# Collaboris

The Ultimate SharePoint Internal Communications Guide

If you are responsible for communicating with various groups of staff in your organisation, then you need a good set of tools that allow you to do this in a very pain free manner.

If you have access to SharePoint (or Office 365), then there are **lots** of features that allow you to leverage it as part of your internal communications strategy. This guide offers some fantastic tips explaining how to use SharePoint to help!
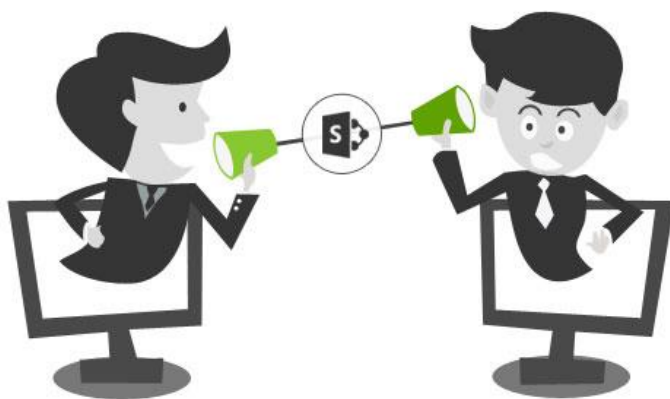
Firstly, why do we need good Internal Communication at all, and why would you want to use SharePoint for this function?

Importance of Internal and Employee Communications – These are the backbone to any successful organisation, supporting every aspect from operations through to change. They promote employee engagement which in turn can impact positively on performance, retention and overall morale of the team. It is easy to see why it should be high on any company's priorities.

Why Use SharePoint for internal Communications – As if the tips in this white paper weren't enough, SharePoint is scalable, flexible and in so many cases already available in your organisation. It just needs a little understanding of what is possible to unlock some great benefits for your communication strategy.

So, to start fine tuning your strategy, here are a list of effective ways to improve your Internal Communications by using existing features within SharePoint. We also branch out into some of the other Office 365 services that can also be consumed within SharePoint.

01 - THE DISCUSSION BOARD

ⓘ COST: FREE | VERSIONS: 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016, ONLINE | SETUP TIME: VERY FAST

The discussion board within SharePoint allows staff to discuss subjects relating to their work. If you want to create a conversation and gather opinion around key topics in your business, then a discussion board is ideal. They take minutes to create and are very intuitive.
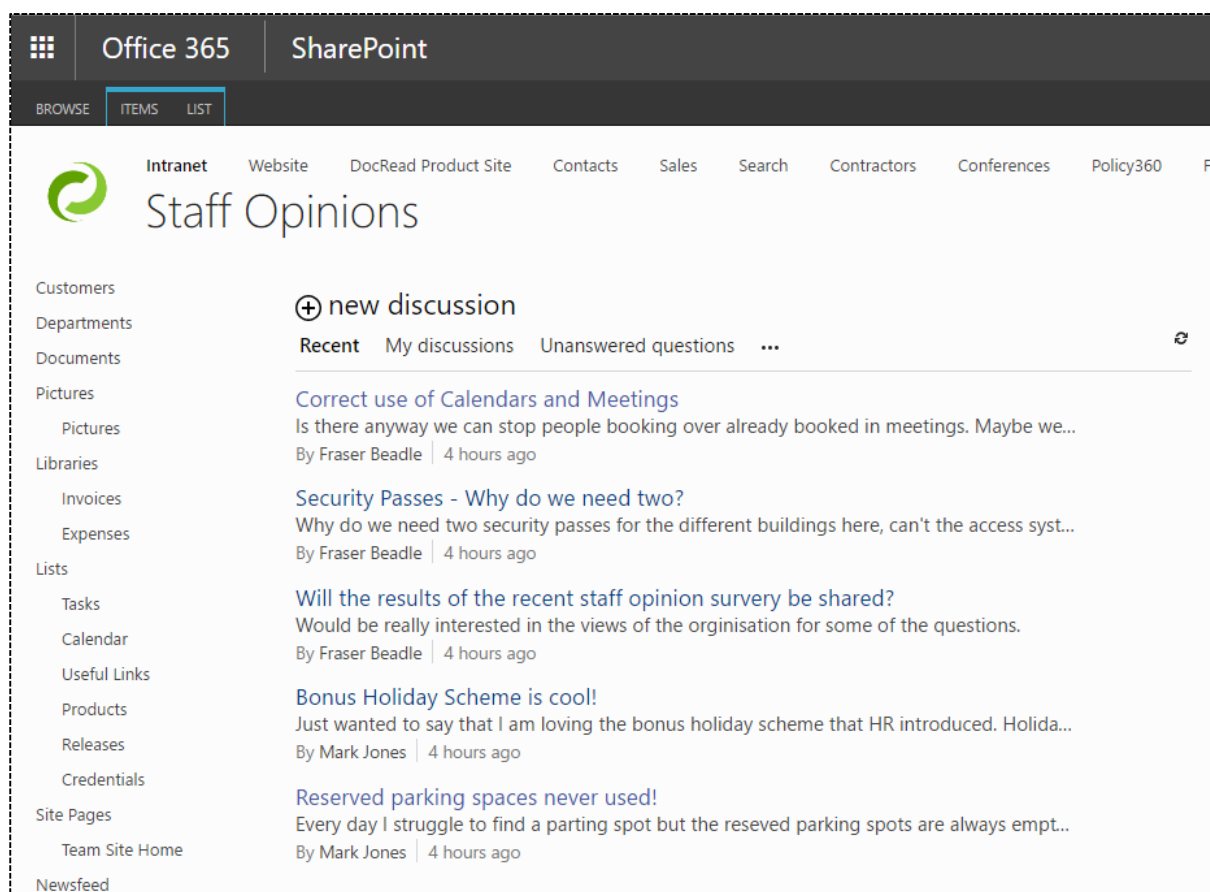

TOP TIP! To increase awareness of the discussion board, consider embedding it on one of your Intranet or departmental home pages. This will immediately

bring any new discussions to the attention of your staff. You may also wish to highlight certain discussions by allowing them to viewed under the 'Featured' view.

02 – WIKI PAGES

ℹ COST: FREE | VERSIONS: 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016, ONLINE | SETUP TIME: VERY FAST

