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# Capabilities of Microsoft SharePoint Online to boost New Zealand SMEs Productivity

Marco Polo de Jesus Cetina Abreu[1], Nagateja Kothamasu[2]
[1,2]*Business Academy, Edenz Colleges, New Zealand*

***Abstract:*** ***The article analyses the Microsoft SharePoint Online platform and its capabilities. This paper also provides outstanding features as well as significant benefits of the implementation of SharePoint Online in New Zealand small and medium enterprises to increase their productivity. The processing of data has become increasingly necessary since the businesses have to challenge with the fierce global competition. Being able to use information systems to outperform the competition adds a competitive advantage and ensures the sustainable growth. SharePoint Online, a collaborative platform, can do a great deal to boost the business through optimise activities and streamline processes. This is not only a document management and storage system, but it is a powerful tool to work collaboratively and analyse an organisation's data. Additionally, Office 365 is fully-integrated with this solution. However, the implementation has to overcome certain requirements to take full advantage of its benefits.***

***Keywords: Capabilities, Benefits, Microsoft SharePoint, Productivity, New Zealand SMEs***

## I. INTRODUCTION

As an entrepreneur, one is constantly seeking the profit maximisation of the business, and improving the productivity is one of the best ways to ensure it. However, in a world characterised by being changeable and producing a vast amount of data every second, working more efficiently is not always easy. Likewise, society is living in a time of hyper connection, that is to say, we must capitalise on working collaboratively more than ever before. SMEs are increasingly adopting new ways of working such as cloud computing, sharing files in real time and utilising new communication channels with clients and employees [4] . It is known that New Zealand businesses lack of utilisation of Information and Communication Technologies, which is limiting productivity [5] . This is where SharePoint becomes a powerful ally. As products changes occur, they evolve more mature, and Microsoft has found that to be the case with SharePoint Online. This solution can allow SMEs to create an intranet where employees can share, search and manage content as well as collaborate with each other across the organisation in a secure environment [1] . This makes it a powerful productivity tool in the modern workplace. In addition to this, employees may want to seize the opportunity to integrate Microsoft Office 365 to enhance the performance at work or even make use of advanced data analysis tools and easily show the reports to anyone.

## II. KEY COMPONENTS AND CAPABILITIES OF MICROSOFT SHAREPOINT ONLINE

SharePoint Online is a cloud-based platform aimed to develop a business intranet that provides a way to create content, which can be completely customisable to meet the current and future business needs. This content creation process lends itself to content editing and collaboration in a single unified platform. Essentially, SharePoint allows designing sites and pages regarding how the published content is displayed. From a document management viewpoint, this solution store documents in a centrally managed repository, which are easily accessible from the browser or the Microsoft OneDrive file hosting service, as it may apply [6] . In the past, having a local SharePoint environment was often cost-prohibitive to SMEs, but now that this tool is part of the Microsoft Office 365 suite based on the cloud, it becomes cost-effective. The following are the main components of Microsoft SharePoint Online:

### *A. Sites to Customise the Workplace*

A site is a group of related web pages which becomes a space of collaboration where the members can exchange information easily. The sites and pages can be utilised to create workspaces assigned to departments, projects, teams or any particular need of the company.

### *B. Lists*

A list is a website component to store, share, and manage information. This tool is extremely useful when it comes to creating databases rapidly, in much the same way as using Microsoft Excel, but with the difference that it is online.

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### *C. Web Parts*

A Web Part is a modular unit of information that forms the basic building block of components displayed on a site. Depending on the permissions of the user, it is possible to edit a page through using Web Parts to display content, pictures and charts, lists of documents, embedded code, maps, etc.

### *D. Document Libraries*

A Document Library is a file hosting storage used by the organisation to store all files related to the department or project. A library can be used to organise files and make it easier to find them. In this way, everyone can have access to them and share them with colleagues easily from any location. The access to files will depend on the employees' permissions. Additionally, Microsoft SharePoint Online integrates seamlessly with Microsoft Office 365, which means the document changes are instant.

### *E. Workflows*

A workflow is a sequence of events triggered by actions carried out within the intranet. This is one of the outstanding features of SharePoint Online powered by Microsoft Flow. It allows automating the activities of the business process increasing productivity. The design of the business process in SharePoint turns out a critical area if the company want to take the most of this tool as automation will depend on the structure of the intranet and its content.

