

7 Ways to Transform Your Organization with Microsoft SharePoint 2010

Nagendra Rao
Vice President

Introduction

SharePoint is fastest-growing product in Microsoft's history gaining 100 million CAL (client access licenses) in a few years. About 78% of Fortune 500 companies use SharePoint in some capacity and about 20,000 user seat licenses have been added every day for the last 5 years – and this number is increasing.

Microsoft's launch of SharePoint 2010 has redefined collaboration and communication in today's business environment. This White paper shares insights on how you could transform your organization by leveraging SharePoint 2010 to improve your relationships with employees, customers and suppliers. It also details how SharePoint 2010 can provide business insights and further support management decision making via its easily configurable interfaces.

Make your intranet a productivity tool with Microsoft SharePoint 2010

Much of present decision making can be improved if departmental silos and individual information stores can be shared amongst a wider audience. A majority of today's corporate intranets lag behind the collaboration technology curve. Users still tend to build individual or departmental silos of information. Departments install their own wikis, collaboration & packaged tools or social media platforms.

Microsoft SharePoint 2010 can transform your intranet into a productivity tool. You can connect your employees, partners more efficiently via SharePoint. You can use the platform not only for collaboration but also for core operations such as having your HR department use it employee orientation and training, speeding up processing of purchase orders and approvals, managing web site content, developing marketing collateral – and much more. All these can be accomplished without any programming since collaboration and workflow features are available out of the box. You need careful planning to ensure that best practices are followed during implementation to make such deployment successful.

Connect business apps with SharePoint using dashboards & reports for decision making

Traditional applications keep information in proprietary formats. It is not uncommon for business managers to use numerous applications like SAP, Dynamics CRM, Payroll apps, SaaS and partner portals to compile and correlate the required data before each meeting, resulting in wasted time and inaccurate reports. Now with Business Connectivity Services in SharePoint 2010, it is very easy to fetch external data from other applications and bring it into users' desktops for decision making. Without any programmers' help you can create sales charts from Dynamics CRM or Salesforce.com, financial information from ERP, key metrics across projects on your browser. The Single Sign-on feature allows you to access all external data transparently without the need for multiple authentications. Once you have data from various business applications you build your own customized dashboards, reports and charts, using simple

templates. SharePoint 2010 has a built-in Business Intelligence Center, a simple website where you can build, customize and manage your dashboards, reports, scorecards and key performance indicators.

Make interactions with vendors and partner useful and productive

Effective, consistent communication with employees, partners, and vendors is difficult to keep up over time if such information exchange is based on emails and faxes and overly dependent on people.

Extranets and portals built using SharePoint 2010 can make transactions with vendors and partners faster, more self service oriented and automated. Security and scalability can be easily built in. As examples from Trigent clients, an insurance company built SharePoint extranet portals for 6 major hospitals to manage their policies and claims. Now staff at the hospitals need not send emails for gathering policy data, they can customize and download their own reports without emails or requests for changes to report structure. The insurance company can view live data on claims on their desktops. In another example, an ecommerce vendor gets updated information on the fall season's prices from 200 partners on a single SharePoint portal and updates their availability on their website. SharePoint 2010 also has powerful branding and UI design features which enable you to brand partner and customer portals to look and feel as different as needed.

Make the company website a living site, content managed by business users

In this fast moving age many company websites remain boringly the same for several years. Content updates are not easy to do. Programmers and webmaster hold the golden key to site updates. Content contributors find the process of content creation and approval for website formidable and often shy away from the process itself.

Using SharePoint Server for Internet Sites, you can manage your website without depending on programmers and without knowing HTML. With simple workflow rules you can configure who can contribute to what portion of the site and set up approval processes that are intuitive and secure. You can change the look and feel of your site in minutes and update content like news flashes, new service updates, customer service announcements daily by your team of business users. The external facing site is your identity and you can have a vibrant site within days of deploying SharePoint 2010. You can also integrate the look and feel of your intranet to match your website which helps portray an integrated brand to employees and external visitors.

Eliminate paperwork, manual processes and foster professional interaction

The need of the hour is to reduce the overload of paperwork and automate processes. Companies often "break the bank" and invest in a large BPM (Business Process Management) system and spend even more money customizing it, only to realize that the returns are not as promised. Using Microsoft SharePoint you can automate simple organizational processes by building work -flows in minutes without programming or expensive consulting hours. In a recent Microsoft SharePoint project that lasted 2 weeks, Trigent helped

a purchase department to cut the purchase requisition and approval process time from 6 weeks to 3 days using out of the box work-flows built on InfoPath forms. In another instance, we helped an insurance provider to cut claims processing time by 80% using internal work-flows. SharePoint helps employees save time and effort and gets work done in a professional automated manner.

Transform and unify customer facing documents

How often have sales people hunted for the latest version of contracts and proposals? Many senior executives have been taken aback seeing employees use obsolete presentations at client meetings. Further, executives see a variety of performance figures floating around the company in shared directories. Brand colors, logos, collateral proliferate across divisions and often no one knows which the latest, correct version is. The “single version of truth” is often elusive and not easy to find.

With a centralized searchable repository on SharePoint you can store documents in one place for all to access based on their rights and privileges (using the company's Active Directory). People can access documents while they are working on them without worrying about others editing them using the check-in, check-out process. You can set rules for time based deletion or archiving. For instance 100s of sales executives can prepare customized product-wise slide presentations by accessing whatever they need from anywhere they are located, without worrying if the slides are old, or being edited, without contacting any department individually for any slides.

Use the Enterprise Search feature for easy access and research

It is frustrating when a whole department spends hours searching for a customer contract or presentations relating to a specific service. All hands are on to desktop searches, frantic emails and phone calls around the world looking for case studies relating to a particular topic.

While building your SharePoint document repository, you can tag documents with several metatags and make them searchable for easy access. For instance, a search on “proposal+testing” would present (just like Google Search) all proposals relating to testing across the company. SharePoint's Enterprise Search will also “suggest” more results like marketing presentations on Quality Assurance, if they are appropriately tagged in the SharePoint lists. External web content can also be searched at the same time without exiting SharePoint.

In summary, you can use your intranet built on Microsoft SharePoint 2010 as a productivity tool to enhance collaboration, automate processes and aid decision making within your organization and amongst your business partners and stakeholders.

About Trigent Software Inc.

Trigent is a privately held, professional IT services company and a Microsoft Gold Partner with its U.S. headquarters in the greater Boston area and its Indian headquarters in Bangalore. We provide consulting services in various technologies including Microsoft Solutions. Our operating model is to conduct sales, customer relationships and front-end consulting (e.g., business case, requirements, architecture) onsite with our clients and perform the detail design, development, integration, testing and quality assurance offshore at our world class development and support center in Bangalore. We are a SEI CMM Level 4 company and is ISO 9001:2000 TickIT certified organization.

For sales contact sales@trigent.com or call 508-490-6000.



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