"Wikiwiki" means quick in Hawaiian. A wiki library is a document library in which users can easily edit any page. The library grows organically by linking existing pages together or by creating links to new pages. If a user finds a link to an uncreated page, he or she can follow the link and create the page.
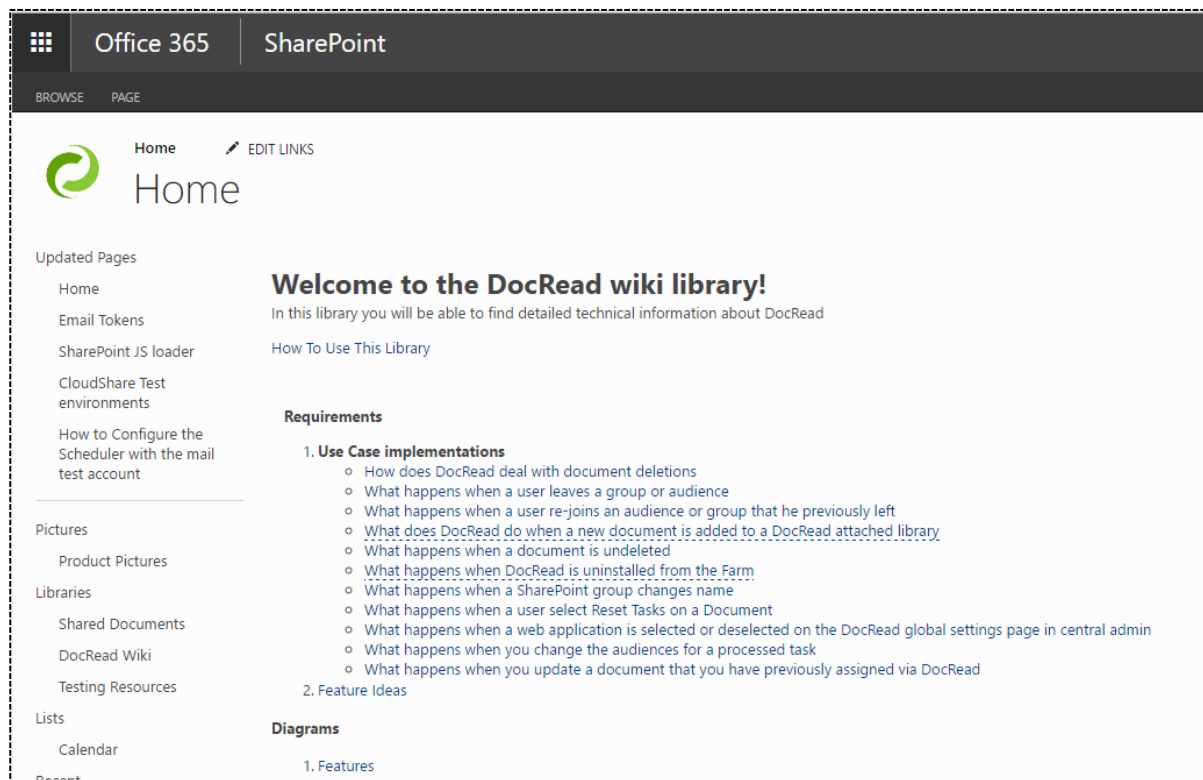
In business environments, a wiki library provides a low-maintenance way to record knowledge. Information that is usually traded in e-mail messages, gleaned from hallway conversations, or written on paper can instead be recorded in a wiki library in context with similar knowledge.

Other example uses of wiki libraries include brainstorming ideas, collaborating on designs, creating an instruction guide, gathering data from the field, tracking call centre knowledge and building an encyclopaedia of knowledge.

03 - ANNOUNCEMENT LISTS

i COST: FREE | VERSIONS: 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016, ONLINE | SETUP TIME: VERY FAST

The SharePoint Announcement List is a special type of list that lets you create an announcement with an expiry date. To present the announcements to staff you can place the Announcement List on the landing page of your Intranet.
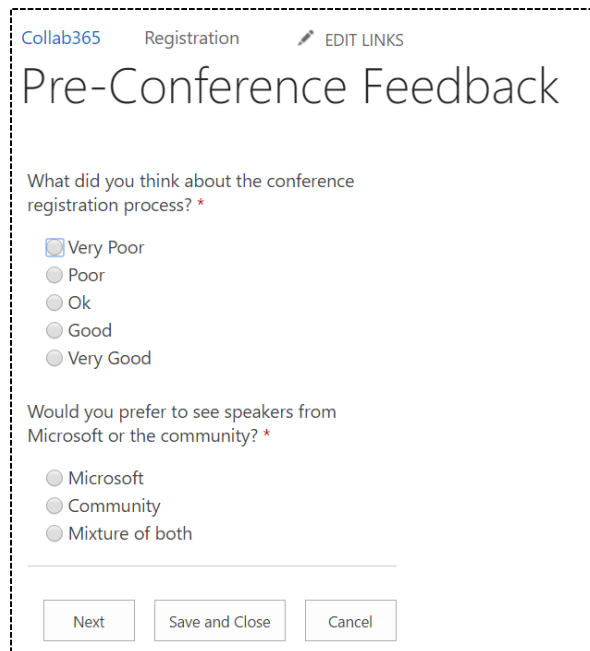
Announcements

(+) new announcement or edit this list

✓	Title		Modified
	What should I use to record my session?	•••	24 June
	How long should my session be?	•••	24 June
	Watermarks on camtasia	•••	21 April
	Do I need to use a headshot for my presentation?	•••	17 March
	How do I show myself on screen and also the slides?	•••	16 March

As the Announcement List is just a custom SharePoint list it can be searched with in-built Search or added to any site pages you feel appropriate. If your announcement is date dependant (such as for a company event), you can set an expiry date that will force it to stop showing. One other notable feature is that an end-user can set an 'Alert' when an announcement is created. This results in them receiving an email (or SMS) automatically.

04 – SURVEY

i COST: FREE | VERSIONS: 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016, ONLINE | SETUP TIME: VERY FAST

Internal Communications often need to be 2 ways in that as well as being able to share information with employees, it's also necessary to receive input. As with the discussion board, a SharePoint Survey can easily be created to gather data.

The Survey that ships with all versions of SharePoint allows you to carry out the following features:

1. Anonymous Surveys (beware - they're not truly anonymous!).
2. Question branching.
3. Group questions into pages.
4. Accessible via a popup.
5. Answers are exportable to Excel.
6. Answers get stored as a SharePoint list.

If you would like to use more advanced features such as randomized questions then the SharePoint Survey is lacking, but it certainly caters for a lot of scenarios! If you'd like to set your staff quizzes or tests, then please see section 12.

05 – YAMMER

COST: RANGES FROM FREE TO 24$ PER USER/MONTH | VERSIONS:2010, 2013, 2016, ONLINE | SETUP TIME: MODERATE

Yammer is often talked about as being the 'Facebook for Enterprise'. It's got a similar feature set and allows you to create and manage a social network for your organisation pretty quickly.

The cool thing is that it is now possible to choose the newsfeed feature you prefer, SharePoint or Yammer.
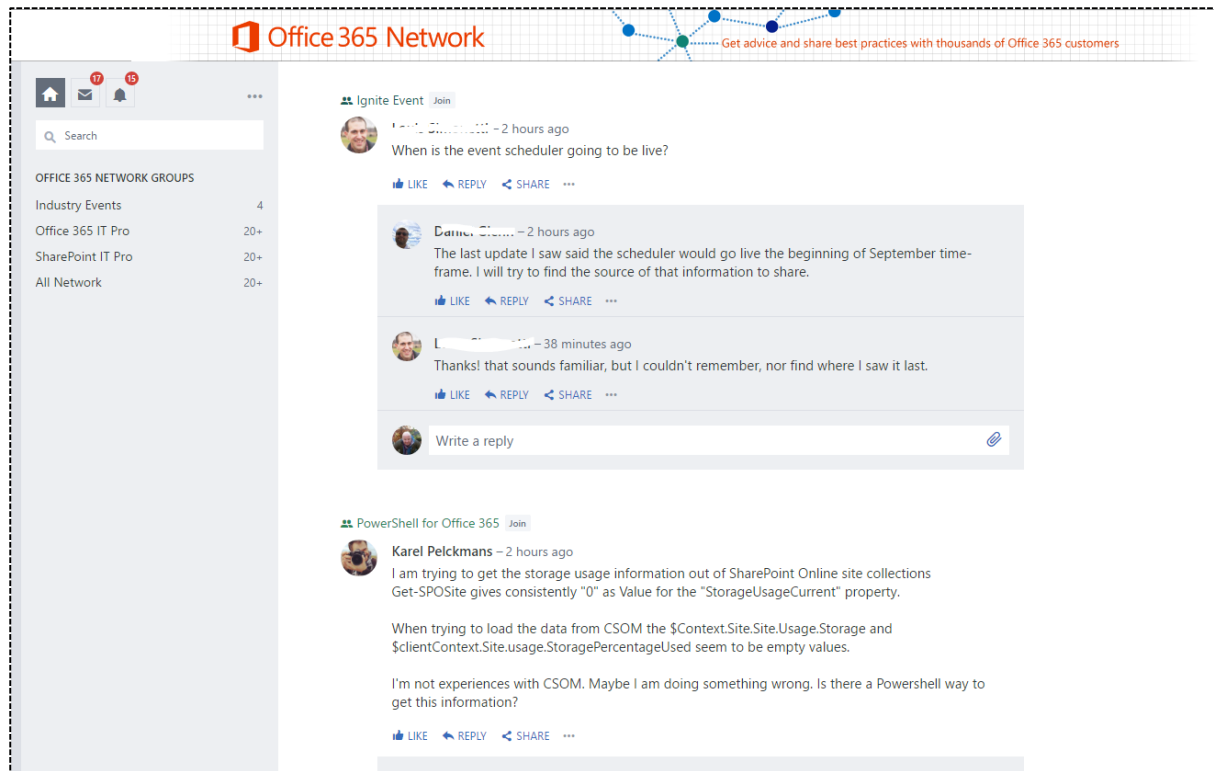
Yammer offers the following headline features:

