



WHITE PAPER

A PORTAL TO COLLABORATION, EFFICIENCY, AND USER ADOPTION: **Why Enterprises are Turning to Microsoft SharePoint to Power their Intranet Portals**

Enterprises across all industries are always looking for more efficient and effective ways to collaborate and share information. Undoubtedly, intranet portals have become the standard vehicle for everyday internal communications, serving as an information center, or hub, housing everything from HR forms and meeting minutes, to project management documents and blogs. According to the International Association for Human Resource Information Management (IHRIM), 85 percent of companies have an intranet or employee portal of some kind.

While there are many intranet portal solutions on the market, Microsoft SharePoint is becoming the platform of choice for a growing number of organizations. SharePoint provides the optimal flexibilities, capabilities, and functionalities for organizations to create and maintain an engaging information center that improves productivity, simplifies collaboration, cuts costs and even boosts company morale.



DRIVING USER ADOPTION

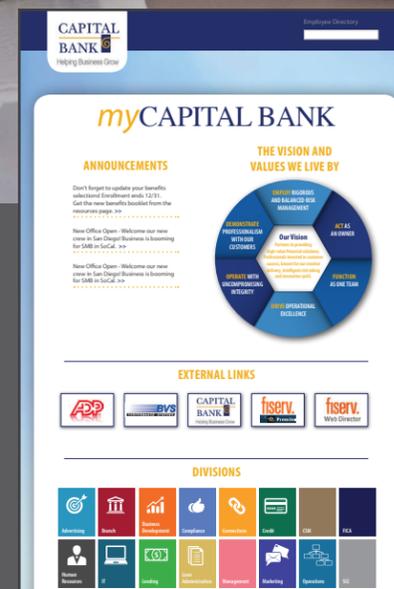
Think of an intranet portal as a welcome mat for employees. Users log into the portal to access essential company-wide announcements and information, and then can drill down to a department's page or area for even more specific content. However, if this "welcome mat" is filled with cluttered content, difficult navigation patterns, outdated information and a less-than-appealing design, employees are less likely to use it. As a result, adoption rates will suffer and a potentially indispensable corporate resource will fall by the wayside.

Companies are opting for SharePoint-powered portals because of the platform's ability to provide a positive user experience that drives adoption. Highly customizable and user friendly, SharePoint allows organizations to easily develop an inviting, branded design and intuitive navigation pattern that will engage employees. Plus, for those companies already using Microsoft products for other business functions, employees will embrace the portal's familiarity and there will be less of a learning curve. Naturally, with more employees effectively utilizing the intranet portal, companies can rapidly maximize their return on investment by increasing productivity and uncovering time and cost savings.

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ENABLING COLLABORATION

SharePoint was built for collaboration and information sharing, so it is no surprise that companies are using the platform to bring these robust capabilities to their intranet portal. By housing documents, data and other information in one place, SharePoint creates an efficient means of enterprise-wide (or even interdepartmental) collaboration. Sales departments no longer have to email proposals back and forth, and human resource staff do not have to store pages upon pages of employee forms on a shared drive. Consequently, SharePoint adopters are reducing the costs associated with storage and manual paperwork, while ensuring the right people are collaborating on the right documents.



SHAREPOINT PORTALS IN USE

Capital Bank N.A. deployed the latest SharePoint intranet portal in order to improve the overall user experience and to help add day-to-day efficiency for its employees. With SharePoint, Capital Bank N.A. now has the infrastructure in place to extend the platform's functionality, incorporate workflows and to connect its lines-of-business systems.

INTEGRATING OTHER LINES OF BUSINESS (LOB)

As companies grow and technologies evolve, more information is siloed in various locations, making it difficult to aggregate into a single location for easy access. Organizations are looking to SharePoint to facilitate direct integration with critical lines-of-business (LOB) systems so that information is readily available from one interface. By seamlessly integrating SharePoint portals with these back-end systems, end users receive a unified view of information across multiple data sources. This level of access allows companies to quickly take action based on certain metrics and analytics and make informed business decisions that positively impact the organization.

In addition to incorporating other lines-of-business systems, SharePoint's ability to integrate with third-party tools, like workflows and forms applications, make the platform even more appealing. For many companies, out-of-the-box SharePoint isn't always sufficient, but the ever-growing array of third-party add-ons makes it easy to extend the solution's capabilities. These customization options can help position companies to address future changes by making it possible to dynamically add and manage newer tools and content as the organization grows.

