



Microsoft SharePoint as the central working environment for the New World of Work

White Paper – December 2010

motion10

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1. The New World of Work

In the past years the way teams collaborate has changed drastically. The traditional model with fixed working times and locations has developed into a flexible mix of interaction, collaboration, and communication. The opportunities offered by today's technologies seem unlimited. We are witnessing the continuous emergence of new application models, applications, and possibilities. At the same time there is a huge increase in internal and external information sources. Organizations and their workers now have to deal with information from external customer and partner systems, cloud services, the Web, and social media, as well as a limited number of separate information systems such as ERP systems and databases.

The **New World of Work** – working anytime, anywhere, using all the information tools you need – has been the much talked about trend in the Dutch business landscape this past year. No nine-to-five culture, no more traffic jams, no more sky-high travel expenses. Working whenever it suits you, independent of where you are: at home, on the road, or in the office.

This means, for example, that workers can combine their busy private lives with work more easily, with less stress because there is no need to be at the office in time. This flexibility can contribute to higher satisfaction levels while improving productivity.

However, the New World of Work is more than just more freedom for workers to organize their working hours themselves. It also means a different approach to work and collaboration with colleagues and team members, supported by technology.

The consequences of this new way of working are considerable, both for organizations and their workers and for society as a whole. We have to rethink business management, performance monitoring, availability, and collaboration. Workers get more freedom as well as more responsibilities, and organizations must look for new ways to ensure that people stay committed to their company, customers, and colleagues.

Organizations are now facing the challenge of how they can use technology to fully benefit from the opportunities offered by the New World of Work and improve their bottom line.



The New World of Work has been driven by developments in information and communication technology. Basically, business information and knowledge are now accessible and available anywhere anytime, due to fast and secure Internet connections. Flexible virtual teams can meet anytime sharing documents and exchanging ideas, as opposed to the same team meeting time and again for hours in a row at the office.

In this time of increasing globalization with international customers expecting 24/7 availability, this way of collaboration represents a solution to improve an organization's flexibility and efficiency.

To accomplish this, business information systems must be accessible in better and smarter ways. More and more workers have a wireless laptop computer which they can use at home to work over the Internet instead of a desktop computer with a wired Internet connection on an office desk. The smart phone has also become an indispensable tool to stay informed and be productive while out of the office. In general, the information in older 2- or 3-tier business applications can not be accessed using smart phones, due to the applications' monolithic character and data connection / data access limitations and requirements.

That is why this type of application has to be furnished with a fourth Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) layer, which will ensure that the information and features can be accessed via a Web service interface. An Enterprise Service Bus (ESB) based on Microsoft BizTalk Server will make sure that all relevant business processes are managed properly. Any data transformations, transaction capabilities or restart options are handled by the ESB as well, enabling the "consumption" of processes and information in existing business systems through a Web interface. Besides the standard capabilities of Web service links a large number of adapters is available which can be used, through an ESB, to create links with the legacy business solutions of various leading suppliers, including Oracle, PeopleSoft, SAP, and Siebel. Gradually all application features will be converted to services enabling the set-up and disclosure of a flexible set of business processes.

2. Microsoft SharePoint in the New World of Work

As a major proponent of the New World of Work Microsoft was one of the first to make a strategic choice for this way of working.

Microsoft offers a complete range of solutions to facilitate and support the New World of Work, including the Microsoft SharePoint platform which acts as a flexible framework for building user-friendly websites and portals providing business information. Via SharePoint staff and team members can share information and collaborate online. Since Microsoft SharePoint is an open platform, virtually all types of digital information can be provided and shared with others. Specific features help virtual teams to collaborate effectively and easily, regardless of where the various team members are or when they make their contribution.

SharePoint enables the creation, sharing and editing of all sorts of information using a browser, smart phone, or Microsoft Office – allowing people to continue using the tools and applications they are familiar with. Another key aspect of SharePoint is the easy and effective functionality for searching information and knowledge.

In the New World of Work Microsoft SharePoint is special in that it brings together all capabilities and information people need to work efficiently anytime anywhere in one single central place. Instead of a multitude of applications, panels and interfaces, which are not really helpful to get a consolidated view, SharePoint centralizes everything.



SharePoint can also be deployed as a central Web-based front end for various other business applications which are being used in the organization. As such it replaces the traditional monolithic interfaces of ERP or CRM applications while presenting the information from these sources in the browser. All of this makes SharePoint the

perfect starting point for creating a central working environment, both at the office and at home, or any place where people can work.

SharePoint's connection and integration features, often combined with an integration server such as Microsoft BizTalk, provide users with one "application" – the SharePoint

browser window – to access all the business information they need, in the right and full context. On top of that, SharePoint can also present information from external sources in a structured and controlled way, for example information provided by an external Web service.

As mentioned before, the New World of Work involves more than just flexible working hours and easy access to business information. An integral part of flexible and remote working is communication with team members, customers, and partners. Physical meetings involving travel time can be replaced by audio/video communication, chat sessions, or Web conferences (both one-on-one and with more participants) by using Microsoft Lync, amongst others.

SharePoint is also the ideal solution to integrate another great communication trend – social media – with the business processes in a structured and controlled manner. Particularly in the New World of Work, where colleagues meet each other in person less frequently, it is paramount to facilitate and stimulate social interaction. SharePoint can act as a kind of “virtual coffee room” to bolster and improve social cohesion in and between teams. Social media can also have a business function, for example to inform colleagues about your whereabouts and current activities.

