

Redmond
THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF THE MICROSOFT IT COMMUNITY

VEEAM
IT JUST WORKS!™

SharePoint 2016: A Server for All Seasons?

Microsoft has a lot of constituencies to please with the next release of its sprawling collaboration and content management server next year. The latest technical preview offers some hints as to whether the product will deliver.



- > [SharePoint Server 2016's Place in the Market](#) *Page 1*
- > [Integrating SharePoint/Office 365 with Box](#) *Page 7*
- > [Hands-on with SharePoint Server 2016 Technical Preview](#) *Page 12*

SharePoint Server 2016



Once described as the “ultimate Swiss Army knife” for collaboration, Microsoft is focusing on compliance, file sharing, search, hybrid cloud and an improved UX with its next release. How many blades will prevail?

BY MAGGIE SWEARINGEN

As Microsoft prepares to release its newest version of SharePoint Server, it will arrive at a time when the environment for collaboration has changed markedly since the last major upgrade three years ago. SharePoint, widely used in organizations of all sizes, was never the only choice available for file management and collaboration. Nevertheless, SharePoint remains quite popular, especially among organizations with Microsoft license agreements. That could give SharePoint longevity, but at the same time, its role in the enterprise is up for grabs, because the way

workers store and share information has changed and a wider variety of offerings available. Microsoft has also made clear its future emphasis on collaboration lies with Office 365, and its OneDrive for Business and SharePoint Online services. Even so, many shops running SharePoint on-premises will continue to do so even as Microsoft encourages them to move certain aspects of it online.

Despite fears that Microsoft might not upgrade the on-premises iteration of SharePoint, the company confirmed plans earlier this year and released the first Technical Preview of SharePoint Server 2016 in late August (see “Inside SharePoint Server 2016,” p. 12). The SharePoint Server 2016 Technical Preview shows improved compliance and file sharing, a new Document Library and enhanced search capabilities, among other new features.

Information technology leadership faces unique strategy concerns that simply didn't exist 10 years.

However, in an increasingly crowded competitive environment, where does SharePoint Server 2016 stand out? Microsoft says it has targeted three key areas of growth when architecting SharePoint Server 2016: Improved UXes, Cloud-Inspired Infrastructure, and Compliance and Reporting.

The fundamental code base of SharePoint Server 2016 TP is the same as its online services, but Microsoft has modified it to accommodate an on-premises environment, fitting in with its new cloud-first model of rolling out new features.

SharePoint has evolved to serve three core functions: Enterprise Content Management (ECM), Web Content Management (WCM), Social Workplace Collaboration and File Sync and Share. Taking into consideration what we know—and what we don't—about SharePoint Server 2016, let's see how SharePoint Server 2016 is going to stack up, whether it will serve your needs or if you'll need additional collaboration software or services as an alternative or to complement it. Keep in mind, Microsoft could add new features in future technical previews, or in the release itself, before releasing SharePoint Server 2016 next year.

Enterprise Content Management

Information technology leadership faces unique strategy concerns that simply didn't exist 10 years ago. Managing the relationship between cloud, mobile and on-premises applications requires an eye toward

Many organizations use SharePoint for various purposes while others have eschewed the Swiss Army approach, which is hardly surprising given the distributed nature of enterprises today.

innovation and change—and a willingness to take a few risks to improve business practices.

A recent Gartner Inc. report, “Flipping to Digital Leadership: Insights from the 2015 Gartner CIO Agenda Report,” best describes the challenges of IT decision makers. “Seizing this opportunity requires flipping long-held behaviors and beliefs—from a legacy perspective to a digital one in information and technology leadership, from a focus on the visible to the genuinely valuable in value leadership, and from control to vision in people leadership.”

ECM, which consists of the strategies and tools used to store and provide access to information across organizations, is at the heart of the leadership struggle. ECM used to be simple—create a file, put paper in it, add it to the file cabinet. Now, ECM is comprised of a complex web of different online communications, file types, and formats, even social and collaborative content.

SharePoint for ECM

In a keynote address at the October 2009 SharePoint Conference, Jeff Teper, the Microsoft corporate vice president known as “the father of SharePoint” called it the “ultimate Swiss Army knife” of ECM for its ability at the time to tie together file management, the hosting of internally and externally facing Web sites, and enterprise search.

Many organizations use SharePoint for various purposes while others have eschewed the Swiss Army approach, which is hardly surprising given the distributed nature of enterprises today.