- Groups
- Post Liking
- Shares / Replies
- Bookmarking
- Online – real time chat
- Polls
- Praising staff
- Emails and Alerts
- + lot's more!

The other big win is that Yammer is all cloud-based so there's no need to procure it and install it on your own corporate servers. There is a useful free version which is also bundled in with various Office 365 subscriptions.

06 - SHAREPOINT ALERTS

i COST: FREE | VERSIONS: 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016, ONLINE | SETUP TIME: VERY FAST

SharePoint has a pretty robust user alerting mechanism built in that allows a person to be notified when content is changed by them or someone else. In addition to this the frequency and type of alert can be specified. For important documents or announcements this is a good way to keep people up to speed with what's changing.

However, this does result in yet even more emails going out to staff so be wary how many you set on document libraries where you expect lots of document changes!

As can be seen (on the next page) the image alerts can be configured to be sent to a user when someone adds, changes or deletes a document. You can also specify the frequency to either immediately, daily or weekly.

Alert me when items change   ✕

Delivery Method
Specify how you want the alerts delivered.

Send me alerts by:
- ⦿ E-mail   mark.jones@collaboris.co.uk
- ◯ Text Message (SMS)   [   ]
  - ☐ Send URL in text message (SMS)

Change Type
Specify the type of changes that you want to be alerted to.

Only send me alerts when:
- ⦿ All changes
- ◯ New items are added
- ◯ Existing items are modified
- ◯ Items are deleted

Send Alerts for These Changes
Specify whether to filter alerts based on specific criteria. You may also restrict your alerts to only include items that show in a particular view.

Send me an alert when:
- ⦿ Anything changes
- ◯ Someone else changes a document
- ◯ Someone else changes a document created by me
- ◯ Someone else changes a document last modified by me

When to Send Alerts
Specify how frequently you want to be alerted. (mobile alert is only available for immediately send)

- ⦿ Send notification immediately
- ◯ Send a daily summary
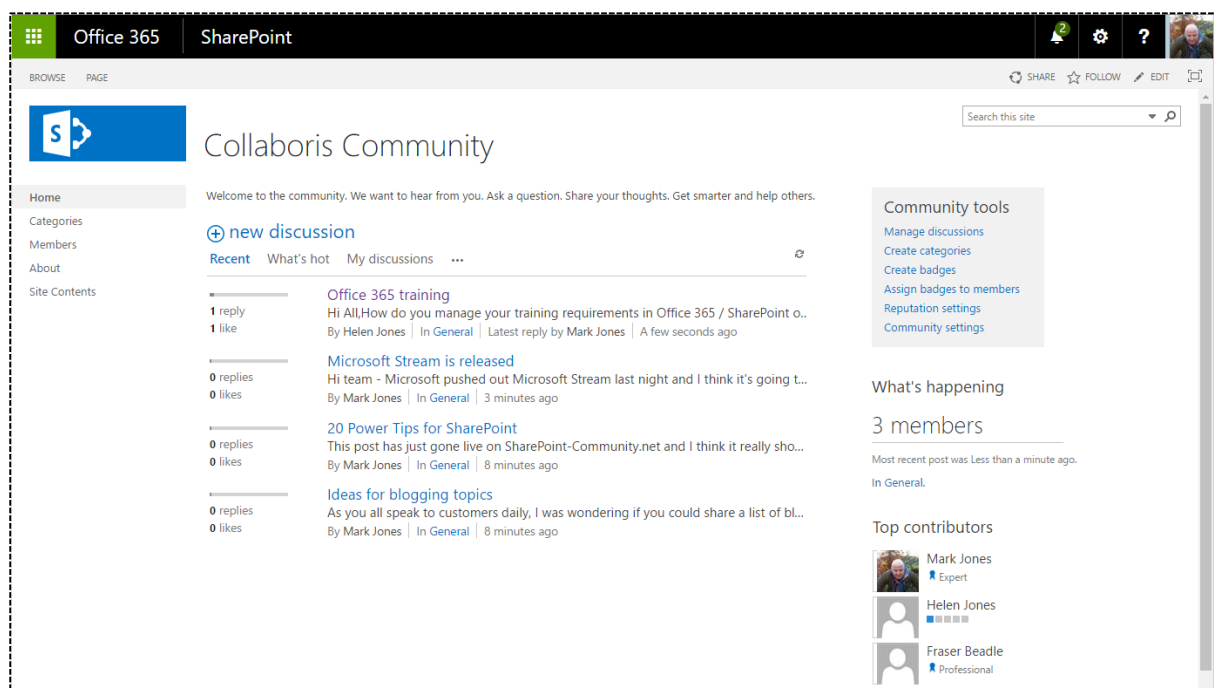- ◯ Send a weekly summary

Time:
[Monday ▾] [08:00 ▾]

[OK]   [Cancel]

07 - SHAREPOINT COMMUNITY SITE TEMPLATE

i COST: FREE | VERSIONS: 2013, 2016, ONLINE | SETUP TIME: FAST

The Community Site Template was new to SharePoint 2013 and is a special type of site that serves as a mini social network around a given subject.

The community site offers the following features:

- **Gamification** - award points to members for completing tasks such as contributing to posts and getting active. You can also directly reward staff with a configurable badge if you feel it appropriate.
- **Discussion** - installs with a discussion forum pre-installed with the ability to create categories.

- **Members view and activity view** - see how active the site and members are.

Having a good social and gamification strategy in your organisation can really be a great way to increase staff engagement and motivation. It's not the best for top down communication, but is very effective for peer to peer communication.

Have Yammer? If your organization has Yammer I think Yammer groups are a much richer option than the community site, although the gamification features aren't present.

08 - USE VIDEO IN SHAREPOINT

ⓘ COST: FREE | VERSIONS: 2010, 2013, 2016, ONLINE | SETUP TIME: VERY FAST

If you believe all the surveys that have been conducted. Video is supposedly one of the most effective techniques for getting a message across. I am no expert, but I know from personal experience, I like to watch not read. We also added a 45 second video about DocRead on our home page and that doubled the interest in our products.

The next screen shot illustrates presenting a video inside of a SharePoint wiki page. This is achieved by using the 'Script Editor Web Part' inside of SharePoint 2013 / 2016 / Online. If you are using SharePoint 2007 or 2010 then there are still ways to get video embedded into a webpage.