Every organization is facing the challenge of converting “invisible” knowledge – the knowledge inside people’s heads – into visible, usable and searchable information. SharePoint offers note boards, blogs and wikis to write down and share thoughts and ideas in an easy way, allowing the whole organization to contribute and use this information.

The most important change in business information systems is without doubt the emergence and growth of cloud solutions – services offered over the Internet which eliminate the need for on-premise business applications and servers. An increasing number of organizations, both small and large, are switching to cloud-based business services, where some choose to offer their existing services in the form of a so-called private cloud inside the organization or group. As a matter of fact, the emergence of cloud-based computing coincides with the rise of the New World of Work. Workers can use business applications which are accessible via the cloud anytime, anywhere. SharePoint is fully capable of integrating cloud-based information with the information in on-premise business systems.



3. The Value of the Microsoft Application Platform

Knowledge is the most valuable asset of any organization. Deploying this knowledge effectively and creatively in order to make informed decisions and fuel new ideas might be a challenge, particularly if it is spread over various, sometimes isolated systems. Often, workers of one department (for instance Sales) can hardly access the knowledge of another department (for example Customer Service) in the same organization because they use different information systems.

The integrated Microsoft application platform, including BizTalk and SQL Server, can help organizations to disclose all of this knowledge in a structured, flexible and safe way. As business functions and processes on the Microsoft application platform can be converted to services relatively easily, integration in a SharePoint Web portal might be the next step.

The Microsoft application platform also offers Business Intelligence (BI) and process integration functionality which organizations can use to improve the performance, reliability and manageability of their business processes. Automated workflows and exception warnings enable real-time monitoring while ensuring higher reliability and faster response times.



In the New World of Work this SharePoint-based integration offers the benefit of eliminating the need for staff to work in various applications and panels – the so-called “alt-tab syndrome.” Integrated access to information and processes ensures the easy monitoring of various business processes, even if workers are working at home or elsewhere outside the office.

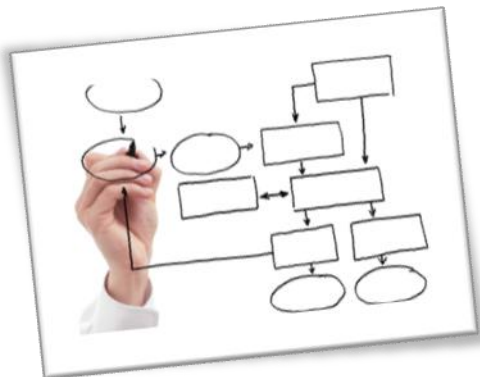
As a result of the broad integration of business information systems and the specific features of SharePoint, related information from various internal and external sources can be linked and presented. For example, a search for customer details not only delivers information from the CRM system but also from various other related information sources. So SharePoint not only shows the history of the customer, it also presents recent customer information found on the Internet.

The integration of servers, applications, services and capabilities enables organizations to create an information system which discloses and enriches business knowledge. Business processes can be further optimized through Business Intelligence and Business Process Management in order to make the right information available at the right moment. After all, accurate and timely knowledge can improve the decision-making process.

4. Planning and Implementation

As soon as a strategic choice has been made for the Microsoft application platform and SharePoint as the central working environment, the organization should make some thorough considerations about implementation. First, all the different processes within the organization must be charted. Which processes can be identified and what information is needed for the execution of the individual processes? Based on this an information model is created which will help identify and handle any bottlenecks in the process structure.

Existing business systems will be analyzed as well, focusing on the question whether (and if so, how) they can communicate with an ESB. The ultimate goal is a service-oriented system landscape, or the conversion of systems into services. Finally, these inventories and analyses will form the starting point for the definition of a complete implementation project.



The delivery of a fully functional system does not yet conclude the implementation of SharePoint as the central working environment. The correct deployment of such an environment may be even more important. This often involves a change in culture, another approach to systems and different ways of interacting with people. The commitment and dedication of employees is crucial for the success of this change process.

To create the required working structure organizations should agree on how to deploy the systems, how to work together, or how to distribute documents (through links posted at the SharePoint portal rather than sending the actual documents by email). These and other agreements will help to leverage the new capabilities of a centralized working environment based on Microsoft SharePoint in a sound and structured way.

It is usually a good idea to train enthusiastic early adopters in the organization, so they can support other users and promote the new work culture, including any formal arrangements.

5. Executive Summary

Organizations are facing the challenge of how to make better use of increasing numbers of information systems and sources. In addition, trends such as the New World of Work, the cloud and social media also require new ways of making information and knowledge accessible in an effective and secure manner.

The Microsoft application platform, particularly Microsoft SharePoint, BizTalk and SQL Server, enables organizations to combine business information, external information, business processes and applications in one centralized working environment. This environment with its effective workflow, search and monitoring capabilities is accessible via a browser anytime, anywhere. Thanks to this platform people can make better decisions and respond to requests and events faster and more flexibly.

SharePoint is at the heart of the platform – here all business knowledge can be found while enabling team members to collaborate and communicate fast and efficiently, regardless of their whereabouts.

About the authors and motion10



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motion10 specializes in integrating digital information from multiple sources. By integrating information, the company enables easy access and helps to extract more value from the data. As a result of this optimal integration, business processes connect better to one another, processes run better, their management becomes easier, and costs will be reduced. Thanks to in-depth experience with sophisticated integrations (hundreds of implementations) motion10 is able to resolve the complexity of IT environments. Based on Microsoft Application Platform technology – BizTalk, SharePoint and SQL Server (BI) – motion10 helps organizations to accomplish a robust, future-proof IT environment.

For more information: www.motion10.com