Six years later organizations who committed to SharePoint are sticking with it and believe it can be a part of their ECM strategy. During a presentation in March at the Association for Information and Image Management (AIIM) conference in San Diego, Doug Miles, director for market intelligence, said more than 25 percent of survey respondents to its annual SharePoint survey said they were “committed to building SharePoint as their ECM and records management system,” and another 20 percent said it was their “system of choice” for the foreseeable future. More than 75 percent stated some commitment to “making SharePoint work.”

As for enterprise content management, Microsoft certainly is a key provider of ECM infrastructure, though SharePoint Server isn't

considered the overwhelming leader, either. Providers such as EMC Corp., IBM Corp., OpenText Corp. and Oracle Corp. are also among the formidable content management providers. As noted, Microsoft's emphasis is on SharePoint Online and it remains to be seen what capabilities introduced there find their way into the server edition moving forward.

Hybrid and SharePoint Server 2016

One of the primary selling points of SharePoint Server 2016 when it arrives next year will ultimately be its hybrid relationship between the cloud-based features available in Office 365.

One of the primary selling points of SharePoint Server 2016 when it arrives next year will ultimately be its hybrid relationship between the cloud-based features available in Office 365.

The Cloud Search Service Application (SSA) continues to garner the most buzz. SSA allows organizations to crawl on-premises content and index the content metadata in the cloud for use across other applications (see a video of a session on the SSA given at the Microsoft Ignite conference in May 2015 at bit.ly/1Rrlz5V). SSA is a compelling feature, as the documents and content itself will not reside in the cloud, just the indexed metadata. The hybrid search solution gives on-premises implementations the flexibility to use Delve, the content aggregation service added to Office 365 launched earlier this year (see bit.ly/1L2K0SO), for example, which otherwise wouldn't be available given its reliance on the cloud-based office graph technology.

SSA also provides some key financial benefits—organizations can minimize the cost of maintaining large search indexes because they're hosted in Office 365. SSA can crawl all versions of SharePoint—back to 2007—without costly system upgrades. Of course, there's data that doesn't live on-premises—Microsoft, however, is banking on the fact that an organization's data index policies will allow more flexibility for cloud solutions—as long as the actual data doesn't reside in the cloud.

Getting less attention, but potentially just as intriguing, are the upgraded compliance and data-loss prevention tools that feature an in-place hold policy and new document deletion centers that give organizations increased control over items in SharePoint and OneDrive.

Equally important in the hybrid scenario is the ease with which Microsoft intends to make upgrades, patches and new feature rollouts. New "Zero Downtime" patching could mean far less

Using SharePoint to run public-facing Web site was once very much a part of the conversation, but that conversation has quieted significantly in the past several years.

disruption in key business systems for organizations—increased or at least uninterrupted productivity and potential cost savings.

The ECM Landscape

As Microsoft adds more features to SharePoint Server to establish it as a hybrid ECM solution, rivals are doing the same. Oracle continues to focus some of its energies on its Oracle Documents Cloud Service and Oracle WebCenter Content solution (see bit.ly/1Oip6Ff). An Oracle-sponsored report by research firm IDC argues the mobile elements of these solutions shouldn't be overlooked. Cloud-based file share solutions give employees access to their data on the go—but often aren't connected with the organization's ECM solution. Hello, hybrid. Now, organizations can implement governance and security, but still allow for collaborative file share and file sync.

Another established ECM provider, OpenText, has also spent the last several years building its hybrid solution toolbox. Its solutions continue to lead the ECM landscape and, interestingly, are extensible enough to play nicely with other document and content management solutions. The integration of OpenText eDocs with SharePoint allows organizations to leverage the robust records and document management capabilities of OpenText while using SharePoint as the front-end UI.

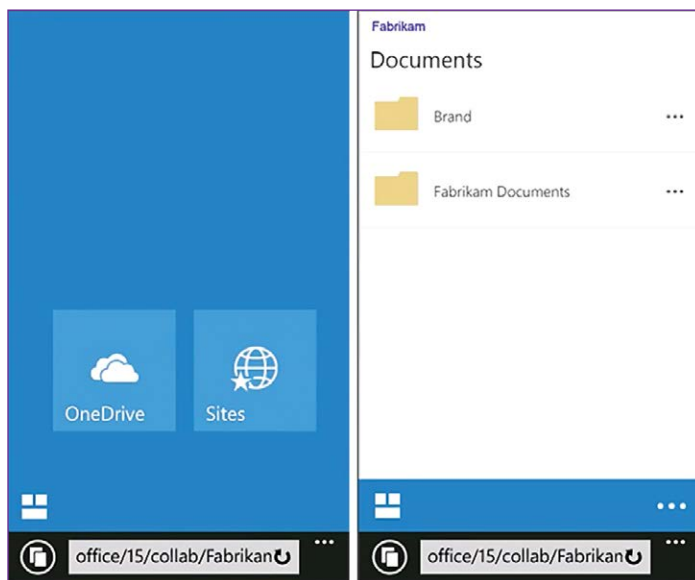


Figure 1. *The SharePoint Server 2016 TP WCM responsive design interface.*

SOURCE: MICROSOFT

SharePoint Server 2016, while not a complete overhaul of SharePoint, should keep SharePoint in the ECM game. But it's too early to say if the changes are enough to shake up the leaderboard.