In our example we've embedded a video from Microsoft Stream, but it's almost the same set of steps to embed it from YouTube or Vimeo for example.
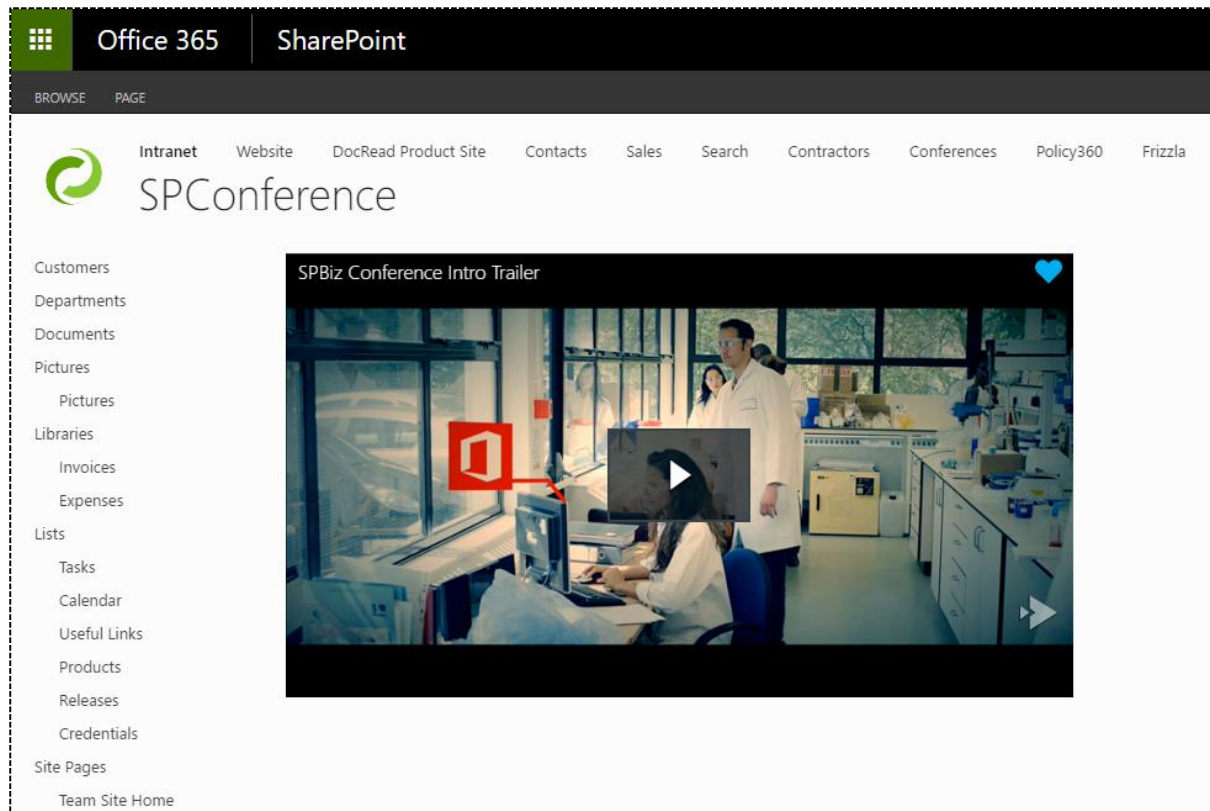
Video is the best format to deliver educational content such as training courses. It can also be effective for many other users such as presentations from Key members of the organisation.

The good news for those of us that have SharePoint is that there are a few options. To add a video (from somewhere like YouTube or Vimeo) is as simple as adding a web part to a wiki or publishing page. For more information, check out our blog posts:

- [How to add a video to a web page in 5 steps](#)
- [How to embed a video into a SharePoint page and where to host it](#)

SharePoint 2013 also improved the story even further as it's a breeze to show off video with thumbnails from your library. Have a read of this article by the Office team.

Top Tip! If you are serious about using video then it's probably advisable that you don't store them all in SharePoint otherwise this could hamper your performance. My suggestion would be to go with a paid video provider such as Microsoft Stream (see next) or Vimeo.

09 – MICROSOFT STREAM

ⓘ COST: FREE | VERSIONS: 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016, ONLINE | SETUP TIME: VERY FAST

At the time of writing this, Microsoft recently launched Stream which in their words is a "*a new business video service that democratizes access to and discovery of video at work. Starting today, anyone with a business email address can sign up for the preview in seconds and begin uploading, sharing and tagging videos in their organization. By taking the "work" out of managing video storage and security, Microsoft Stream enables organizations and their employees to communicate and collaborate with video more easily*."

Here's our Stream instance with a few sample videos loaded in.
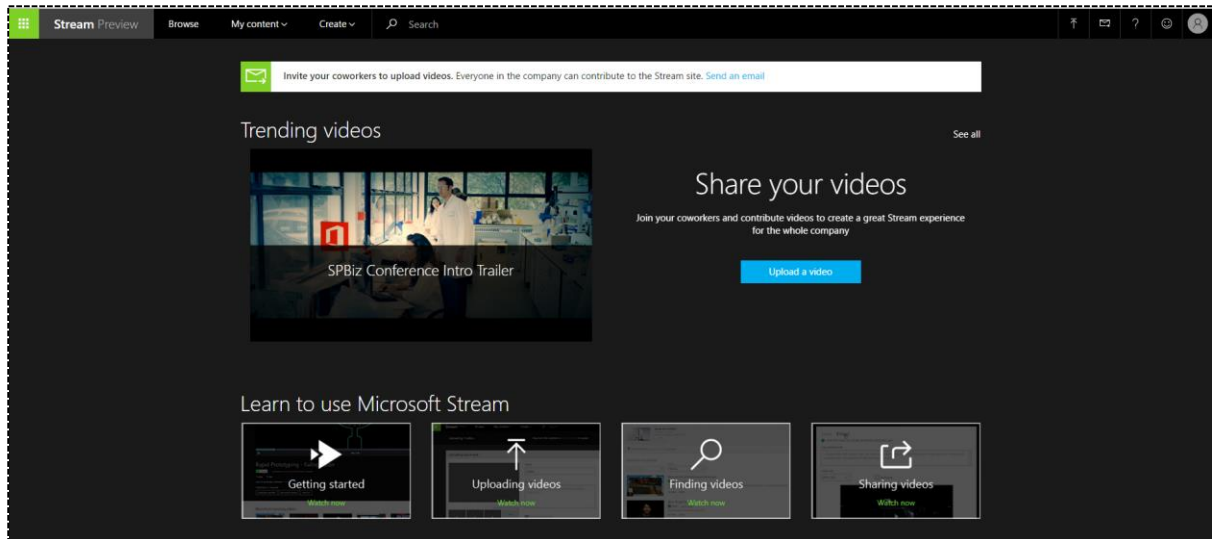
If you are wondering where this leaves "Office 365 Video" then do not worry because Microsoft have already said that Stream will be the successor to O365 video and that there will be a migration path.

Prediction: MS Stream will eventually become a very important tool in your Internal Communications belt as I imagine it will be bundled and integrated with existing Office 365 subscriptions. This means it will also be easy to share video with staff members who also have access to O365 (or even SharePoint hybrid).

As you'd expect with a modern video sharing platform, Stream allows video:

- to be watched on mobile devices
- to be shared easily with colleagues
- to be secured so only the correct people can see it
- to be discovered easily by browsing and search

Bundle that in with a truly integrated Active Directory experience and that's certainly going to be some power!
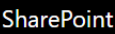
10 - SHAREPOINT BLOG

i COST: FREE | VERSIONS: 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016, ONLINE | SETUP TIME: VERY FAST

SharePoint also offers a type of site template called a 'blog'. A blog site template allows you to create and manage your posts, comments and categories. However, (as with other OOTB features) when compared to other blogging engines (e.g. WordPress) it's not half as powerful or flexible. It has certainly improved in SharePoint 2013 but you can still only choose from 3 types of layouts.

It's also quite limited if you want to expose blog content on other sites. However, if you don't need a lot of 'bells and whistles' for an 'internal-facing' blog then this may just suffice!

