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7 Ways to Increase SharePoint User Adoption

20,000 new SharePoint users are added each day...
In 2011, Microsoft also claimed that this has been the case for the last 5 years. Yet, other industry surveys have found that only 17.6% of organizations felt that the SharePoint user experience truly met their needs...

SharePoint has been one of the greatest collaboration technologies to ever come from Microsoft. For over 10 years now, the SharePoint solution has been providing content management, enterprise social networking, powerful intranet search, portal creation, management, and collaboration capabilities. However, very few organizations have been able to fully realize the potential that SharePoint has to offer.

As an organization who is focused on assisting our clients to more effectively manage their business operations through the unification and utilization of current and industry standard information technology assets, we know there are a number of keys to successfully deploying and leveraging SharePoint. We believe that technology alone is not the answer, but rather it is about building and leveraging repeatable technology components that drive business processes and provide tangible business value. Through real customer experiences, thee following are the top 7 keys to successful SharePoint user adoption:

1. SharePoint is a development platform, not a solution by itself

One of the key elements to a successful SharePoint implementation is to recognize the level of investment that is required to begin realizing value from the solution. Several industry reports have highlighted that many organizations did not fully appreciate the level of time and effort required to build and implement the business applications.. As each business unit has its own unique requirements, it is vital for organizations to approach their SharePoint implementations using development best practices like having a well defined development process, proper requirements management, testing, and project management skills. Recognizing the benefits of the time and resource savings associated with buying versus building, many clients have opted to leverage repeatable third-party components (including our own), which can be easily implemented and then simply configured to meet their business unit requirements and processes.

2. Get clear on the desired results

SharePoint offers a number of capabilities including content management, team collaboration, search capabilities, workflows, and business process implementation. Ask these questions: Are you looking to deploy to a single team or project? Are you looking to have multiple departments or the full organization using the solution? The answers have to be well understood before fully diving into your SharePoint implementation. On one end, many CIO's wish to improve management of the business processes, and on the other end are the line of business owners who simply want to have a stable content repository. Although all of these elements are possible, it is vital to get crystal clear on your goals and what you are hoping to accomplish. By getting clear early, you can avoid challenges with competing stakeholder requirements, and will deliver something that users understand, value, and will embrace.

3. Build to provide business value

Each part of an organization delivers results that have an impact on the business and its success. In order to have users appreciate the importance and value of using SharePoint, they need to understand the impact that it will have on their jobs and the success of the organization as a whole. By prioritizing and aligning your implementation to roll-out functionality that has a direct correlation with departmental or organizational success metrics, it will also ensure that the project continues to receive executive sponsorship and allocation of the required resources.


4. Leverage current tools and processes

In order to increase user adoption, decrease training requirement, and to reduce the time to value for your SharePoint implementation, focus on how to leverage your target users' tools and processes. Take the time to interview and shadow your users to fully understand and document how they do their work on a daily basis. SharePoint offers the capability to integrate into common user tools including Microsoft Word, Excel, and Outlook just to name a few. Integrating other key line of business applications, and building a solution mapped to their processes will significantly increase user adoption and success.

5. Ensure Executive Involvement

Although it is vital for the overall success of your project to have the proper executive sponsorship, ensuring you have their actual involvement will further increase the likelihood of success and will increase the adoption by your users. Building the proper amount of governance, key decision, issue resolution, and approval processes, along with alignment to organizational key performance indicators into your SharePoint solution will ensure that executives will utilize the systems. Knowing that executives are fully embracing and utilizing the system to monitor/manage the key business metrics, processes, and content, will in turn increase user adoption and usage.

6. Iterative Implementations
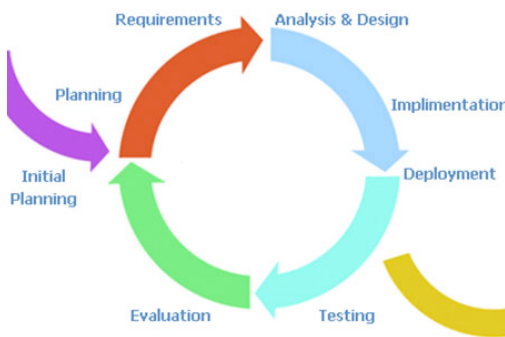
One of the greatest mistakes that many organizations make when implementing SharePoint is they try to implement too much, too quickly. This typically leads to a loss in user productivity and frustration by the users while trying to achieve their daily activities. There is also a significant user training requirement when deploying a monolithic system. Although it is important to have a clear vision on what the overall solution will eventually look like, it is essential to build and deploy smaller iterations that provide more immediate business value. Users can more easily adapt and incorporate the new systems and processes into their daily activities and they will be more likely to embrace everything that it has to offer.

7. Stay ahead of the curve

As a Microsoft technology, SharePoint has periodic product enhancement, patching, and even security updates. Depending upon how it has been implemented and the extent of the integrations into other applications, there are often many different elements that have to be managed and supported once it has been deployed. One of the quickest ways to erode user confidence and utilization is through system outages and availability. By building a dedicated support environment, clear escalation policies, along with well-defined support processes and procedures will allow you to remain ahead of the support curve and avoid user skepticism.

About Us

Syntapa Technologies is a Canadian Microsoft Certified Partner, specializing in assisting organizations to more effectively manage their business operations, clients, and data through the unification and utilization of current and industry standard information technology assets. We are experts at leveraging Microsoft SharePoint and .NET platforms combining them with our clients' existing systems to provide company-wide unified systems that are configured specifically for each of our clients' business and operational needs.

Microsoft has recognized Syntapa for the value that we offer to small and medium sized businesses with our SharePoint based IMS solution. We are proud of being a 2010 Canadian Microsoft Impact Awards finalist.