“[For Microsoft] this is part of a longer-term strategy, enabling people to move to the cloud much more easily,” says Antonio Maio, a SharePoint MVP and senior SharePoint architect at Protiviti Inc. (the firm where I'm a SharePoint consultant). “It allows you to put your toe in the water, and then a bit more, and a bit more. Over time it can significantly change SharePoint's place in the marketplace.”

Choosing the right WCM system means understanding your business, your users and your internal resources.

Web Content Management

Every ECM solution has a WCM component. Naturally, with WCM, it's less about document management and more about Web sites, Web pages, SEO and overall digital strategy. Effective WCM systems have employed publishing, workflow capabilities, content targeting, mobile experiences, and extensible search options. Choosing the right WCM system means understanding your business, your users and your internal resources.

Earlier this year, Forrester Research Inc. analyzed 10 key WCM providers (bit.ly/1KkHFnv), which includes Adobe Systems Inc., Ektron, IBM, Oracle, OpenText and Sitecore. Interestingly Microsoft didn't make the initial list, though in a separate report Forrester evaluated other challengers in the market, including Microsoft and some lesser-known, but unique, tools such as Kentico Software, Alfresco Software Inc. and Liferay Inc. (see bit.ly/1OiqoA2).

It's safe to say using SharePoint to run a public-facing Web site was once very much a part of the conversation, but that conversation has quieted significantly in the past several years. Over time, the SharePoint licensing model has shifted, making it sometimes difficult to discern the cost implications of hosting a public Web site with SharePoint. Add to that the announcement in late 2014 that Microsoft was dropping the public site option from Office 365 completely, and suddenly the idea of SharePoint as a full-featured WCM seemed to be fading.

SharePoint for WCM

Not too much in the SharePoint Server 2016 Technical Preview appears to position SharePoint as a strong challenger as a WCM system. That's not to say SharePoint as a public-facing Web site will vanish completely—it just doesn't appear to be a strong consideration in new features going forward.

The one point of interest, however, is the new emphasis on responsive design (see **Figure 1**). SharePoint mobility (or lack thereof) continues to be a hot topic among SharePoint Server power users. The new out-of-the-box interface in SharePoint Server 2016 is responsive—but the continued emphasis from Microsoft encouraging limited branding carries over to on-premises implementations, especially ones leveraging SharePoint Server 2016 infrastructure more substantially.

Box Targets Office 365 and SharePoint with Deeper Integration

By John K. Waters

When Box, the rapidly growing enterprise content management (ECM) and collaboration platform provider was founded, CEO Aaron Levie made clear the company wanted to topple Microsoft SharePoint. Box was so intent on displacing SharePoint in organizations that it posted billboards on Highway 101 in Silicon Valley mocking it. Of course, Box failed to displace SharePoint in most shops, though it has made formidable inroads as an alternative ECM and collaboration platform.

Closely watched on Wall Street after going public in January, the company reported 43 percent year-over-year growth in revenue for the most recent quarter. Of its more than 39 million registered users, the company claims just over 50,000 are paying customers. Yet 52 percent of those are Fortune 500 companies, Box says. Among them are AztraZeneca, Eli Lilly, Gap, General Electric, KKR, Live Nation, Procter & Gamble, Nationwide Schneider Electric and Whirlpool.

Despite its revenue growth, Box remains hugely unprofitable, having posted a loss of \$43 million for the most recent quarter. Despite the enterprise inroads Box has made in recent years, SharePoint isn't going away any time soon, said Forrester Research Inc. analyst Cheryl McKinnon, who presented a session at last month's BoxWorks customer, partner and developer conference in San Francisco. Noting the huge installed base of SharePoint on-premises, and Microsoft's plans to roll out a new version next year, McKinnon said SharePoint will continue to play a key role in enterprise collaboration.

"A lot of these organizations are going to take their time moving off their on-premises ECM and collaboration systems," McKinnon said, "so SharePoint on-premises certainly has a very long life ahead of it. Plus, there's the complexity of things like integration with other key enterprise apps like SAP, so movement among these kinds of organizations is likely to take far longer than simpler, newer use cases."

