



## **10 ways to start a SharePoint Project the right way!**

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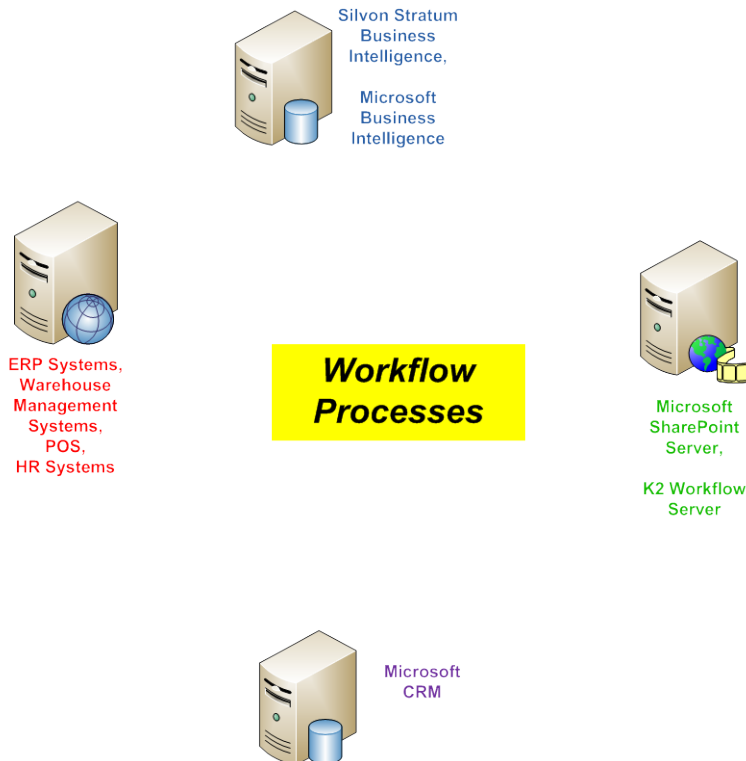


## Summary

Microsoft Sharepoint is more than just a Portal or a business solution. SharePoint is an extensible platform for integration collaboration and communication that can meet the needs of small teams to large enterprises alike. It directly competes with the likes of Lotus Notes as a collaborative platform to allow end users to quickly create workspaces and has the intuitive business user UIs that are a part of the trademark of all Microsoft technologies. Sharepoint integrated tools empower business users to collectively achieve focused goals and subsequently to communicate those achievements and goals effectively to targeted audiences.

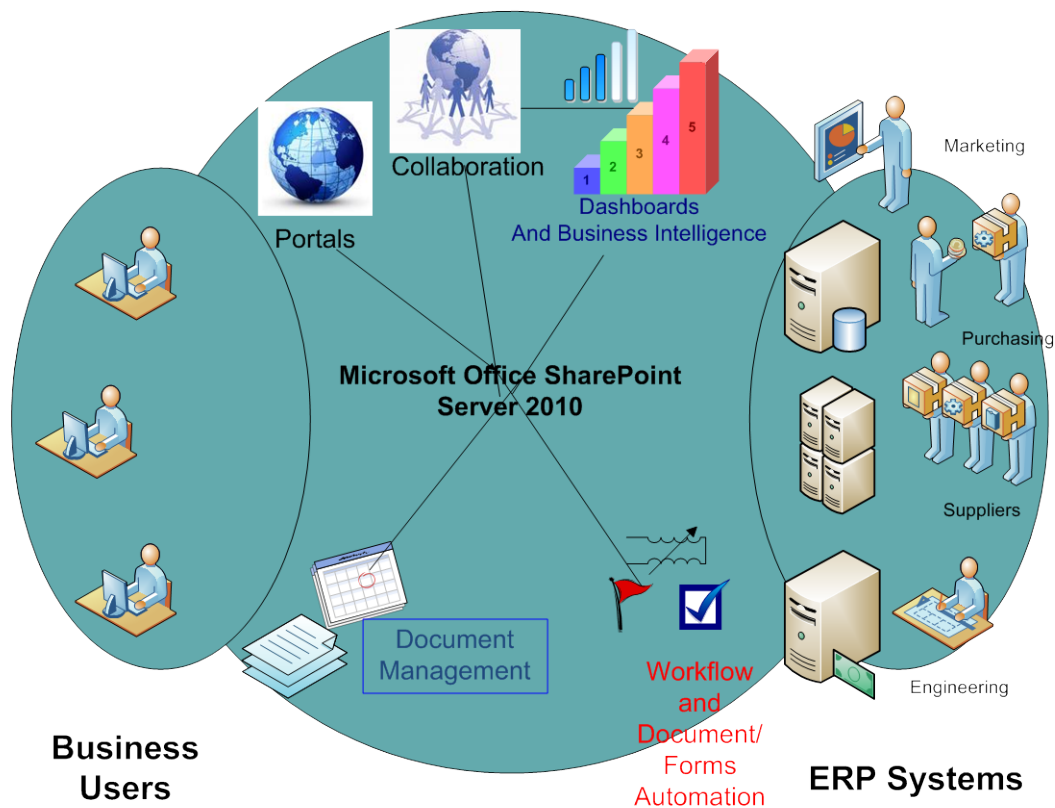
Sharepoint server provides an enterprise business framework that allows for a single sign on, integration of enterprise application information from various systems. With the upcoming release of SharePoint 2010 and its enhanced features of workflow, form, automation, business intelligence and document management, SharePoint is the dynamic platform for **filling the whitespace between ERP systems and desktop productivity tools**.