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Office 365 | SharePoint

BROWSE   PAGE

Home
Collaboris Blog

Categories
Events
Ideas
Opinions
ADD CATEGORY

Archives
July
OLDER POSTS

STOP Using Email as your Policy Management Software
19 July 2016

Every company has its own policies and procedures that have to be shared with people in the organisation. In the past this was typically done by distributing paper copies. Since its introduction, e-mail has largely replaced the need for paper distribution, and using e-mail and file shares as the companies only Policy Management Software is pretty common.

by Mark Jones at 13:41
0 comments | Email a link   Edit

Avoid the SOP Management Mistakes
19 July 2016

Of course, in any work environment, when creating and updating Standard Operating Procedures, there are numerous considerations; many ways to get it right and many ways to get it wrong. This blog is to highlight some of the most common areas people and teams fail in their SOP management.

by Mark Jones at 12:48
0 comments | Email a link   Edit

How to make sure your team read and sign documents without using paper
19 July 2016

Blog tools
Create a post
Manage posts
Manage comments
Manage categories
Change post layout:
Basic ▼

No, this isn't actually my picture. I just haven't gotten around to updating this section. It's good to know that someone is reading every last word though. Thanks!

RSS FEED
ALERT ME

11 - DOCREAD & DOCSURVEY

ⓘ COST: PAID | VERSIONS: 2010, 2013, 2016 (SOON) | SETUP TIME: 1 HOUR

DocRead and DocSurvey for SharePoint are add-ons to SharePoint that we built to really provide a robust way of pushing out content (stored in SharePoint document libraries) to groups of users. DocSurvey allows you to create a quiz or test that the staff member must pass. DocRead is responsible for the distribution of the task as well as tracking the progress and storing the acknowledgment.


The following process now becomes possible:

- Create a document, video, announcement or any list item in SharePoint.
- Assign the document to be sent to a SharePoint Group, AD Group, Global Audience or set of users.
- Specify a deadline to read and confirm by.

- Create and assign a quiz and assign it to the document.
- Sit back and relax.

Each user is then created a 'Reading Task' to read the document, pass the test (if used) and accept your terms. A Web Part can be placed onto any SharePoint site page so it's immediately obvious what they need to read with the most urgent at the top. The web part can be scoped to the entire farm so regardless of where the document originates from it's all viewable in one convenient, consolidated reading list.
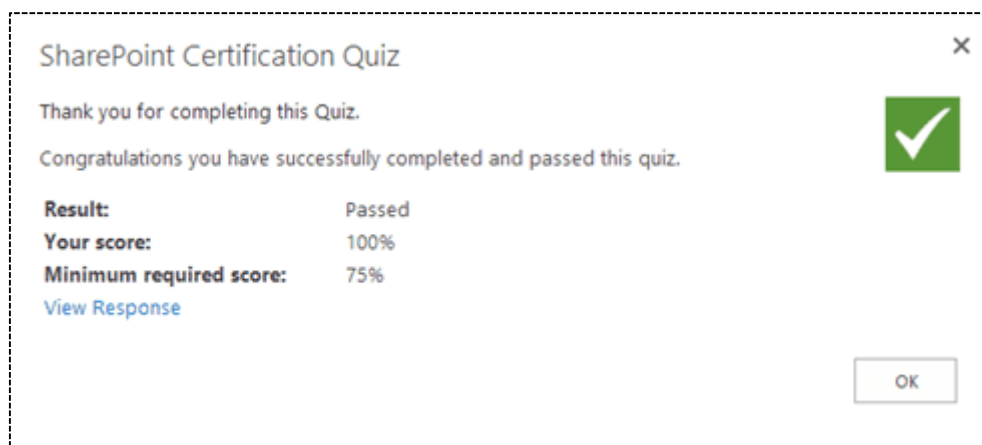
The screenshot above is an example of what the staff member will see if they've passed the quiz that you set.

If you wish to find out more, please use the links below:

- DocRead - https://www.collaboris.com/products/docread/
- DocSurvey - https://www.collaboris.com/products/sharepoint-survey/

12 – SKYPE FOR BUSINESS

ⓘ COST: WITH 0365 PLAN | VERSIONS: O365 | SETUP TIME: FAST

This one isn't officially "SharePoint" but it's so closely linked to the SharePoint / Office 365 family that it's very worthy of a mention. It's also essential that you have a strategy for virtual meetings as well as for instant messaging. If you have an Office 365 subscription, then it's likely you will also be able to run meetings using Skype for Business internally with your own staff and also externally with clients and other contacts.

Some of the Skype for Business features you will want to use to aid your internal communications strategy are as follows:

- Multi-user video conferencing
- Content sharing (screen, PowerPoint, desktop)
- Meeting broadcasting
- Instant messaging
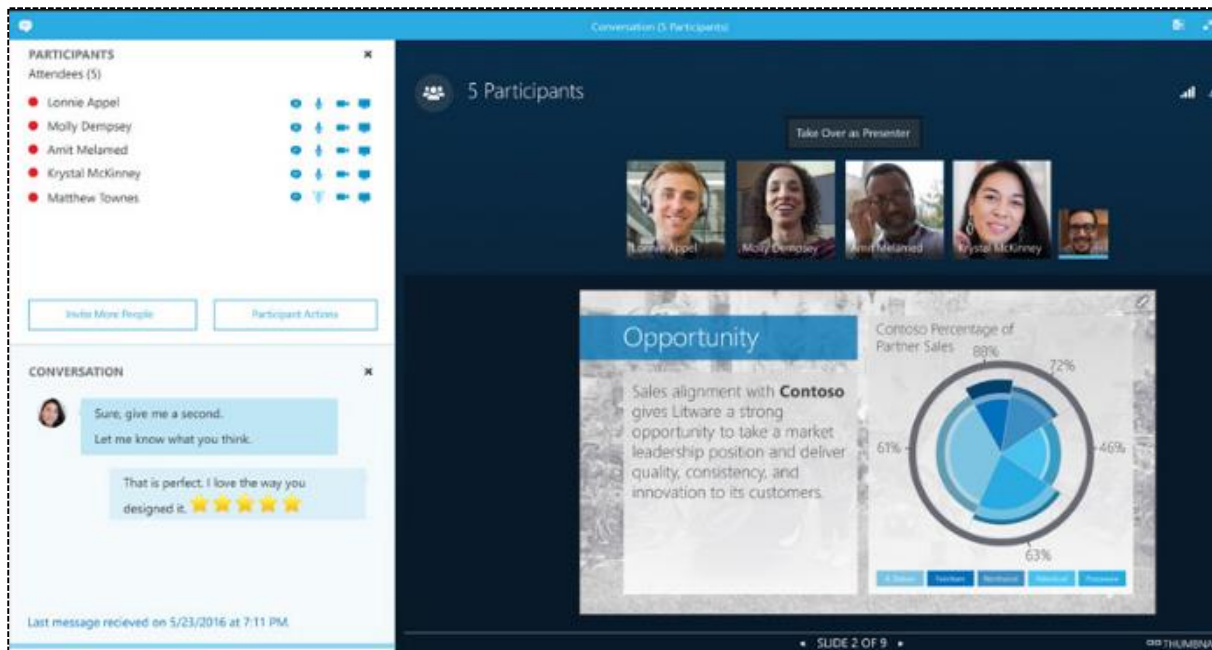
TOP TIP! If you don't have an active Office 365 subscription then you may want to consider using normal Skype, which is free and also allows screen sharing and video calling.

13 – POLLS

ⓘ COST: FREE | VERSIONS: 2007, 2010, 2013 | SETUP TIME: MEDIUM

Polls are an excellent way to gather feedback from your staff. The reasons that they're so effective are:

- They are extremely fast to take part in (click of a button).
- The staff member is keen to take part so that the answer can be revealed.