As Microsoft continues to extend the features of SharePoint, the company's core emphasis is on Office 365 SharePoint Online, and its core cloud content storage repository OneDrive for Business. IDC analyst Melissa Webster said OneDrive for Business is vulnerable. "Box doesn't do everything that SharePoint does," Webster said, "but it does do everything OneDrive does. We talk to companies who have evaluated OneDrive, and there are performance issues and other weaknesses. That's a potential competitor situation."

As an enterprise file sharing and collaboration platform, Box showed up as a leader in the Gartner Inc. influential Magic Quadrant, whereas OneDrive for Business is only a challenger. Speaking on that finding at Gartner's annual Catalyst conference in San Francisco in August, analyst and Vice President Guy Creese pointed to reliability issues with OneDrive for Business. Creese emphasized Box is very cloud-centered, so the APIs are extremely core to the product. In contrast, organizations are just now starting to get OneDrive for Business APIs as the product previously relied on using SharePoint APIs, Creese explained.

Hoping to address some of those issues, Microsoft last month announced a number of improvements to OneDrive for Business, including a new sync client, new UX improvements in browsers and mobile apps, and some enhanced IT management controls. "Right now, in organizations that are committed to SharePoint, OneDrive fills that mobile-friendly, sync-and-share gap in a pure Microsoft stack," McKinnon said.

In an interview at the BoxWorks event, Jeetu Patel, the company's chief strategy officer and vice president of the Platform group, argued Box is more than just a sync-and-share tool. "We are a content management platform," he said. "What you'll see us doing over time is getting deeply embedded in workflows and systems that drive a company's business—things like customer-facing apps that I, as a company, am building, or supplier-facing or partner-facing applications. They will all need a content component. And when they need those content services, we'll be the ones powering them."

IDC's Webster said it's in both Box's and Microsoft's interests—and Apple's, Adobe's and IBM's, for that matter—to partner with Box, despite the fact that it's a threat to their respective ECM and collaboration businesses.

Box said it has a total of 1,400 integration partners. Among them Google (Apps), Salesforce.com, NetSuite, Okta, DocuSign, MobileIron, Symantec and VMware (AirWatch). At last month's conference, Box rolled out new tools and services, along with updates to its growing ecosystem of native integration. The company released developer and enterprise versions of the Box Platform that will make it easier to integrate enterprise applications with the Box platform.

John K. Waters is a freelance writer and editor-at-large for Redmond magazine sister Web site ADTmag.com.

Social Workplace Collaboration is easily the dirtiest lens through which to view enterprise software.

From the WCM UI standpoint, the changes in the SharePoint Server 2016 Technical Preview are minimal. Again, this is not surprising given the online roots of SharePoint Server 2016—if it's actually possible for UI changes to be more philosophical than actual that's what's happening here. Nothing in the interface is jarring, certainly I'm not describing the jump from SharePoint 2010 to 2013, but the subtle changes elevate mobile use and pay credence to the "personal."

None of this however, really, positions SharePoint any differently against the big WCM tools. Sitecore, for example, continues to battle Adobe for supremacy in the WCM landscape. Its ASP.NET platform, like that of SharePoint, appeals to developers who want more control over their Web content management platforms, and it also lends itself to a wide variety of add-ons, extensions and integrations. Subtle differences in Sitecore give it a significant edge over SharePoint in this space. That's because it's much easier to implement a UX for an unauthenticated user in Sitecore than in SharePoint. But, there are more complex reasons it functions better at WCM than SharePoint, too. The Sitecore Digital Marketing Suite (DMS) can target content to anonymous users based on their viewing patterns on a particular Web site, which is critical in today's me-centered Web universe.

The Adobe Digital Experience Manager (AEM) focuses on the delivery of content and content assets. Adobe gives customers the opportunity to manage their digital experiences across channels—it's not just about content editing and dissemination, but more about what content, when. AEM is a key part of The Adobe Marketing Cloud—as such it can draw from other applications in the Adobe suite with ease. Sounds appealing, but AEM is expensive. However, Sitecore and SharePoint are also expensive. At this point organizations should put a value on their Web presence.

The long and short of it is that SharePoint—while still technically competing in this space—isn't stacking up, and based on the first SharePoint Server 2016 Technical Preview, Microsoft hasn't done anything to further WCM.

Social Workplace Collaboration

Social Workplace Collaboration is easily the dirtiest lens through which to view enterprise software. What works and what doesn't work remains to be seen. For that matter, what's the actual meaning of social workplace collaboration?