When properly configured, SharePoint is ideal for expediting the search and retrieval process. Employees can find the information they seek faster (with less frustration), allowing them more time to focus on other more critical tasks.

SIMPLIFYING SEARCH & RETRIEVAL

A primary roadblock to an intranet portal's user adoption is the ease of finding information. More often than not, employees visit the portal to find something, like a timesheet form or report template. Yet, on most intranet sites, employees spend more time looking than they do finding. When properly configured, SharePoint is ideal for expediting the search and retrieval process. Employees can find the information they seek faster (with less frustration), allowing them more time to focus on other more critical tasks.

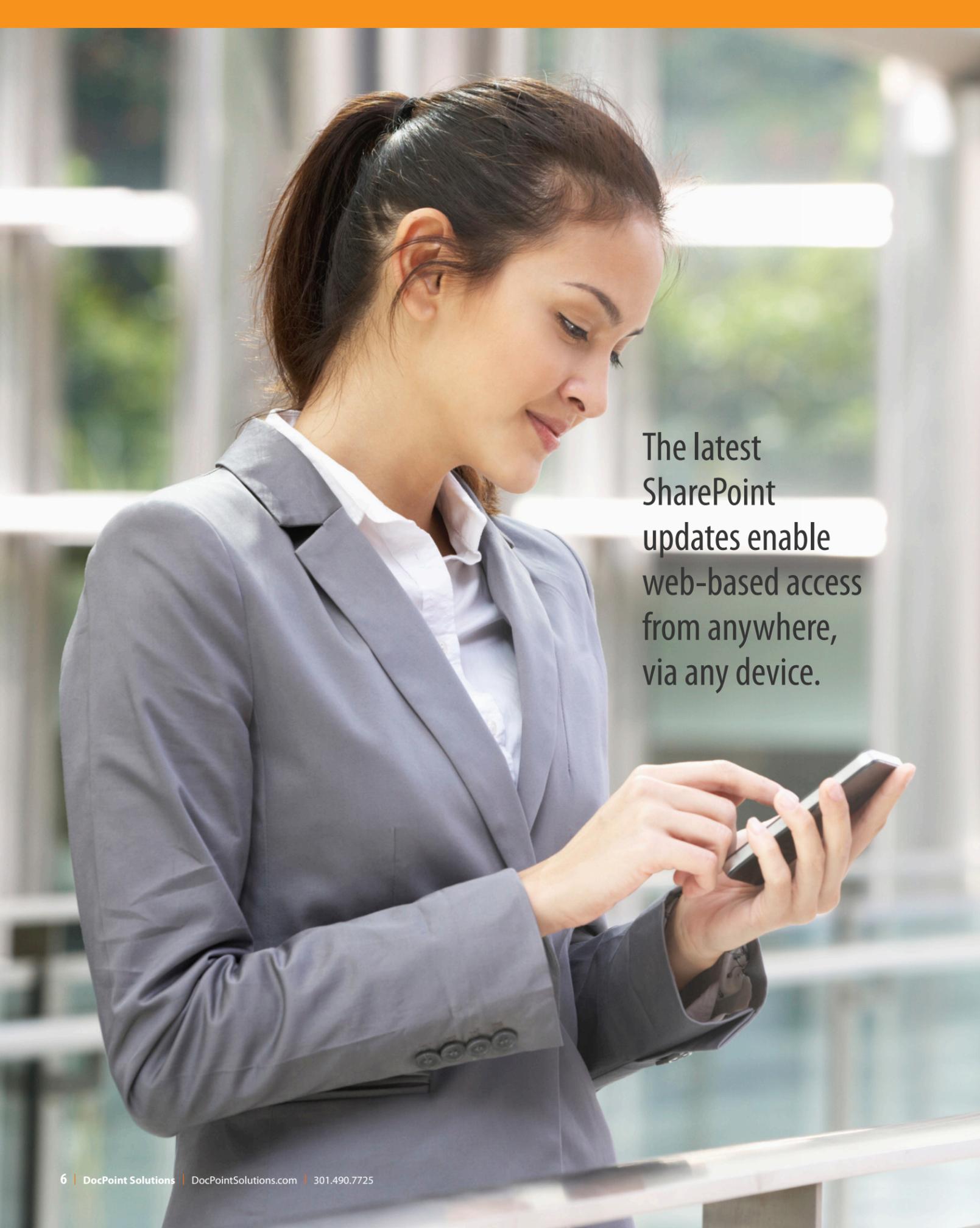
SECURING DATA & ASSIGNING USER ROLES

One of SharePoint's most vital features is its security settings, which protects the portal from unauthorized access. With the ability to set user roles and permissions, SharePoint truly gives administrators control over their intranet portal. Admins can monitor and approve employee-submitted content (blog entries, announcements, photos, etc.) prior to posting, so all content is relevant and appropriate. And, by assigning user roles, each department can manage its own section of the portal, thus spreading the responsibilities for adding and approving content.

SHAREPOINT PORTALS IN USE

The Fund for Johns Hopkins Medicine, Johns Hopkins' philanthropic giving office, implemented a SharePoint intranet portal due to the platform's ability to replace the inefficient methods of sharing information. The organization had long been emailing attachments back and forth, and saving and resaving documents to a hard drive—methods that could put donor data at risk. With a user-friendly interface and clean design, the SharePoint intranet portal is helping the organization share data safely and effectively, while creating a greater sense of community and team morale among employees dispersed across several different buildings.





The latest
SharePoint
updates enable
web-based access
from anywhere,
via any device.

SHAREPOINT PORTALS IN USE

In need of an intranet portal to house, organize and present the latest company news, announcements and documents, a retirement communities manager opted for a SharePoint-powered employee portal. From the landing page, employees can drill down to separate pages for each individual community to find the information most relevant to them. The company reports that SharePoint's user-friendliness has driven the intranet's user adoption, with a vast majority of employees coming to the portal at least once a week, if not every day.

GETTING SOCIAL