SharePoint doesn't officially ship with any in-built polling engine, however it's very simple to integrate others.

SpUserPoll is completely free and installs on SharePoint 2007, 2010 and 2013. It doesn't currently support Office 365 and also relies on your SharePoint Administrator to install it (which is a very quick task).

To help with our Collab365 conferences we also use polls extensively and integrate them to SharePoint with a cloud-based poll provider. Once you've created the poll (using the Cloud provider's UI), then it's possible to export it and embed the script into SharePoint. Take a look at the screenshot below which illustrates 8 polls in-use on one of our SharePoint Wiki Pages.
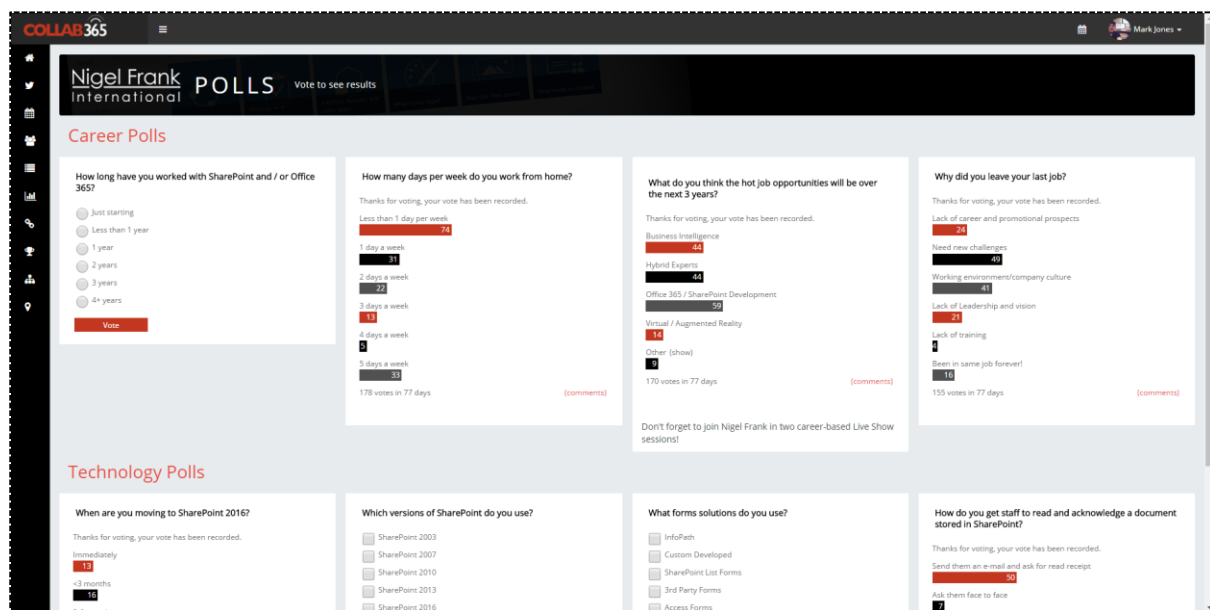
If you are interested in the poll provider we used on the Collab365 SharePoint Conference platform, then take a look at: http://www.poll-maker.com

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14 – DELVE

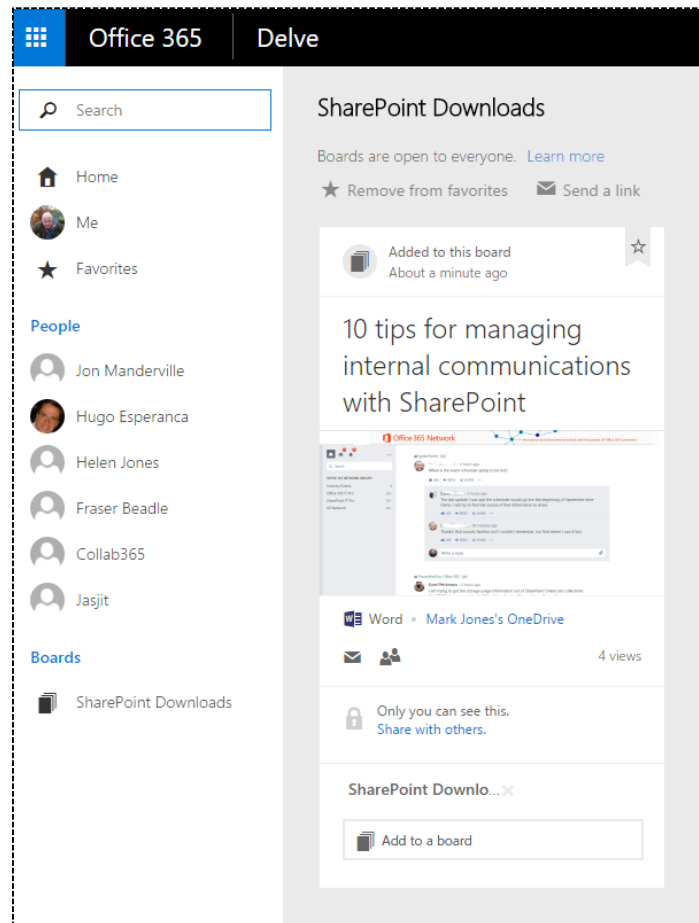*i* COST: FREE | VERSIONS: OFFICE 365 (ONLINE) | SETUP TIME: NONE

If you have Office 365 (and use SharePoint Online) then this particular tool comes for free with no set-up required. It's actually a very different kind of communication tool.

So what is Delve? Think of Delve as a tracking engine that monitors what each person does inside of Office 365. If a person works on a document, then this is tracked. If a person amends a page in SharePoint, then this is also tracked.

Why is this a good communication tool? Well it's really valuable if you are looking to see what your colleagues are working on and serves as a really convenient way to communicate without having to do anything. Delve also security trims the results, meaning that if you don't have access to see a particular document (that a colleague is working on) then it won't show up.
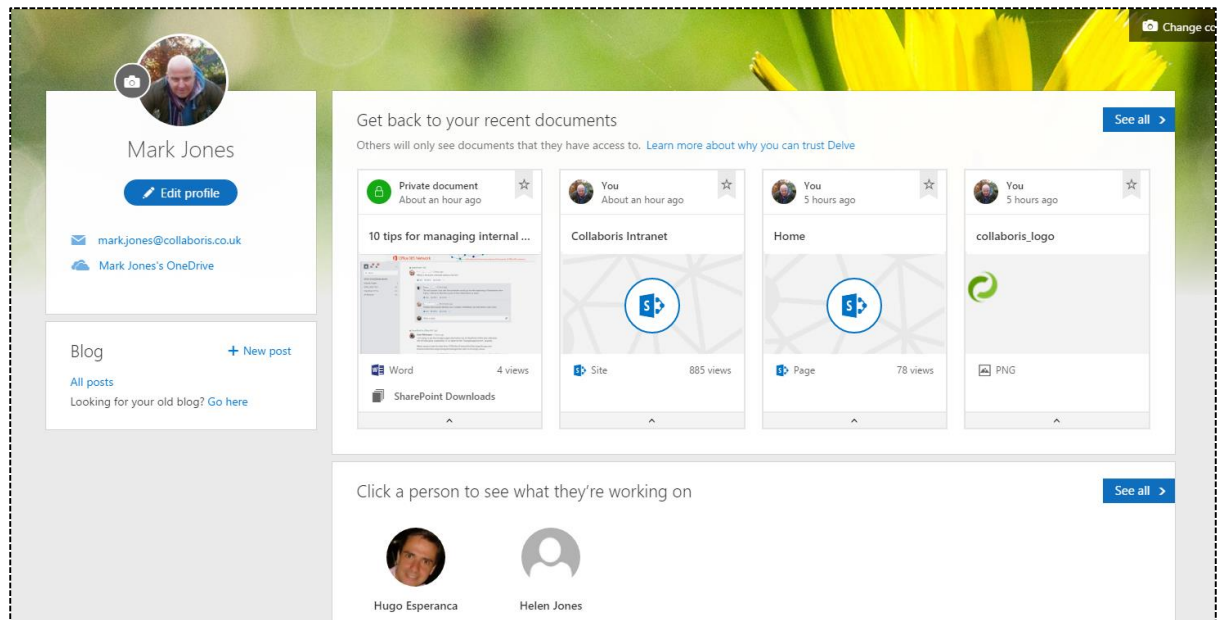
For extra convenience you can also add 'boards' to group documents together. Each board can then be browsed by other employees. Here's a board I just created for this document.

