COMMUNARDO

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE FOR BETTER TEAMWORK

Transforming Competing
Platforms into Collaboration
Intranets

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INTRODUCTION

Behind every powerful innovation is a high-performing team. But bringing these teams together can be challenging. With today's globally distributed workforces, businesses often struggle to successfully manage projects that span multiple organizational units, geographies, and time zones.

Enterprise collaboration platforms transform how teams work—regardless of proximity—by getting ideas out of desk drawers and hard drives and into the cloud where the entire team can work on them. But when an organization leverages more than one collaboration platform, problems may arise soon. The time used to switch between different business applications can end in a loss of productivity and a loss of money for the organization. Furthermore, the usage of various platforms might again separate teams.

This whitepaper will explore the complications that arise using competing collaboration platforms and how to address them.

A TALE OF TWO COLLABORATION PLATFORMS

Atlassian Confluence and Microsoft SharePoint are among top collaboration platforms that have been leveraged by various business organizations worldwide. The fact is, they're both great platforms with no shortage of advocates on either side.

Confluence is a powerfully simple and cost-effective solution for teams who want to develop their own wikis. Offering an intuitive user interface, superior wiki management capabilities, and a vast ecosystem of apps and macros, Confluence makes it easy for teams to set up and manage spaces for creating, sharing, and collaborating on projects and ideas.

SharePoint's real strength is as a document management system, providing organizations with a fast, secure way to organize and collaborate on documents, spreadsheets, and presentations. Unlike Confluence, it only offers elementary wiki management functionality and requires substantially more administrative overhead to plan, build, and maintain a wiki.

Given the relatively low cost and simplicity of Confluence, it's not unusual for individual teams within an organization to deploy it on their own to manage their projects and "tribal knowledge." It's particularly popular with software teams who are already using Atlassian's Jira software development tool to manage their workflows. Accord-ing to Atlassian, more than half of Fortune 100 companies use Confluence today.

Yet, many of those same companies have also adopted SharePoint for its document management capabilities. According to the Association for Information and Image Management (AIIM), 80% of the Fortune 500 companies use SharePoint —and this is where things get complicated. Corporate IT organizations find themselves having to manage two competing systems that are not designed to work together.

The Widening Digital Divide

On their own, Confluence and SharePoint are great collaboration platforms. But using them together can result in a sprawling chasm between teams.

Software development teams, for example, frequently live in Confluence, using it to manage everything from documentation to project schedules. Yet, many of the teams they work with, such as sales and marketing, live in SharePoint.

This situation can lead to all kinds of headaches and inefficiencies for everyone involved. Sales people don't know where to go for the latest product information. Project managers have to spend an enormous amount of time managing people and information across systems.

In the end, teams suffer from miscommunication, inefficient practices like emailing documents, and problems with version control and out-of-date information.

This is not the way collaboration is meant to work.

Closing the Digital Divide

Heads of IT are under increasing pressure to close this digital divide. Teams on both sides of the divide want a solution to break down the silos and enable true collaboration. Meanwhile, IT departments struggle to justify paying for two different systems that, to a CFO, appear to do the same thing.

In an ideal world, IT managers would shut down one system and push all users to the remaining system. But we don't live in an ideal world. In reality, even though tools exist to migrate data from Confluence to SharePoint, and vice versa, there are a lot of risks to this approach.

Let's face it, no migration is without its headaches. There are very few IT managers who want to take on the responsibility of ensuring that hundreds or thousands of pages of data are correctly migrated to the new system. And even if, by some miracle, they pull off a perfect migration, they know that they'll face an even more impossible task: bringing their users over to the new platform.

Getting users to adopt new software is hard enough when there's no point of comparison. But when those users have spent years using the previous system only to have "corporate" take it away from them, you'll surely face a tsunami of change-resistance.

BRINGING YOUR CONFLUENCE AND SHAREPOINT TEAMS TOGETHER

There's a solution. Instead of having to decide between Confluence and SharePoint, you can integrate them using an app like SharePoint Connector for Confluence. With this app, your teams can work as one, sharing and collaborating on con-tent using whichever system they prefer.