### *F. Views*

A view is used to visualise the items of a list or library in different ways according to the selected fields. This can be modified in order to display specific data. As usage of the lists grows, using different views to organise the information is needed.

### *G. User Permissions*

This functionality provides or restricts user access to the site or its contents. Site permissions apply normally throughout a site, and they allow assigning different access based on user role.

### *H. PowerApps*

Microsoft PowerApps powers SharePoint Online to create sophisticated business applications to interact with the business information without writing code.

### *I. Mobile Experience*

The platform is mobile-enabled which means the co-workers can use their mobile devices to access the sites or interact with other services at any time and in any place.

Some of the most significant capabilities that SharePoint Online brings to help users increase productivity at work are:

*1)* Connectivity at any time, from anywhere, on any device with a responsive website design
*2)* Centralisation and control of the information
*3)* Storage of documents in the cloud via OneDrive
*4)* Smart search system
*5)* Collaboration and sharing of documents in real-time
*6)* Revision and approval of documents
*7)* Alert notifications to stay updated when lists or items change
*8)* Improved graphic user interface to allow any employee to interact with the platform easily
*9)* Automation of tasks by using workflows
*10)* Integration with a range of different productivity apps and services

### *J. Productivity and Technology in New Zealand SMEs Enterprises*

Some tend to associate productivity with working hard rather than working smart, and the former, in terms of worldview, may lead to undermine the productivity. In short, productivity is described as the process of doing more with less resource. The time has come and gone where productivity is a luxury. These days increasing productivity is indispensable to stay in business, and the usage of technology is critical to enhance it in the organisation. The development of New Zealand IT and the mere fact of utilising data smartly could lead to an economic boost of up to $4.5 billion [8] .

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New Zealand is a small economy, which suffers from constraints of scale and other inefficiencies. Nevertheless, this is not an excuse to be disconnected from the world. IDC reported in 2016 that four out of five New Zealanders over the age of 18 own a smartphone [11] . The advances in mobility and cloud computing are changing the way of working, and utilising mobile-enabled IT solutions to be connected at the right time will allow us to transform business processes, operations or develop more profitable business models.

There has been evidence that SMEs in New Zealand are not taking sufficient advantage of computers apart from accounting applications, spreadsheets and word processors. In addition to this, most users are not computer specialists [9] . This means that either SMEs lack understanding of the potential of implementing more technological tools, or they believe these tools are still cost prohibited. Today there are several options, within budget, to take full advantage of new technology. Businesses are not making the money they should, and workers are not earning high enough wages because of the levels of productivity [10] .

### *K. the potential of SharePoint 2016*

The proper use of SharePoint Online brings significant productivity growth for the business. Mobility and connectivity are some of the most significant improvements in this release. Access to the intranet, which is the business information centre, everywhere and at any time helps co-workers to make more informed decisions. This also allows being connected with your work team to send and receive information in order to close deals faster. Work flows faster when everyone knows and can access to the business resources easily such as official documents, policies, and information. Modifying the business process to make it interact with SharePoint can streamline and automate processes. Administrative processes, for instance, can reduce the amount of paperwork, streamline the approval process and share the outcomes easily. The communication and collaboration are fully integrated by means of Office365 (Outlook, Skype or OneDrive).

In regards to data analysis, SharePoint displays specific primary reports automatically. However, advanced analysis and visualisation of data may be done via Power BI web-part. The real value of collecting and exchanging data is in using analytics to provide further information and insight. Instead of only inspecting raw data, analytics can solve the problems of the business.

## III. CONCLUSIONS

Without a doubt, SMEs need to expand their horizons in terms of how to use technology for productivity enhancement. Microsoft Sharepoint Online is a versatile tool that can boost the productivity of SMEs and it is not necessary to utilise all functions available from the very beginning, as it is easily scalable. This platform has proven to help enterprises all over the world automate business processes and help provide a robust collaboration solution for employees. Nevertheless, it is imperative to implement easy to use solutions to promote the sense of uselessness and education programmes to increase the employee's familiarity with the computer systems. The perception of ease of use is inextricably linked to users' computer success. Failing to take it into account can result in a failed SharePoint Online implementation. Moreover, a genuine commitment is required by the management in order to obtain the best results.