There's no evidence yet that SharePoint Server 2016 with the first Technical Preview has made significant progress toward integrating Yammer into the on-premises landscape.

The simplest description is the use of online “social” tools to facilitate collaboration and productivity in the workplace. The nuances, of course, lie in the word “social.” Am I talking Twitter, or an internal online social network such as Facebook?

SharePoint for Social Collaboration

Microsoft's 2012 acquisition of Yammer positioned the company to dominate the social workplace marketplace. The rationale in acquiring Yammer was that Microsoft would have a social tool that would eventually integrate with the business tools we all know and love. That was the vision, anyway. Fast-forward to this quarter when the Yammer discussion often sounds more like an afterthought. While Office 365 continues to make strides integrating Yammer to the SharePoint landscape, there's no evidence yet that SharePoint Server 2016 with the first Technical Preview has made significant progress toward integrating Yammer into the on-premises landscape; so the debate continues: Yammer or SharePoint social?

SharePoint Server 2016 does include the ability to redirect from a My Site to a OneDrive for Business account—enabling sharing and potentially co-editing. If other integrations with Yammer are a part of the SharePoint Server 2016 hybrid strategy, Microsoft has yet to reveal or emphasize it.

Social Collaboration Providers

Meanwhile, IBM, Jive Software and Salesforce.com are all jockeying to topple Microsoft's lead in social collaboration. IBM has software for everything, which is its strength and, some say, its weakness. IBM social business integrates with its ECM suite, and its digital marketing suite; from a Web perspective it's simply another spoke in the wheel. IBM considers social business a solution, an experience, an opportunity to “work smarter.”

So, how does Salesforce.com Inc. fit into all of this? As a CRM provider, Salesforce.com is leading the charge, so why not push internal connections beyond database management? Salesforce.com offers the opportunity to automate business processes in favor of building business.

What's curious is that no one knows what to expect from Microsoft as it pertains to SharePoint, Yammer and some of the new features emerging in Office 365. About four years ago, SharePoint social

tools were dead-in-the-water, revived in SharePoint 2013, renewed with Yammer. It doesn't appear SharePoint Server 2016 will give Microsoft dominance in this category; if anything it will slip a bit—but the company has articulated the importance of it and it's a safe bet Office 365 will bring interesting developments.

Enterprise File Sync and Share (EFSS)

EFSS is no longer new, but the last five years have seen significant movement and an absolute need for users to be able to get their documents, images and other files from a variety of devices.

It's not unheard of for end users to leverage EFSS tools outside their network environment to share and sync business files with ease. Organizations want to, and need to, get their hands around this common problem. Enter EFSS solutions.

One of the smaller, but no less important, stories in the SharePoint 2016 hybrid approach is its continued improvement of OneDrive for Business.

SharePoint Server 2016 and EFSS

One of the smaller, but no less important, stories in the SharePoint Server 2016 hybrid approach is its continued improvement of OneDrive for Business. Just a month ago, Microsoft released improvements to OneDrive for Business, which is the EFSS component included with Office 365 and SharePoint Online. Sync, in particular, was under fire for its inconsistencies. Additionally, UI improvements make browser-based OneDrive for Business use as “friendly” as the app. OneDrive, the private, file, sync and share application from Microsoft, served as the inspiration for many of these changes (see bit.ly/1Rk9Q9e).

The EFSS Space

As Microsoft boasts significant enterprise adoption of OneDrive for Business, Box, Dropbox, Syncplicity LLC and Citrix Systems Inc. (ShareFile) have all been offering enterprise file and sync services for several years. That hasn't stopped Microsoft and Google Inc. from continuing to place emphasis on EFSS as a part of their ECM strategies.

Interestingly, despite its focus on OneDrive for Business, Microsoft and Box continue to build their partnership (see “Box Targets Office 365 and SharePoint with Deeper Integration”). Yammer allows for simple integration with Box, and Box plays nicely with Office applications. Syncplicity, too, includes a built-in editor to edit Office documents and offers VPN-less access to SharePoint. Citrix takes it even a step further and extends its ShareFile tool to allow

one-application access to SharePoint and OneDrive for Business. Making Citrix a secure entry-point into other (presumably secure) file sharing applications. Dropbox also has a partnership with Microsoft.

It's important to remember, though, making any move here really requires a willingness to store data in the public cloud. The leaders in this space are making compelling security arguments—Microsoft is promising new data-loss prevention features in OneDrive for Business. Google Apps for Work, for example, recently rolled out a new ISO/IEC 27018:2014 privacy standard to its compliance framework.

Based on the first Technical Preview, SharePoint Server 2016 is all splish but no splash.