You get the best of both worlds with the Share Point Connector for Confluence. Teams can continue to use Confluence's free-form, easy-to-edit wiki to manage information and share knowledge, yet they also get access to the powerful document management and workflow capabilities of SharePoint Online.

Teams can easily embed SharePoint document libraries, calendars, links, discus-sions and more, directly into Confluence wiki pages. Additionally, Microsoft Office documents can be edited directly from Confluence, and all changes are saved directly back to SharePoint. This eliminates all the back and forth of email—and the associat-ed problems with version control and out-of-date documents.

Confluence teams aren't the only ones who benefit. With this new integration, Share-Point users can embed Confluence wiki pages, blog posts, and blog lists directly into SharePoint. Now everyone can be on the same page. When a comprehensive system is in place and collaborative processes are supported, teamwork can be fostered easily.

Here are some team-friendly use cases that you'll get when you integrate SharePoint and Confluence together.

Building a Common Knowledge Base
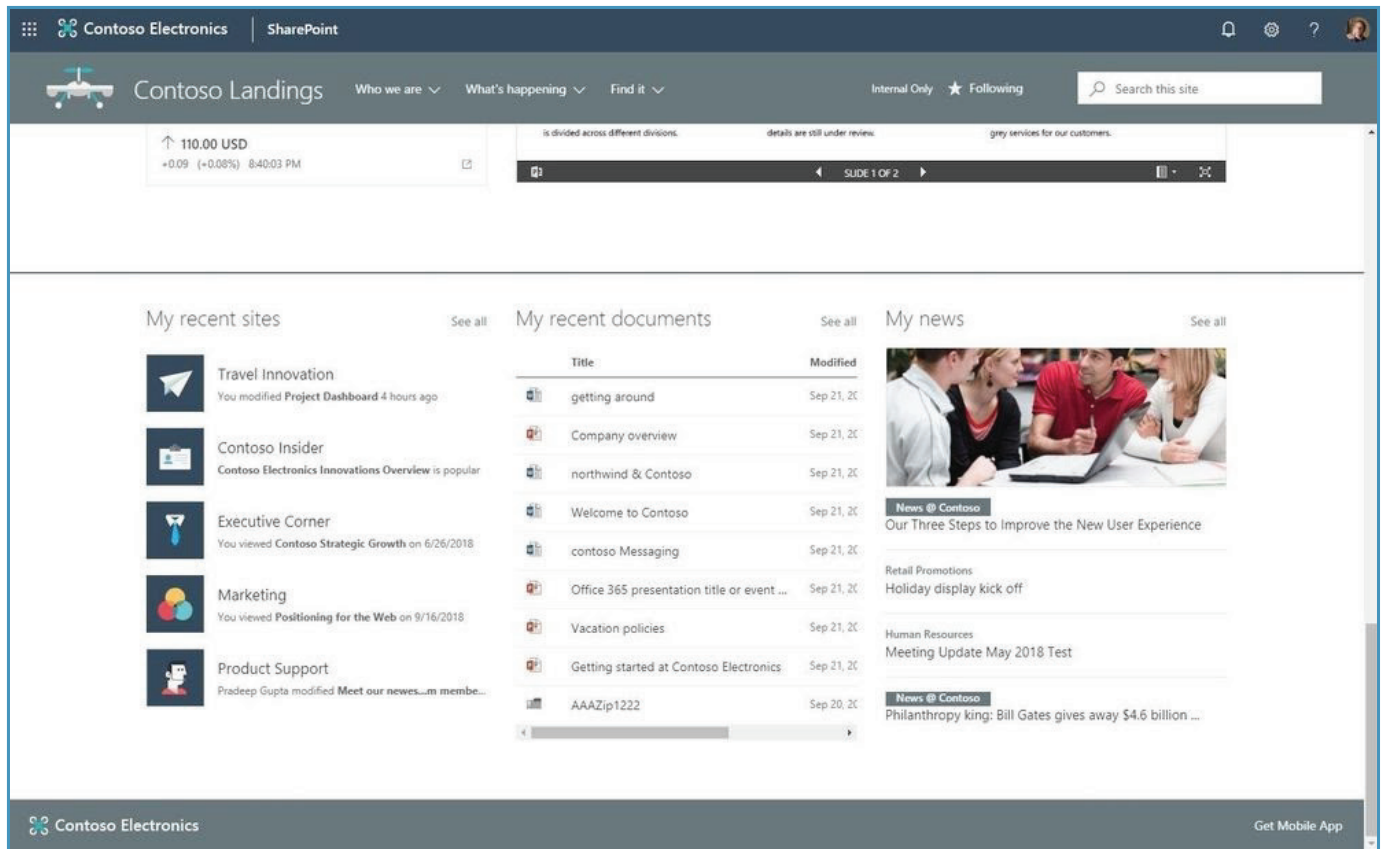
A corporate intranet focuses on managing knowledge as an asset. It can be an all-encompassing platform for employees to share new ideas, co-create content, and deliver new levels of innovation.