The real power of Delve will come down the line when you can teach it how to collect information from your own actions.

15 - COMPANY NEWS

ⓘ COST: FREE | VERSIONS: 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016, ONLINE | SETUP TIME: SLOW

SharePoint doesn't offer a specific news features, but it's pretty easy to create a 'News experience' by using its robust Publishing infrastructure. This could be achieved in a few ways, but the suggestion here would be to create a new content type called 'News Article' and then create a publishing page layout to create News articles.

Once you've got the publishing pages created then you could use something like the Content Query Web Part or even the Content Search Web Part to show the latest news to the end-user.

If you would really like to show off, consider using 'Audience Targeting' so that you can personalise the news to a person based on their department, team or general interest!
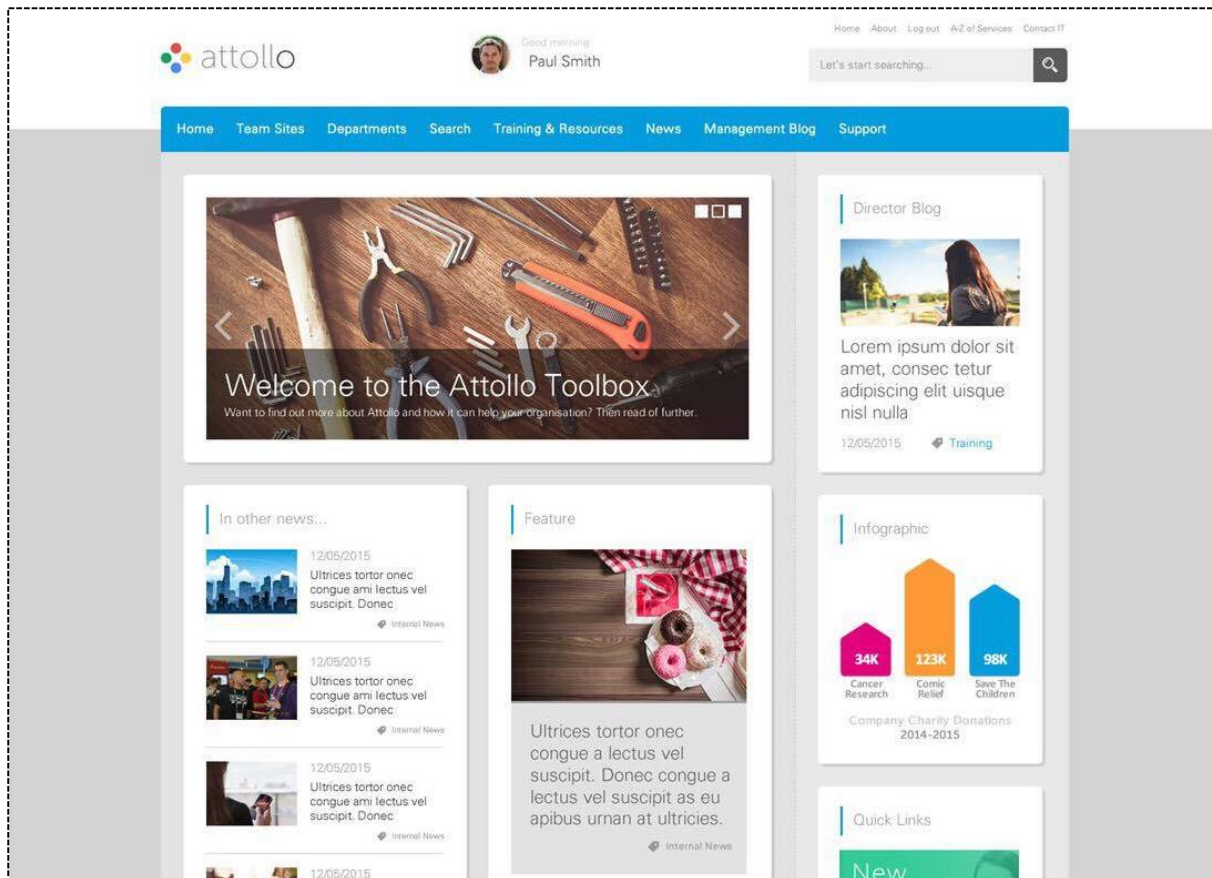
The screenshot above is a mock-up of what a SharePoint Intranet could look like if it was styled to match a corporate brand. In fact, this is actually a screenshot of Attollo, jointly developed by RedPlane and Pink Petrol in the UK. In this example, Attollo aggregates the news by using SharePoint Search to display the latest news from the company.

16 – SHAREPOINT ON MOBILE

ℹ️ COST: **FREE** | VERSIONS: **2013, 2016, ONLINE** | SETUP TIME: **FAST!**

What internal communications strategy would be complete without considering mobile access? The great news is that in the middle half of 2016, Microsoft got really serious with mobile. They released a mobile app for iOS and Android (coming soon) that have been marketed as "Your intranet in your pocket".
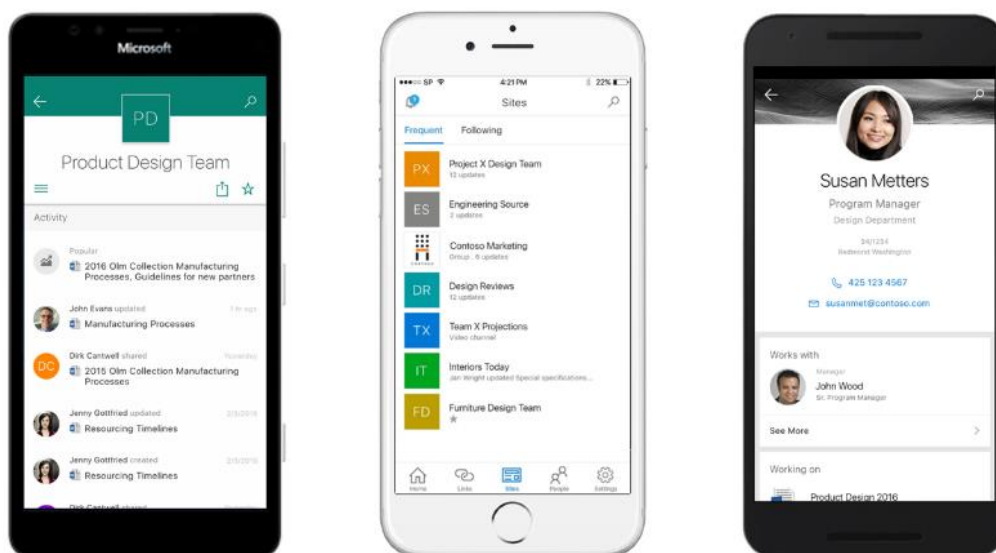
(The image is from this Office blog post).

What Microsoft have done is to release a mobile accessible version of SharePoint that works in SharePoint Online as well as for SharePoint 2013 and SharePoint 2016 on-premises.

