced less than satisfactory results for companies. Managers would have to call and email their crew hundreds of times just to stay on track with team members about the project progress (GetStartedSharePoint, 2009). Needless to say, it was difficult for every branch of the business to stay connected and understand where the project was headed. SharePoint essentially provides a source or a home for the involved associates to access data, communicate with members, share new information, and observe the development of the assignment at hand. The manager of the company creates this source, online, and searches for team members who specialize in relevant skills (GetStartedSharePoint, 2009).

Features and Benefits

Some of the many benefits of using Microsoft SharePoint include the use of

Cloud storage, mobile access through the SharePoint app, and the social networking

aspect of the program. Toby Ward, CEO and Founder of Prescient Digital Media, (2013)

considers SharePoint to be a crucial step in the evolution of Intranet. Intranet is a local

network that uses protocol to link computers on the same domain, so that users in that

network can communicate directly and share information privately. SharePoint is based

on Intranet communication and this allows for secure data to be soundly distributed with

only members of the team.

One of the highlights of this software is that anyone can use it; it does not require

much technical savvy to operate. SharePoint is easy to install, customize and use right

away and it is not only for the technologically inclined team members. The program does

not require the users to write any original code to initiate or to manipulate the settings.

The implications of what are called "workflows" act as very helpful tools for businesses

that want to collaborate on projects. Workflows are applications that allow an individual

to deliver a message with ideas or contributions, link any essential documents or websites

(Introduction to Workflows, n.d.). Take for example, if a member of a department needed

an executive's approval for a contract, and with that approval that contract would need to

be shared with all of the other team members, he might create a workflow. This would

require him to submit the request, with an attached file of the contract, to the executive,

who could then click "approve" or "reject". If the contract were rejected, the individual

who submitted it would get a notification, and if it were approved the contract would be

distributed via e-mail to the other members on the team (Introduction to Workflows, n.d.).

Other features of Microsoft SharePoint include the ability to house Microsoft Access databases and to provide access to documents in native MS format, even if the user does not have the native software on his own computer (Pretty et al., 2013). SharePoint also comes equip with recycle bins so as to avoid the accidental deletion of important data. One down side may be that there are multiple steps required to upload content, and often subsites need special adjustment so that they are consistent with the main site (Pretty et al., 2013). In recent upgrades of the software, users have seen noticeable improvements to social computing, mobile computing, Office integration, cloud integration, Search and more (Ward, 2013).

Security

When a manager creates a site through Microsoft SharePoint there are ways that he or she may take control of the security of the project. Firstly, SharePoint offers the same benefits to any and all users, regardless of the type of site that a business had created. The site owner controls who has access to the website and can stipulate who is eligible for account permissions within the company. Permissions may include actions like "viewing pages, opening items and subsites. Windows SharePoint Services 3.0 provides 33 pre-defined permissions that one can use to perform specific actions" (About Security Features of Windows SharePoint Services 3.0, n.d.). The user accounts are validated by the authentication method Web server. The creator of the site initially adds users if they are a part of the project at hand (About Security features, n.d.). SharePoint groups are effective for communication in that the manager of the project can provide an

e-mail list for the members. These groups also require authentication in order to access, and the levels of allotted permissions can be altered to fit the needs of the group. The domains in which the group members connect are "defined by this authentication system" (About Security Features, n.d.). Another security feature commonly used in SharePoint is the Securable Object. This is any object on which permissions can be tailored to the group. This configuration of sites, documents, libraries, lists and folders allows for a natural hierarchy in the network system; subsites must comply with the regulations set for them by the top tier of the network, which helps the project run smoothly and as intended. SharePoint is a program that specifically caters to those who found projects and desire the utmost protection and safekeeping of their information. Of course, this is contingent on the team members' commitment to the security as well, since they possess at least partial access; however, this intranet system is highly respected for its armament of information (About Security Features, n.d.).

The Social Aspect

Microsoft SharePoint is present in eighty percent of the Fortune 100 and plays a prominent intranet role in about seventy percent of knowledge worker intranets (Ward, 2013). Companies like Ferrari, Starbucks and Viacom have used SharePoint to create their public-facing Web sites and for various other tasks. All told, more than 17,000 customers use SharePoint" (Vance, 2009). These statistics show how significant this software is for our society. Large companies using this program are proof that it is a considerably powerful tool. For example, The Bank of India, one of the most prominent national banks, uses the software in the loan and application deposit process. This makes the process quick, efficient and appeals to the modern generation. The General Manager,

Singh was quoted saying, "Customer satisfaction is out utmost priority and we want to cater to all generations of customers" (Bank of India Deploys Microsoft SharePoint to Enhance Customer Experience, 2014). This is very indicative of society's tendencies toward digitalization, but is a definite benefit to Microsoft as a company.

This software makes it possible for companies to be more connected with their clients, by forming these public-facing websites, but the software was fundamentally designed for inter-network communication facilitation. Members within a team can reach out toward others with special skills, be in touch with the manager or leader of the project, and relate to each other personally via SharePoint blogs and email services (GetStartedSharePoint, 2009). Nothing makes for a more productive organization than efficient communication.

Conclusion

"'SharePoint is saving Microsoft's Office business even as it paves the way for a new era of Microsoft lock-in,' - Matt Assay, an executive at Alfresco, a company that makes an open-source content management system" (Vance, 2009). SharePoint has already evolved enormously since its platform was first launched in 2001. It is user-friendlier than ever before and it is proving to make a difference in productivity in companies large and small. The most recent upgrade in the program was released in 2013, and as the software makes its mark on these major companies, the future looks bright for the continuation and transformation of Microsoft SharePoint.

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