Outlook for SharePoint 2016

So far, based on the first Technical Preview, SharePoint Server 2016 is under-the-hood about incremental moves toward a bigger goal—it's all splish but no splash. Indeed it has a lot to offer but it doesn't look like the "ultimate Swiss Army knife" that Microsoft's Teper described six years ago. At the same time, much has evolved since then, perhaps most notably Microsoft's willingness to interface with rival systems.

Does that mean what Microsoft has shown with SharePoint Server 2016 suggests Microsoft isn't making progress? No. Ultimately it will depend on how you use the on-premises platform in the years to come, and your organization's threshold for hybrid solutions. Microsoft's strategy depends on the adoption of the cloud by organizations—wholly or partially—and SharePoint Server 2016 is just the latest phase in that larger gambit. **R**

GetMoreOnline

What's Next for SharePoint Groups, Yammer and Team Sites?

Recent updates and feature announcements around Office 365, Skype for Business and OneDrive for Business has led to questions among experts and customers whether Office 365 Groups is displacing Yammer.

While the official word out of Redmond is the company will continue to support Yammer and integrate it with other key services, the SharePoint community continues to speculate about Microsoft's plans. It is anticipated Microsoft will shed some light on the role these features will play (updates to be posted at Redmondmag.com).

SharePoint MVP and Redmond blogger Christian Buckley weighs in on this at Redmondmag.com/SPGroups.

Maggie Swearingen is a manager and an Office 365/SharePoint UX architect for Protiviti Inc., a global consulting firm specializing in IT consulting, risk and compliance, and internal audit. A frequent speaker at SharePoint events around the country on best practices and user adoption strategies, Swearingen has a master's degree from Georgetown University in Communications, Culture and Technology.

INSIDE

SharePoint Server 2016

Despite questions about the future of SharePoint Server, the technical preview of the next release shows improved compliance and file sharing, a new Document Library and enhanced search capabilities, among other new features. **BY BRIEN M. POSEY**

Microsoft has finally released the long-awaited and much-anticipated Technical Preview release of SharePoint Server 2016. Microsoft first began to officially talk about the SharePoint 2016 feature set at the Ignite conference in Chicago last spring—though details were vague and the company only revealed them in a few technical sessions, opting not to mention the on-premises version of the widely deployed collaboration platform. Only now can IT pros finally see what Microsoft appears to have in store for SharePoint 2016 by downloading the new Technical Preview.

Evaluating a product like SharePoint is challenging because it's a monolithic application with countless features. This first look will evaluate what it took to get the SharePoint 2016 Technical Preview up and running, its general usability and key new features.

The Installation Process

The installation process is relatively straightforward but there are two things that might come as a surprise, especially to those who are trying to create a small SharePoint deployment.

First, it's still possible to create a single server deployment. However, single server deployments no longer use SQL Server Express. You're going to need a full-blown SQL Server even if you're installing only a single SharePoint Server.

For the purposes of this evaluation, I chose to perform a single-server installation and used SQL Server 2012. The installation process was surprisingly simple and straightforward. The installation media includes a utility that installs all of the prerequisite components for you. Once those components are in place, then the actual setup process is based around a simple wizard.

In regard to the simplicity of installing a small SharePoint deployment, other than the SQL Server requirement, there's no longer any such thing as a truly standalone deployment. Even a single server deployment exists within a farm (see **Figure 1**). As **Figure 1** illustrates, the SharePoint Products Configuration Wizard asks you to specify the server role. These roles are what Microsoft refers to as mini-roles. The idea is that the wizard makes it really easy to install exactly the role that you need on your SharePoint Server 2016. Keep in mind role assignments are not permanent. You can always configure a SharePoint server to host a different role later on if necessary.

There's no longer any such thing as a truly standalone deployment.

Once SharePoint was installed, I set out to create a new Web application and a new site collection. The Central Administration tool is laid out in a way that makes these tasks easy. I suspect that even someone who has never used SharePoint would be able to create a new Web application with minimal effort. The process of creating an initial site collection proved to be just as easy and intuitive.