Take a look at the apps below:

- [SharePoint Mobile app on iOS](link)

- SharePoint on Android (due in Q4 2016)

17 - OFFICE 365 GROUPS

i COST: FREE | VERSIONS: OFFICE 365 (ONLINE) | SETUP TIME: NONE

Office 365 Groups are pretty new and if you have a license for O365 I believe they're one of the most powerful communications features out there. If you have ever used Slack then this is where I think Microsoft is heading with O365 Groups. They allow you to take part in conversations, share documents and schedule events all as a group.
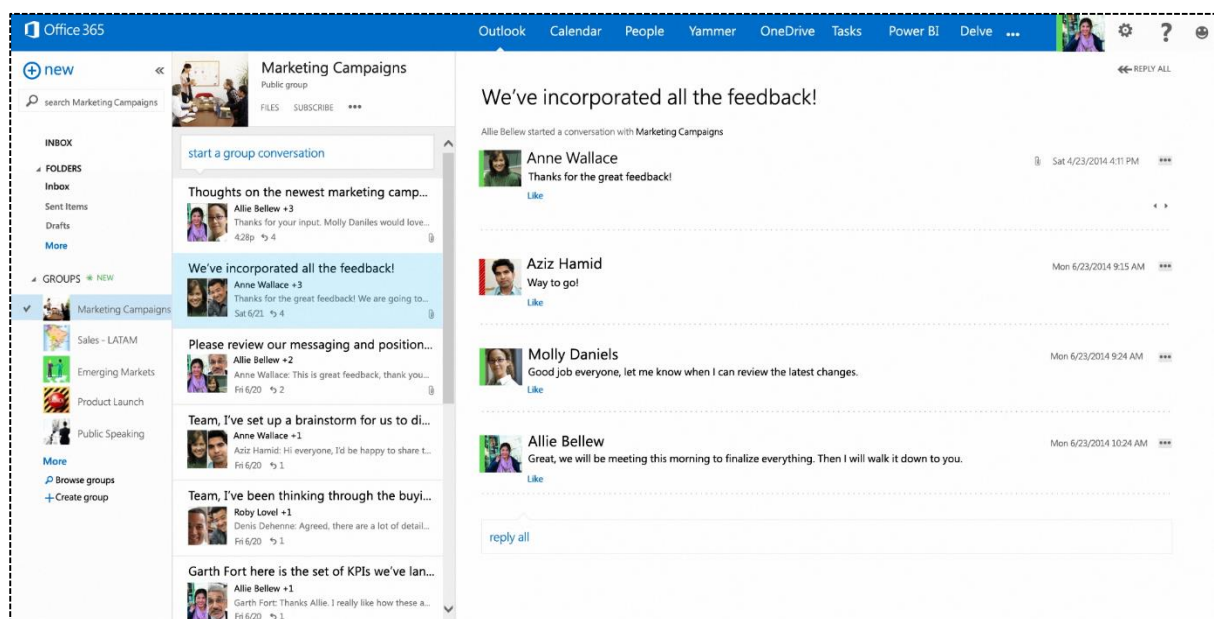

(Picture originally posted here).

One of the cool features that I like about Groups is that when you manage the group "FILES" this is actually a SharePoint site underneath. This also means that

groups aren't constricted to one application – they will eventually be spread across the entire Office 365 family.

18 - E-MAIL ENABLED LISTS / LIBRARIES

ⓘ COST: FREE | VERSIONS: 2010, 2013, 2016 | SETUP TIME: MODERATE

If you are an organization that's particularly mobile, then it may not always be possible to be logged into SharePoint on a desktop. One very cool feature in SharePoint on-premises is the ability to give a particular library its own e-mail address. Once you've done this you can literally open up your favourite mail client and send an e-mail to it. When the library receives the email it will post it as a new item and also extract any attachments from it.
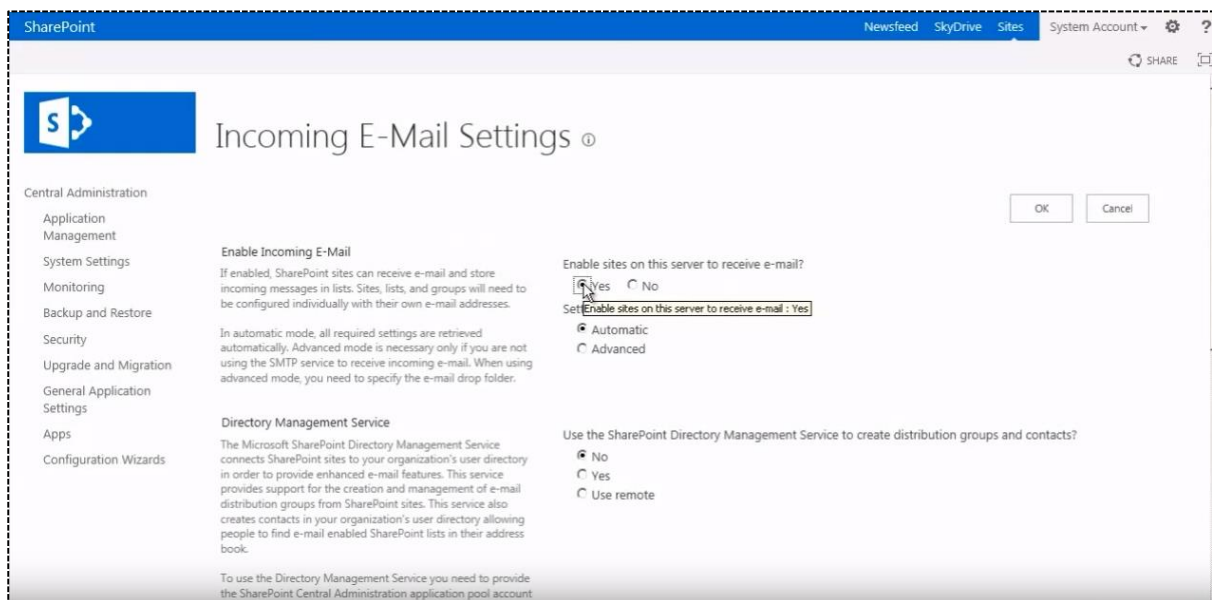
This is ideal if you want to keep staff communicating while away from the Office!

19 – TAGS AND NOTES

i COST: FREE | VERSIONS: 2010, 2013 | SETUP TIME: VERY FAST

SharePoint offers the ability to tag and create notes around content. This then allows users to explore the content using those tags. This is very similar to the hashtag idea that's so prolific in Twitter. SharePoint also offers a standard clickable Tag Cloud visualisation that can be placed onto a site page.

The most popular tags are larger. After you click on a tag in the cloud it will take you to a page that allows you to:

- View the content that has been tagged
- Follow a tag (which then causes it to appear in your Newsfeed)
- Add notes about that particular tag
- View people who are following the tag

Please note this feature has been retired in Office 365 and SharePoint 2016. However, Yammer can be used as a "similar" replacement but if you are interested changes around documents you will need to "follow" a document.

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THAT'S A WRAP!

I hope you have found this guide helpful and are eager to try some of the features and techniques that I have outlined.

If you'd like to connect with me or get involved with what we do, then please do via one the following methods:

- Twitter - https://twitter.com/MarkQJones
- Facebook - https://www.facebook.com/Markqjones
- Web: https://www.collaboris.com
- Community: https://sharepoint-community.net
- Conferences: http://collab365.events
- DocRead: https://www.collaboris.com/products/docread/
- DocSurvey: https://www.collaboris.com/products/sharepoint-survey
- Email: mark.jones@collaboris.com

Thanks for reading!

Mark Jones, Collaboris