



How To Take The Headache Out Of Your Migration To Microsoft 365

The top challenges when migrating to Microsoft 365

Microsoft 365 is where the work happens

With COVID-19 continuing to impact people and countries around the world, teams everywhere are moving to remote work. Since the outbreak, there is a large spike in demand for collaboration tools. The digital workplace is the new normal. So, get used to running meetings from the kitchen table and conducting performance reviews via Microsoft Teams. It is the new way we work. No wonder that Microsoft decided to offer some Teams features for free during the coronavirus outbreak. This way you can stay connected and get work done. With the accelerated adoption of this new way of working, you and your company need reassurance that all your content and functionality have a future in the cloud. We take away the pain by touching the most common challenges and provide you with the medicine for resolving this. Keep on reading...

Microsoft is the leading supplier of software in the cloud (33%), mainly with Office 365, SharePoint Online and Exchange. For every application, there seems to be a Microsoft cloud alternative. Since March 2020, "Microsoft 365"¹ is the new name for an Office 365 subscription service. It includes everything Office 365 included—and more. With the introduction of the new name, Microsoft also introduced new tools for improving writing on the web, managing your finances, and connecting with family and friends, such as Teams and Editor. Depending on your license you will have access to more functionality and/ or more applications.

When we look at it very broadly, Microsoft 365's content management collaboration applications like SharePoint, Teams, Groups, etc. consist of containers with lists, containers for documents and sub-containers. SharePoint Online acts as the basis for the storage of content for these. The other content management applications are smaller SharePoint sites with either functionality enabled or disabled.

When it comes to migrating to Microsoft 365, we often receive the question, that is if we migrate to all applications or just only SharePoint? In essence, this is the same process with some additional flags to indicate the type of location we migrate to and which features should be enabled, so yes, we do. With no additional effort. Nevertheless, other challenges keep you from moving to the new way of working. Most of these are easy to solve, but others will give you a real headache. Let's have a look at them.

1 <https://www.microsoft.com/>

CHALLENGE ONE:

How can I get people to like and use the new system?

Humans are creatures of habit. Moving to a new system means that users will need to get familiar with a new product, its features, the user-interface and much more. Only when the user is satisfied with the product, he or she enters the adoption stage, deciding to use the new product fully and regularly. But how can you get users excited about using the new Microsoft 365 environment?

Generation instant-on

First, you need to do something about the performance of your infrastructure. Members of today's Gen Z—loosely, people born from 1995 to 2010—are true digital natives: from earliest youth, they have been exposed to the internet, to social networks, and mobile systems. They receive information instantly with the speed of light. We might even want to call this group 'generation instant-on'. They expect to get the information instantly, in their personal life but also from their working environment. The reason why they use - for example - Dropbox to store their private stuff, is because it's extremely fast and they expect the same performance of the tools they use in their daily job.

Giving users the instant-on feeling when using Microsoft 365, you will need to increase the bandwidth of your internet. The traditional infrastructure of your organisations' network is designed to work fast, but locally or between offices. In this situation, the internet connection is not equipped nor configured for working in the cloud. Working in the cloud means you need to pump up the bandwidth. One option is to make agreements with Microsoft for a dedicated service delivery. An extra advantage of having more bandwidth is that migrating content from your legacy ECM to SharePoint Online will take less time.

Once you have a bandwidth that supports working in the cloud comfortably, it's time to start using your new environment. To give users the best experience possible, you want to show them active, relevant content only. One scenario that is very likely to happen in your ECM or file share, is having different users uploading the same document to numerous document libraries/ shares over time. This creates lots of content duplication. Identifying duplicate documents and filtering those out before migration, will improve the user experience as they will only receive single relevant content.

De-duplication

Most available tools deduplicate based on any combination of a file name, file size, extension and exact content equality. This method, however, is not foolproof. Even when a file is modified only minimally or only opened and saved again, it often no longer is an exact duplicate. These files are usually not recognized as a duplicate and therefore will still pollute your new environment. Xillio's method is unique, as it not only searches for exact content duplicates but also look-a-likes based on content. For example, documents that are in accordance with each other, content regardless of the file name, size or any other meta information, and even based of a set percentage of its content (words in the document).

Redirection

Another way to make users slowly adopt the new Microsoft 365 environment is by offering redirection. Let's imagine you are in the middle of a migration. You have migrated half of your content to the new system but haven't phased out the old local document management system yet. In this case, you can redirect users clicking on a link in the old system, or a related link in a document on the old system, to the same document in the new system. This way users can get familiar to the new interface naturally. They will get the best of both worlds. After fully adopting the new system, then it's time to phase out your legacy system.

CHALLENGE TWO: **What to do with legacy file formats?**

It's quite easy to transfer your modern Office documents to the cloud. There are some quick, light-weight migration tools available to do so. However, what about legacy Office documents that are used by many others to collaborate? Take, for example, Excel files with macros. People are hesitant to transfer these to the cloud as they are afraid to lose the active macros and the possibility to collaborate on these documents. When it comes to migrating to the cloud, it becomes complex when it involves documents that need collaboration. Additionally, what about migrating non-Office files to the cloud? Migrating these are a struggle as well.