In other words, you're providing an environment where employees can collaborate on knowledge sharing. When done right, they can be encouraged to create content beyond traditional domains. Eventually, it is where breakthrough ideas coalesce into actionable strategies and plans.

Managing and Sharing Documents Across Confluence and SharePoint

With SharePoint, your organization can break free from endless email threads and uncontrolled file sharing. Once uploaded to SharePoint, your documents can be edited and automatically saved in the cloud. No matter when and where your team members access the file, they will always see the most updated version and track changes through the editing trail.

When outdated files are out of the picture, communication gaps will cease to exist and workflow management becomes more efficient. Using SharePoint Connector for Confluence, you can integrate SharePoint with Confluence's content editing capabilities to create a central hub for content creation as well as document management. From this point onwards, team culture can be nurtured and new best practices for collaboration can be established.

Integrating Various Communication Channels
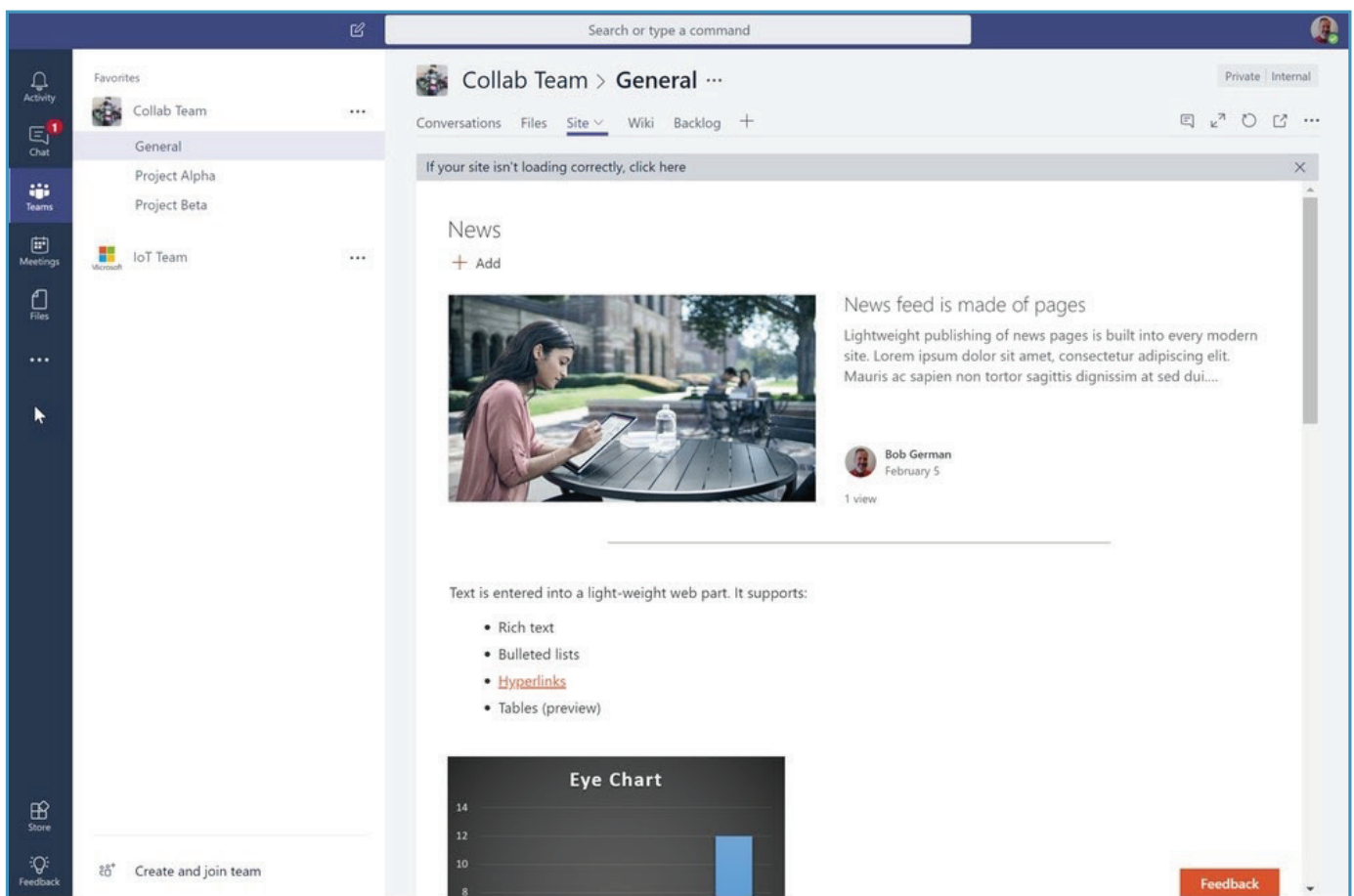
When your intranet is robust enough, you can foster peer-to-peer collaboration through both synchronous and asynchronous communication.

