
How to **maximise** the return on your Office 365 investment

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Intro

Although IT budget spend has been increasing, CIOs and CTOs are still under pressure to justify every investment

You are also expected to prove the returns of each investment, and the value brought to the business as a whole.

At the same time, your team is under pressure to build an IT infrastructure that flexes to seamlessly support changing business priorities, even driving the agenda as part of a digital transformation strategy.

The bottom line is that you must fully utilise every asset – or face uncomfortable questions from the rest of the board.

Digital transformation from an unexpected source

The humble Microsoft productivity suite Office 365 may not seem like the logical starting point for digital transformation – but there’s a lot going on behind the scenes. According to Microsoft, most subscribers are already using Exchange Online and Skype, whilst simultaneously ignoring the many value-adds included with their service. As a result, those businesses are missing out on a number of opportunities to drive their digital transformation agenda.

Microsoft has identified four key areas where Office 365 can deliver more value for your organisation.

These are:

- Collaboration
- Mobility
- Intelligence
- Trust & Security



Part 1 Collaboration

As the boundaries between business units blur, your employees need tools that allow them to work more closely

The impressive uptake of Skype – 110 million meetings are held using the platform every month¹ – shows how Office 365 is already helping to bring people closer.

Microsoft also report that employees are assigned to multiple project teams simultaneously. Staying on top of all the moving parts means equipping workers with the tools they need to manage their workload.

Office 365 provides Groups as a way to build a workspace across Microsoft technologies. Importantly, Office 365 adds context into the mix, allowing workers to more easily surface and work on documents and resources relevant to the task in hand.

Office 365 also contains many of the tools and functions you need to help combat the rise of shadow IT. If your business is not supplying the tools and apps employees need to collaborate effectively, they will find their own – and you will lose control of permissions and data in the process.

TAKEAWAY

Using centralised workspaces and groups, Office 365 gives your employees context-aware tools to work together more efficiently and effectively.



¹ Figure quoted at Microsoft Tech Summit, March 2017



Part 2 Mobility

The need for any time, any place access to corporate data has been further accelerating the rise of shadow IT – a report by CipherCloud claims that 86% of applications in use by corporations are unsanctioned². Microsoft are working to resolve these issues, extending support for their applications beyond Windows devices to encompass Apple and Android too.

Rather than trying to replicate the Windows experience on every platform, Microsoft has been adopting the conventions of the host. The all new Outlook for iOS app takes its navigation cues from Apple devices for instance, making it more intuitive for users – and reducing the barriers to adoption.

TAKEAWAY

Office 365 apps help you regain control of your mobile IT estate and boost uptake without compromising productivity.

² Over 1,100 Cloud Applications in Use by Companies, 86 Percent of Cloud Applications are "Shadow IT" – CipherCloud – <https://www.ciphercloud.com/company/ciphercloud-report-identifies-1100-cloud-applications-use-companies-86-percent-cloud-applications-shadow/>



Part 3 Intelligence

The most powerful feature of the Office 365 platform is easily missed, mainly because it cannot be seen. The Azure platform that underpins Office 365 runs an incredibly powerful machine learning system in the background

TAKEAWAY

For the user, this machine learning helps to surface information and resources quickly and autonomously. Outlook offers a focused inbox feature for instance, identifying the messages users need, and relegating other, less-important emails for action at a later time.

Similar functionality is available across the entire Office 365 suite through the Delve tool. Again, the tool automatically surfaces data, files and people that are relevant on an individual basis – whilst fully respecting security permissions.

The Office 365 platform also helps users work more intelligently. Context-aware tooltips provide bite-sized training ideas for instance. PowerPoint has also become more smart, offering the ability to automate slides and animation to reduce the time and effort required to build a presentation. Power users will also benefit from the advanced Business Intelligence (BI) tools that help them to unlock greater value from your data.

The brilliance of these machine learning functions is that they know what your users need to find, even when they don't. And because Delve surfaces information users may not have been aware of, they are less likely to waste time and effort duplicating existing work.

New machine learning features help prioritise data and activities automatically to save time, effort and resources. ➡➡



Part 4 Trust and security

The CTO already knows the importance of security – and the complexities of managing the myriad systems your business needs to operate

TAKEAWAY

According to Microsoft, Office 365 offers “privacy by design” – helping to greatly increase the security of applications and data stored in the Cloud.

To help ensure that you have complete control of your hosted assets, Office 365 and Azure provide complete transparency. End user activities are logged so you can report on how the system is being used, and to spot misuse early. This auditing is invaluable for proving compliance to data protection regulations and compliance frameworks.

Microsoft is also keen to emphasise that their machine learning systems exist purely for the benefit of their users. Unlike other Cloud providers, data stored in Office 365 and Azure is never mined for “analytics” or marketing – what’s yours is yours, and your privacy is respected at all times.

With privacy and security at the core of the Office 365 proposition, users and IT administrators alike will find it easier to protect corporate data without compromising productivity.



Part 5 Conclusion

Smarter and faster –
automatically

Microsoft Office 365 is evolving into much more than a Cloud-based productivity suite. The application of machine intelligence behind the scenes will make users' lives easier – and increase their productivity.

The IT staff responsible for managing security and privacy also stand to benefit from continual improvements to the platform. Privacy by design and powerful permissions controls greatly simplify the process of controlling access to sensitive applications and information in the Cloud.

Perhaps most importantly of all, Office 365 gives your employees the tools they need to perform well, whenever and wherever required. Which should help to slow the spread of shadow IT – and the security headaches these unsanctioned systems create.

To learn more about Office 365 and what it means for your business, please get in touch.



Part 6

Why Acora for your Office 365 migration?

FF *Acora's complex Office 365 email migration service helps companies with complex multiple Active Directory Forests and legacy Exchange Organisations consolidate into Office 365. We combine interactive planning workshops with skilled engineering and a proven toolset to move legacy exchange email into Office 365 quickly and without risk, saving time and cost compared to internal teams learning a complex procedure to perform only once.*

Lee Ganly – CIO, Acora



Moving email to the cloud can present your business with a number of challenges around legacy infrastructure or applications, secure access and security of data.

As a Microsoft Gold Partner, Acora is perfectly aligned to carry out complex enterprise level migrations to Office 365. We've done it many, many times and for a number of clients in different sectors. We'd like to think we've seen it all, know the pitfalls and understand how to manage the risks. From cloud architects, project managers, design architects and consultants our full service professional services team comprises some of the best Office 365 talent around. Their carefully considered and well communicated plans ensure that your journey to Office 365 is safe, secure and can provide an immediate return on investment.

Microsoft Partner
Gold Enterprise Resource Planning
 Gold Server Platform
 Cloud Accelerate

If you would like to find out more about how partnering with Acora can help transform your business, you can contact us via phone, email or through our website. Our team will be happy to help.



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