

Critical Mission

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FEATURED ARTICLE

By
Craig Yellick, Vice President



Top Office 365 Features you Own but Are Not Using

Office 365 subscriptions come packed with numerous features and tools that aren't obvious "go to solutions" on first glance and thus get overlooked in the long term. You're undoubtedly using the familiar Office products like Outlook, Word and Excel every day. Are you confused about the different versions of OneDrive and when to use one of those instead of SharePoint? What about Office Teams? Groups? Planner? Looked at Delve once and it made no sense? What can you do with Forms, and why?

The Office 365 Value Proposition

When you sign-in to portal.office.com you see a list of all the applications and tools associated with your subscription. Someone with a high-end Enterprise E5 subscription will see *dozens* of different applications, while even the most economical "Business Essentials" \$5/month subscription will see ten or more. Microsoft has been adding new tools and services to Office 365 subscriptions on a regular basis and the expectation is that this trend will continue as Microsoft makes the case that their subscription model offers the most value compared to traditional software product licensing.

Let's take a look at some of the tools and applications found in all Office 365 subscriptions. We'll go beyond the obvious products like Outlook, Word and Excel and examine tools you really ought to be using.

Document Management

If you have multiple devices or need to share documents among colleagues, customers and others, you can do better than a collection files in folders on a C: drive that are shared via email attachments. Every Office 365 subscription comes with numerous document management features that fully support and enhance working with multiple devices and sharing.

We'll start this discussion with **OneDrive versus SharePoint** and just to confuse matters, the name "OneDrive" can be applied to two very different products.

The name OneDrive by itself refers to the cloud storage product Microsoft offers for free to anyone who creates a Windows ID. This OneDrive is associated with you, personally, and is not tied to a company or other organization, even if you use a company email address as your Windows ID. Think of this OneDrive as your *personal* document management solution that will follow you wherever you go, between jobs and beyond. As such it's *not* the right place to be storing and collaborating on work-related documents.

That's the role of **One Drive for Business**, which is part of your Office 365 subscription and is considered an asset of the company or organization that's paying for the subscription.

You can think of One Drive for Business as a personal cloud storage solution that's intended for documents related to your job. It's the right place to collaborate with fellow employees, customers, vendors etc in the context of an employer. Should you leave the company, the documents remain available to company administrators.

SharePoint has nearly identical document management functionality but goes well beyond just documents. SharePoint can wrap a *business process context* around document management and create the ideal place for people to find, share and collaborate on documents that are part of a process. SharePoint understands that files often exist in the context of shared calendars, task lists and other content and are often accessed for different reasons by various groups or roles in an organization.

In short: OneDrive for Business is the place for documents that *you always control* while SharePoint is a much better solution for documents that are shared as part of a larger process involving multiple people.

Microsoft Teams

Anyone who has ever joined a team that's been around for a while knows the hassle of trying to get up to speed on what has happened. Same goes for a team outsider that wants to check on status or otherwise get a sense for what's going on. If the team communicates via email the history is lost in a tangle of message threads tied to individuals. Add file attachments and you've got a real mess.

Microsoft Teams is a chat-oriented way for team members to create a common knowledge base that captures all interactions – whether for general public consumption or private exchanges, whether for formal meetings or ad

hoc conversations – and makes it all searchable and shareable, with notifications. Microsoft Teams are deliberately not a highly structured project management-style of tool. Instead they encourage group members to interact in a natural way that evolves over time to meet unique communication and collaboration needs.

Microsoft Planner

If Microsoft Teams sounds interesting but is possibly not structured enough for your needs, take a look at Microsoft Planner. Planner, as the name implies, is all about **the plan**: a list of tasks with assigned responsibilities and status and history. Planner is very flexible and allows you to organize tasks around “buckets” and dynamically categorize tasks based on changing needs. Similar to Teams, any files or other documents associated with a plan are collected in one place, along with conversations about tasks and supporting documents.

Sway, the PowerPoint Killer

We've all seen PowerPoint presentations with slide after slide of simple text formatted as indented bullet points. Typically designed for a desktop monitor coupled to a projector, they don't work well on smaller devices like phones. PowerPoint makes it easy to create such presentations, so you end up with a lot of them almost by default.

Sway is Microsoft's alternative way to create compelling presentations that look good on any device and break out of the PowerPoint mold. Sure, there's a learning curve but anyone who has attempted to get beyond the basics in PowerPoint knows you need to spend time to get a better result. If you're not highly skilled in PowerPoint, consider a switch to Sway.

But Wait – There's MORE?

Many Office 365 subscriptions come with products like **Yammer, Delve, Forms, Flow, PowerApps, Stream** and more. Flow and PowerApps alone are enough to justify a lengthy newsletter article for serious power users. There's a lot going on in Office 365!

Summary

Every Office 365 subscription comes packed with additional tools, features and functionality that add value to the core Office products like Outlook, Word and Excel. You're missing out on some terrific productivity and collaboration enhancements – it's time to take a closer look.

Craig Yellick will be presenting an extended, live version of this newsletter topic at the upcoming SharePoint Saturday Twin Cities event on 28-Oct-2017.

Contact Alto if you'd like to learn more about how to take advantage of the full set of functionalities in Office 365.