Synchronous channels like direct messages are great for brainstorming or when a team member needs an immediate response. When they anticipate that the conversation will evolve, they can bring it to a knowledge–sharing platform instead, so other people can jump in and collaborate. Discussion can be tracked and systematically documented to keep everyone on the same page—an efficient practice in maintaining teamwork. A team site on SharePoint is ideal for asynchronous communication, especially if your teams are geographically distributed.

The best part? Most intranet platforms allow integration with a third-party messaging app, for example, SharePoint and Teams, to facilitate frictionless communication. You can easily embed a SharePoint site in Teams to collaborate on a project. So, whenever you're having a discussion, your team members can instantly access the information they need without having to switch between apps.

TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK

It is difficult to foster teamwork when there is a clear digital divide in your organization. You have to nip the issue in the bud; in this case, by plugging the gaps in your processes and systems. Make both collaborative platforms work with each other to allow your teams to work efficiently together.

An integration tool like SharePoint Connector for Confluence can help your previously segregated teams maintain their processes and workflows on either one of the platforms while still keeping everyone else involved in-sync. They can work as one despite running on two separate platforms—and that's how you close the digital divide. While educating your teams on the best practices when collaborating can help with the digital divide, it's just as crucial to set up a digital environment that makes collaboration quick and easy.

The more rewarding aspect of the integration tool is the fact that it also enhances the strengths of both platforms. Once you're able to navigate their strengths, you can then leverage them as tools in building a powerful intranet.

COMMUNARDO

Communardo builds products for smarter enterprise collaboration - we strive to make collaboration effective, fast and fun. We are Atlassian Platinum and Enterprise Solution Partner, Atlassian Gold Marketplace Partner as well as Microsoft Gold Certified Partner and with our head office based in Dresden, our products have that "Made in Germany" quality.

At Communardo, software engineers, consultants, support, and service specialists passionately work with our clients. We take the problems that keep cropping up over and over again and develop apps that solve these brilliantly making Atlassian solutions even better.

So far more than 4,000 clients in 90 countries rely on our experience for their daily business.

Try SharePoint Connector for Confluence for free

Contact us

Communardo Products GmbH

Kleiststraße 10 a

01129 Dresden, Germany

Phone: +49 (0) 351/850 33-0

products@communardo.de

www.communardo.com