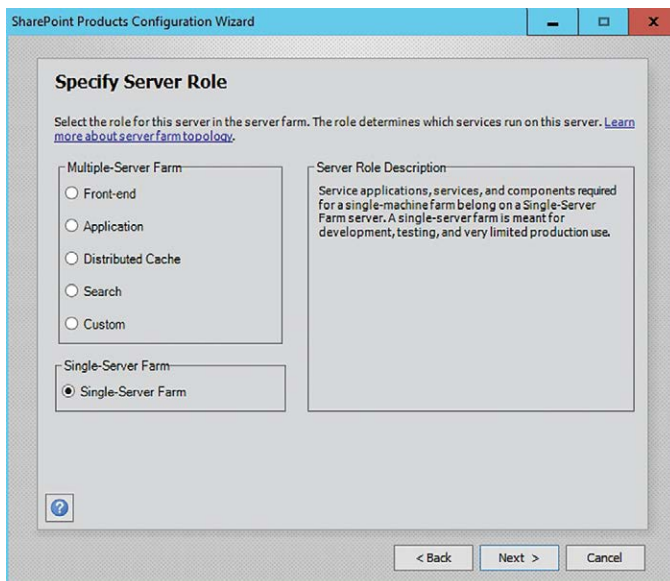
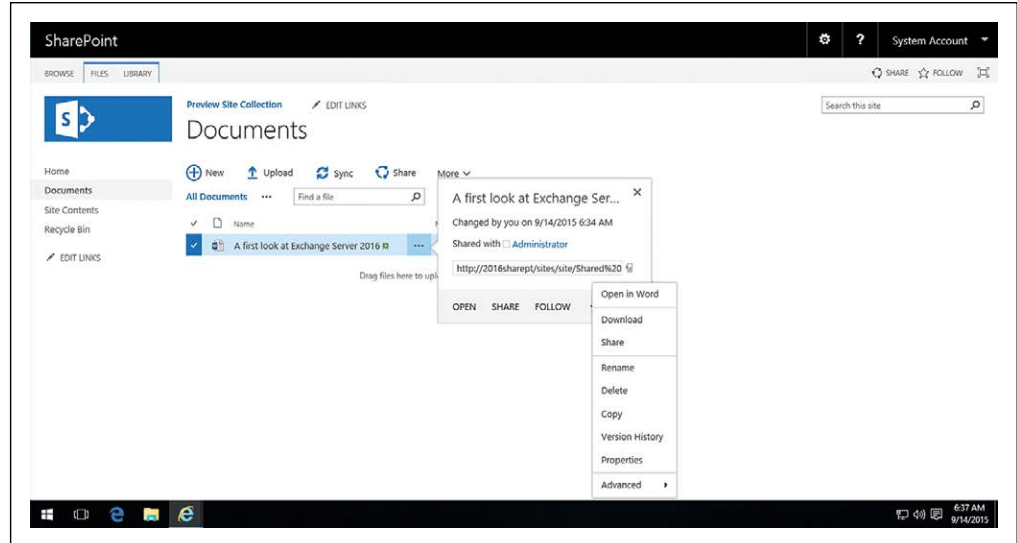


Figure 1. A single server deployment involves creating a SharePoint farm.

The Document Library

Once the server was up and running and I had created a team site, I decided to check out the document library, which is among one of the most widely used SharePoint features.

When uploading a Word document to the document library, clicking on the document provides the option to open, share or follow the document (see **Figure 2**). There's also a menu icon associated with the document, and clicking on that icon displays many more options including things such as Delete, Rename, Copy, Version History, Properties, Download and Open in Word.



Microsoft has gotten rid of the upload file size limit.

Figure 2. Users have a number of different options for working with documents within the document library.

There are also a couple of things worth mentioning about the document library that aren't obvious from **Figure 2**. First, Microsoft has gotten rid of the upload file size limit. Previously, the document library imposed a 2GB file size limit for uploads. Microsoft doesn't, however, recommend uploading documents larger than 10GB. Some people have reported having problems with session timeouts when working with larger files.

This actually poses an interesting question. What sort of performance impact can you expect from the removal of the 2GB limit? Given Microsoft hasn't yet released SharePoint 2016, it's unfair to give performance benchmark results that'll likely change by the time it reaches RTM. But it does appear Microsoft is taking the potential performance impact seriously.

File transfer operations in SharePoint 2016 are based on the Background Intelligent Transfer Service (BITS). According to Microsoft, BITS is only used to transfer data when sufficient bandwidth is available and the bandwidth isn't immediately needed by other applications. There are some other benefits to using BITS, as well. For starters, BITS is able to monitor network traffic and throttles its own performance on an as-needed basis in response to changing network traffic conditions. Another nice benefit to using BITS for file transfers is that BITS is resilient in that if a disruption were to occur, BITS is able to resume the file transfer operation when conditions improve.

Many of the new features in SharePoint 2016 aim to up the ante on compliance and data loss prevention.

The other thing worth mentioning regarding **Figure 2** is Microsoft has changed the way sharing works. Whether you're sharing a site or a document in a document library, you can simply click the Share button (see **Figure 3**) and then type in the names of the people who you want to share with, and choose the permissions that you want to assign. The process couldn't be easier.