Social networking encompasses more than just Facebook and Twitter these days. Enterprise social networking tools like Yammer are making their mark across industries. Integrating social tools with a SharePoint portal adds a new dimension to the intranet, bringing the latest and greatest news under one roof, while providing admins complete control over posts. Enterprise social tools are especially useful for organizations that do not allow traditional social networking during work hours, but still want to deliver employees the latest news and create a sense of community. However, SharePoint's flexibility still allows for the integration of traditional social media platforms by creating feeds within the portal.

GOING MOBILE

In an age when more than half of the U.S. population owns a smart phone, as reported by PEW Research, mobile reigns supreme. The latest SharePoint updates enable web-based access from anywhere, via any device. With mobile-optimized SharePoint portals, organizations can extend the reach of their intranet beyond the four walls of the office. Employees can access resources, company news and important documents from virtually anywhere, which naturally leads to higher user acceptance and, again, greater productivity.

UNCOVERING THE BENEFITS OF A SHAREPOINT INTRANET PORTAL

When properly and effectively deployed, a SharePoint intranet portal provides a wide range of benefits that can permeate the organization. By providing a user-friendly hub for promoting collaboration among employees and departments, a SharePoint portal can significantly increase productivity, foster positive company morale, cut costs, minimize security risks and position the workplace for future growth.

However, to fully realize these benefits and more, it is often not enough to implement an out-of-the-box SharePoint portal. Many companies know what they want in terms of an intranet, but do not know how to get there. Seeking the expertise of a knowledgeable SharePoint integrator will help you get the most out of your portal. Acting as a partner, an integrator can assist in building your intranet portal in alignment with your company's vision and long- and short-term goals. Developing a proper governance plan, integrating third-party applications and training end users are just a few of the services that an outside expert can provide to make your portal implementation a success.



WHAT ARE YOU SHARING?

POPULAR SHAREPOINT PORTAL FEATURES INCLUDE:

- HR documents: 401K plans, healthcare forms, and timesheets
- Vital financial statements and supporting details
- Newsletters and company announcements
- Sales proposal templates and quotations
- Photos, videos and multimedia
- Discussion boards and Q&As
- Meeting minutes
- Research data
- Contracts information
- Specific project-related content
- Calendars
- Social media feeds

SHAREPOINT PORTALS IN USE

Replacing its shared drive environment that siloed data from different business units, a government healthcare organization chose SharePoint to streamline collaboration and store and share documents. Now, employees are saving time and effort searching for documents, while permissions and user roles protect sensitive information. Built-in workflows and integration with social tools, including Yammer, are helping the organization make the most of its investment.



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