Luckily, Microsoft 365 supports 'older' Office documents since 2010 relatively well and regularly adds new functionality, so no need to worry. And for outdated Microsoft software, there is always the possibility to convert them into the newer Microsoft version.

Still, you might be stuck with a truckload of non-Microsoft based files resulting from industry-special software, for instance, accounting software. Maybe the vendor offers a cloud-based version of the software, but it will certainly cost you money. In these cases, we always advise our customers to move the back-end repository to a cloud database (Azure SQL) and keep the front-end on your local machine. This is the most cost-effective solution.

Talking about cost-effective, migration is a perfect moment to identify older file formats in your repositories (not only Office documents) and decide if it's valuable to migrate.

CHALLENGE THREE: Where should I archive outdated files?

In large enterprises with legacy enterprise management systems, you will always find outdated content that has become irrelevant to the business at this point. This data is infrequently accessed, and we refer to it as cold or inactive data. Take for example sales information that is older than a few years. Although this information is inactive, it must be securely archived for a long duration, because of internal and external rules and regulations.

As the costs and support associated with on-premise systems can be high, we always advise archiving inactive data to the cloud. Doing so will help the organization to meet governance and compliance needs for long-term data retention. When thinking about cloud archiving, often **Amazon** Web Services (AWS) or Microsoft **Azure** are in focus. But why? When you research these two cloud storage solutions, you will see they offer just as much – or better just as little - archiving functionality as Microsoft SharePoint. These products are developed with a history of supporting collaboration and not for archiving. So why not make it easy and migrate active content to an active SharePoint site and inactive content to another SharePoint site and save the extra license costs?

Developing archiving features is not a top priority of Microsoft, otherwise, they would already have something very functional out there (or they are working on it as we speak?). Also, records management functionality is offered by Microsoft SharePoint Online as an add-on, and not as integral built-in functionality yet. Legal compliance and other regulations are very complex to control. So, if you need a cloud archiving solution or advanced records management, check out solutions like Smarsh[®], Hyland[®] or eDiscovery[®] that offer a connection or add-on to Microsoft 365 Services. They depend on Microsoft to allow access to the backend of the solution; these tools support big data, they offer extremely fast reporting and searching and are very good working with tags, years, audit trails, and locks. All whilst being compliant.

Let's zoom in quickly: searching in Microsoft on a specific year, let say '1998' will give a search result containing all documents, folders and lists that we created/modified in 1998 and those that contain the text 1998. Nice, but for archiving and records management this isn't very useful. A tool like Smarsh[®] automatically tags uploaded/ linked content with the relevant date and year, and because it supports big data volumes, it provides a better and faster search result. It is intended for records management and archiving so it can export the correct mandatory reports for an audit. You also know that once it has been archived that it will never again be changed. This is not (yet?) guaranteed for SharePoint Online content.

CHALLENGE FOUR: **The cloud has no back-up functionality**

“Once in the cloud, always in the cloud”. It makes sense that Microsoft 365 doesn’t provide any back-up capabilities for your local needs, having its internal solution. This solution is based on the combination of file versions and the well-known recycle-bin. We already concluded that humans are creatures of habit and desire control. Therefore, without anything tangible, working in the cloud does not feel 100% right. Everyone who is less cloud-oriented – sorry; don’t be offended J - and is used to creating their backups (over backups), see daily reports on the result that their content is secure, are more at ease.

When you think about it: it does feel peculiar as most other software applications you can think of providing a backup solution to you, and Microsoft 365 does not. It is your content and now someone else is managing it. Your system administrators feel in control when they can see the hardware in the datacentre. All the fancy security surrounding the Microsoft datacentre doesn’t mean a thing to them.

Still, it’s possible to run a manual synchronization to your local environment. However, an automated and secure back-up is a much better solution. Fortunately, there are vendors out there that provide modules to make backups of SharePoint Online, OneDrive and Teams to your local infrastructure. You could see it as a scheduled repetitive delta migration.

The pill that mitigates your migration headaches

It seems like Microsoft 365 is the affordable beacon of light for every organization that wishes to stay up to date in this competitive remote work environment. You need to realize that rolling out more and more Microsoft 365 collaboration apps also means giving more and more control to Microsoft and less to your local IT department. They are not in charge anymore of updating the software and fixing mistakes. Is that a problem? Can you trust Microsoft with your content?

Of course, you can! With millions of users, worldwide¹, rest assured that Microsoft knows all the best practices so that its users can focus on their core business. They take care and will prove that your content is secure. They listen to what you need and desire in the cloud: a single solution that does it all.

Your scepticism about migrating to Microsoft 365 and trusting a new way of working is logical and understandable. We tried to address some of the challenges that cause this scepticism. However, we can also conclude that for all of them there is a solution. A solution that may need partnering with a third-party expert that you can trust and has the experience on safely and securely working with your content and storing it in Microsoft 365. As Microsoft continues its quest to improve Microsoft 365, it is sure to remain an inseparable part of the digital workplace for many years to come. Xillio is your partner for migrating to the cloud. Let's go!

3 <https://expandedramblings.com/index.php/microsoft-office-statistics-facts/>



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