Speaking of file sharing, in SharePoint 2016, Microsoft has addressed what is sometimes a source of frustration to SharePoint users. When a user shares a file with another user, they often send that user a link to the file. The problem is in an environment as dynamic as SharePoint, files are often moved, renamed, or deleted. In the past, moving or renaming a file would cause any links to that file to break. In SharePoint 2016, Microsoft has given us a durable links feature that ensures that links to files will continue to function even if the file in question gets moved or renamed.

Added Compliance

Many of the new features in SharePoint 2016 aim to up the ante on compliance and data loss prevention. Specifically, Microsoft has introduced some new types of sites that are designed to help make compliance related tasks easier.

Among the new compliance capabilities is the Document Deletion Policy Center. The Document Deletion Policy Center helps administrators to get a handle on document lifecycle management.

There are three main options within the Document Deletion Policy Center. The first option lets administrators create deletion policies. Deletion policies are designed to automatically delete documents after a certain period of time. The other two options allow deletion policies to be associated with site collections or with site collection templates. By doing so, administrators can ensure that deletion policies are applied in a uniform manner across an entire site collection (or across all of the site collection that are created from a template).

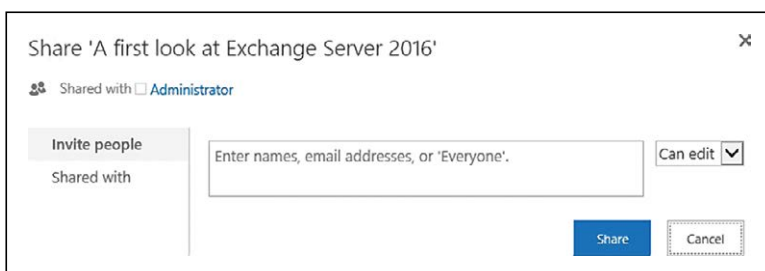


Figure 3. *SharePoint 2016 makes it easy to share content with others.*

Deletion policies are made up of one or more deletion rules. SharePoint

SharePoint 2016 supports hybrid searches that query both SharePoint Online (Office 365) and SharePoint 2016.

2016 makes it easy to create a deletion rule. You specify a name for the rule, a delete action, a time period, and how the age of the document should be calculated.

Deletion policies are not the only compliance feature in SharePoint 2016. Compliance features such as in place hold and enterprise search, which existed in previous versions of SharePoint are still around.

Regarding search, SharePoint 2016 supports hybrid searches that query both SharePoint Online (Office 365) and SharePoint 2016. For right now, it seems as though Microsoft still has some work to do on the hybrid search feature. It's a long story, but there were some issues that prevented me from linking the SharePoint 2016 preview to my Office 365 account. However, according to various Internet posts hybrid search works correctly if the user initiates the search from Office 365. However, searches initiated from local SharePoint servers allegedly include only local resources in the result set.

Microsoft also improves the security of SharePoint data through Information Rights Management (IRM) support. IRM can be used to not only encrypt documents, but also to control the way that documents are allowed to be used. A user might for example, restrict a document from being copied or printed. Likewise, a user could use IRM to mark a document as read only.

Another way Microsoft is making it easier to maintain compliance with organizational policies or government regulations is through the introduction of classification IDs. Classification IDs are a mechanism for identifying specific types of content. For example, a classification ID might be used to tell SharePoint what a social security number looks like.

If this concept sounds familiar, it's probably because Exchange Server already uses a similar mechanism to look for sensitive information within E-mail messages. In the case of SharePoint 2016 however, it'll be possible to use classification IDs to search for sensitive information within SharePoint.

Microsoft has cleaned up the end user interface to make it easier to use, added persistent links to documents and improved mobile support.

Major Improvement

Because SharePoint 2016 is currently in preview release, it remains to be seen what the finished product will look like. If the preview is any indication however, SharePoint 2016 will be a huge improvement over its predecessors. My prediction is that the organizations that will derive the most benefit from SharePoint 2016 will be those that have both local and cloud based SharePoint resources that they need to manage.

Even though SharePoint 2016's cloud integration and its compliance features seem to be getting the most attention, it is difficult to ignore the improvements that Microsoft has made to the SharePoint interface. Microsoft has cleaned up the end user interface to make it easier to use, added persistent links to documents, and improved mobile support. All of this should provide the end users with a better overall experience. **R**

Brien M. Posey is a seven-time Microsoft MVP with more than two decades of IT experience. He's written thousands of articles and several dozen books on a wide variety of IT topics. Visit his Web site at brienposey.com.

