

Hosted SharePoint 2010

Key features

Hosted Sharepoint 2010 Foundation

Core Functionality

Document Management

- **Document Libraries:** Shared online document management facility. Can replace fileserver-style document sharing, but provides considerable additional document management functionality.
- **Deep MS Office Integration:** Microsoft Office and SharePoint are designed to work together, and SharePoint's document management capabilities work seamlessly with the Office suite.
- **Versioning:** SharePoint document libraries can be configured to automatically maintain a history of the versions of a particular document. The latest version is always available, but previous versions can quickly be viewed or restored. No more fussing with ugly naming conventions and having directories cluttered with dozens of versions of the same file.
- **Metadata:** Files in SharePoint – whether Office documents or other files like PDFs, CAD documents, images and multimedia files – can be 'tagged' with additional metadata. Examples include author, date created, title, approval status, expiry date and so on – you are free to set up whatever metadata fields will be helpful to your business.
- **Retention Policies:** To prevent clutter and reduce storage costs, SharePoint allows you to configure automated document retention, archival and disposal policies.
- **Workflow:** SharePoint provides powerful workflow tools which you can use to implement business processes and sign-off procedures. The workflow engine provides simple approval mechanisms out-of-the-box, but with SharePoint Designer offers a sophisticated and customisable workflow capability.
- **Image Management:** SharePoint provides image libraries, which provide all the capabilities of document libraries, but with built-in thumbnails, previews and slideshow capabilities.
- **Offline Use/Synchronisation:** SharePoint can synchronise folders, document libraries and other content for offline use with Outlook Client 2007 and above.

Structured Information Management

SharePoint's Lists feature provides built-in support for a range of structured information types, including electronic forms and tabular database views. Built-in List types include:

- Document libraries and picture libraries discussed above
- Calendars, which can be synchronised with Microsoft Outlook
- Contacts, which can be synchronised with Microsoft Outlook
- Links lists
- Task trackers, which can be synchronised with Microsoft Outlook
- Issue trackers
- Surveys

Each of the SharePoint list types is highly customisable; you can add fields, rearrange them, incorporate them into workflow processes.

SharePoint also allows the creation of entirely-custom Lists; here the possibilities are endless – FAQs, product lists, asset trackers and so on. Excel spreadsheets can be imported to create shared Lists; every column in the spreadsheet becomes a field in the List.

Unstructured Information Management

- **Blogs:** SharePoint provides an easy-to-use blog mechanism, fully supporting standard blog features such as comments, permalinks and RSS syndication.
- **Discussion Forums:** SharePoint provides a built-in discussion forum capability which may be organised into flat or threaded views.
- **Wikis:** SharePoint also has a built-in wiki feature to support collaborative document authoring.

Integration and Customisation

- **Web parts:** SharePoint pages are composed of web parts, which can easily be added, deleted and rearranged on pages – from within the browser – by authorised users. There is a wide range of ready-to-use web parts built-in.

- **REST and ATOM Data Feeds:** SharePoint lists and libraries may be consumed by other applications as XML data feeds in addition to the Web Service API.

- **Content Editor Web Part:** This web part, affectionally known as the CEWP, provides designers and developers the opportunity to add highly-customised functionality using HTML and JavaScript. JavaScript code running in the CEWP can work with SharePoint-managed data through the comprehensive Web Service API.

- **SharePoint Designer:** Users who have access to SharePoint designer can perform significant customisation – look-and-feel, workflow, navigation and more.

- **XML/XSLT Web Parts:** The built-in XML web part allows external XML data feeds to be rendered on SharePoint pages. Point it to the datasource and provide the XSL/T, and the web part will render the latest data as XHTML in the context of the SharePoint page.

Other Capabilities

- **Role-Based Permissions:** SharePoint provides comprehensive web-based functionality for managing users, roles and permission. You have control over which portions of your content are kept confidential, and which can be opened up to wider audiences.

- Sitewide Search: Quick keyword search across lists and document contents
- Support for Accessibility Standards
- Cross-Browser Support
- Mobile Connectivity
- High-Availability Architecture

Higher-Level Capabilities

- **Project Teams:** Projects, proposals/bids etc. Use SharePoint team site as the authoritative repository for documents, team calendar, project plan, discussion, requirements gathering, defect tracking etc.
- **Rapid Provisioning:** Cases where a collaborative mechanism is often required to be set up quickly and with minimal overhead; eg extranet engagement with a new client.
- **Multi-Office/Home Working:** Where users are at several separate locations (especially where VPN connectivity is problematic).
- **Mobile Users:** Device proliferation/BYOD – PCs, laptops, tablets, smartphones...many of these may be difficult to integrate in 'traditional' Windows file-and-print sharing or line-of-business systems.
- **Collaboration:** With clients/suppliers/other external users, while retaining control of access levels.
- **Information repositories:** Knowledgebase, policies and procedures, best practices

Target Client Indicators

- Typically SMEs from 3-100 users. Sweet spot will probably be smaller clients around 10-20 users.
- Typical client will not maintain their own IT function in-house. Ideally they will have a designated 'power user' - who may receive SharePoint training - but there will not be capacity to maintain Windows servers, updates, security patches etc.
- Existing hosted email - those who have existing hosted Exchange services are a natural target, as they demonstrate a willingness to adopt hosted platforms.
- Users who have a complex Active Directory environment and are used to integrated authentication/single sign-on approaches may not be well-suited to using a hosted solution, which will 'feel' like a second-class citizen in their IT environment.
- Clients requiring complex integration between SharePoint and their line-of business

systems would probably be better served by on-premises solution. Basic integration using RSS/XML feeds or iframes are fine (and it's surprising how far this can be taken), but API-level integration is likely to raise challenges.

- Customers requiring customisation of features, web parts, look-and-feel, feature stapling etc would probably be better served by an on-premises solution.
- Customers seeking to use SharePoint for 'portal' type use in an intranet environment, or as a public web site hosting platform, will not be able to use the Giacom hosted solution.

Summary - The ideal client is small, has sophisticated collaboration requirements but does not have a dedicated IT function: the type of organisation that springs to mind includes:

- Legal firms
- Accountants
- Consultancies
- Architects
- Engineering practices
- Insurance brokerages
- Financial advisors
- Estate agents
- Left-field ideas which nevertheless can benefit significantly might include:
 - Schools (eg class sites)
 - Medical or dental practices
 - Charities
 - Editors and publishers
 - Photographers
 - Churches
 - NGOs

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