Microsoft has made SharePoint incredibly easy to customize, but the help of a professional is still needed for configuration. It is not intended itself to be a plug and play solution. Building an effective intranet means more than only having access to commonly used enterprise content. It is important to underline that software adds no value in itself and that users usually do not care about the technology they are using; instead, they want solutions. Therefore, the management should invest time in internal conversations and in developing the business strategy as well as how SharePoint and its capabilities help streamline specific processes. Not to mention that the design of the intranet has to be user-centred in order to be useful.

Finally, many other technologies can provide extraordinary benefits in terms of efficiency, productivity and sustainability. SMEs should not forget to do a thorough analysis of their business requirements and processes to select the best IT solution and to take the most of it. Even small enhancements in productivity growth can have a significant impact on the income and well-being of co-workers.

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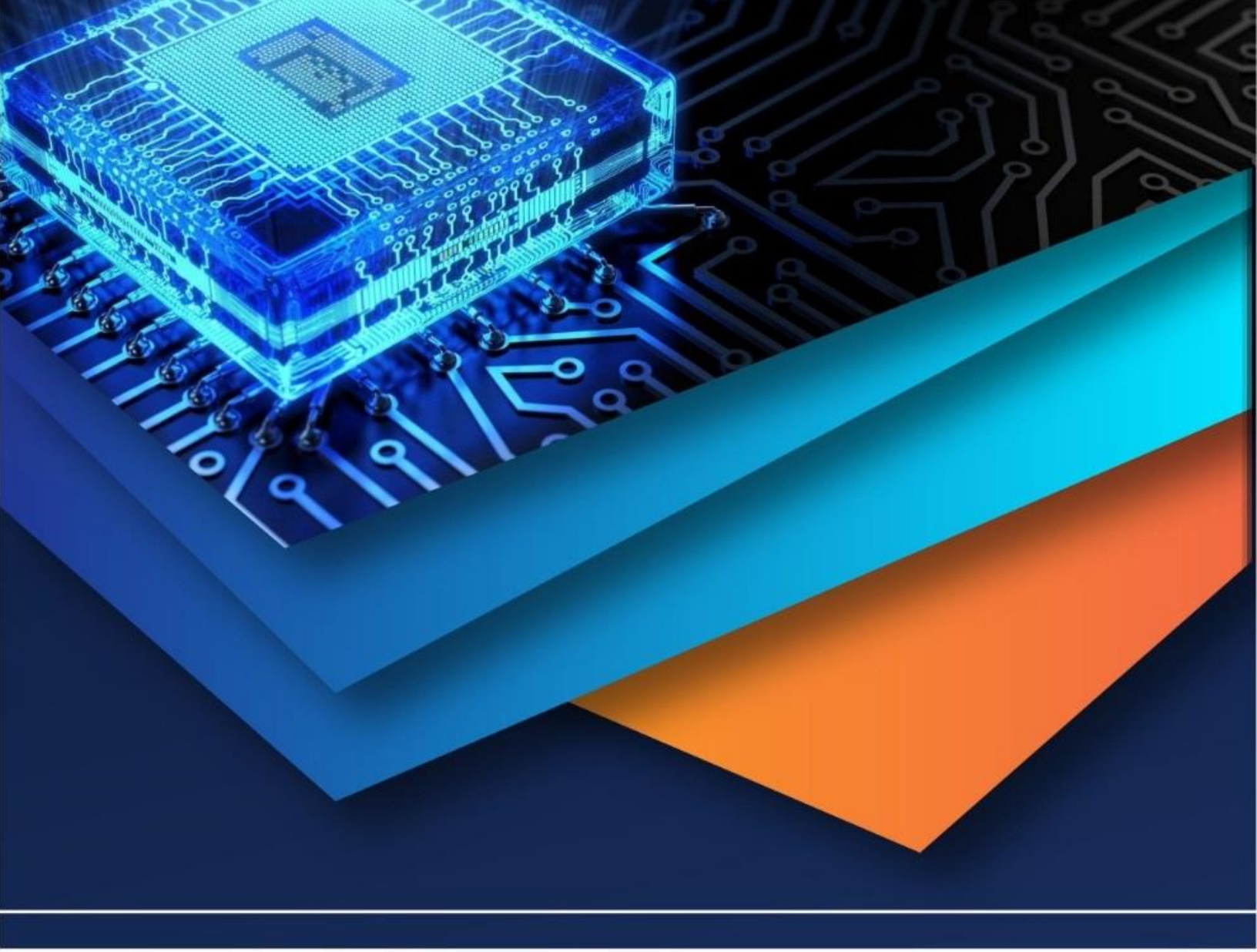

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