It is a launching point for access to key data and information within organisations and will provide the organisations **central point for a single version of the truth** for business users and key stakeholders. SharePoint 2010 allows organisations to create custom applications for focused audiences that are either not available within existing ERP systems or are too clumsy to organise. These applications can be put together in portable, manageable components called “web parts” which can be commercial purchased or custom built. SharePoint is the one platform where convergence of custom applications can happen and centralization of management of these applications can be a reality.



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## SharePoint and our vision for SharePoint



***“SharePoint aims at filling the collaboration white space between systems, people and business users across organizational boundaries through integration, collaboration and personalization”.***

SharePoint will allow organisations to create collaboration applications for focused audiences and for specific purposes.

1. Customer, employee, partner, supplier focused
2. Product, project, topic, and issue related with the help of focused sites or better content management/tagging
3. Applications include customer services, discussion boards, knowledge management, enterprise search, and document libraries

Furthermore, SharePoint will also allow creation of applications that will be put together in portable, manageable components called “web parts” that can be targeted to customers, employees and partners.

It can be a single source web portal that employees will need to know to access the various information and services from all areas of the organisation.

It will help resolve the strategic needs for collaboration and provides the features to do that by reaching across, company, geographical and language barriers, support for extranets, support for internet based technology standards.

It supports high availability and reliability standards to be a mission critical infrastructure supporting collaboration across organisations boundaries that enable innovation and seamless integration.

SharePoint Addresses issues in implementing a robust collaboration environment by, integrating “out of the box” supporting many systems such as outlook, directory services, and desktop applications. It provides infrastructure for integration with ERP, CRM, Supply Chain systems, and warehouse management systems through XML and web services.

## 10 things to consider for a SharePoint deployment

- **Establish a vision for SharePoint,**  
What will SharePoint mean for your organisation? What is the best way to implement it to get the maximum benefits to your organisation - Should it be just an intranet, extranet or a collaboration platform? Should users be able to create their own environment or be restricted? Will the document management features be useful for automation workflow and document handling? Can dashboards be of any use to your user community?
- **Establish a Business Case before you plan your infrastructure spend.**  
We have seen many times that an organisation will invest in servers, additional hardware, network storage etc without considering the overall business case for sharepoint. What applications will be necessary (such as Silverlight, visual studio, SQL 2008, and any other platforms within the business case), who are the users, has user profiling been considered? Other area's such as business groups, both internal and external also need to considered.
- **Find an Initial Business Unit Sponsor.**  
Take a look at the organisation and the business units within it, then consider how each of those units would benefit from using the features within SharePoint 2010. Examples can be, suppliers being evaluated on forms, emailed back in, and distributed to relevant purchasing offices, health and safety compliance, on line training, or workflows where decisions can be routed within the organisation. There are many more that can be done, however experience has told us to look for small easy wins to show business users that relatively easy tasks can be done, and then start to add more complex tasks after that.
- **Start a grass roots organisation for supporting the portal**  
There needs to be content contributors, editors and an administrator, typically the administrator contacts the business units and asks for documents, workflows, or anything else that business unit may require. This is an ongoing process and the more proactive the better the returns on site delivery.

- **Profile the users**  
Develop a list of user types within the organisation, look at needs and requirements of those users, also consider splitting up portals, i.e. a portal for each business unit that contains relevant information for that unit while keeping a global perspective (universal address book, common documentation etc)
- **Catalog existing content sources and content types**  
This provides a rich source of existing content and content types that will drive the structure of the portal. Typically there are common documents across an organisation (leave forms etc) then there are forms or procedures that have common names as well, then there are unique functions and forms/content relevant to those particular business units.
- **Create Processes for content development, publishing and administration of SharePoint**  
Content is everything in portals, establish content development, review and publishing procedures for all types of content and make sure relevant and interesting content gets to the site. Do not make the process too elaborate or you will lose interest from volunteers for content development /publishing.
- **Build the Portal Infrastructure so it is open and secure**  
Design the portal so it will allow employees to interact between themselves and with external partners, customers etc from the same infrastructure and that it is seamless to the business community. Security comes into it where applications such as PDF, locked document control, and read/edit permissions according to user profile.
- **Implement key business processes in the portal**  
Make the portal more than content, introduce workflows and processes, so that it becomes an integrated part of company operations. Some examples can be project management, sales collaboration, partner collaboration and self serve applications for procurement, user management etc. After all, SharePoint has these features built in and will increase the return on investment dramatically.
- **Fresh content and continuous improvement plans**  
A portal is not a static site, it is like a daily newspaper, people get fresh content with new features updates on a regular basis.

***SharePoint is not a mere investment into any other infrastructure, but it is a unique business tool whose prime focus is the business users of any organisation. Implementations of SharePoint will offer you assured business returns both in internal operational costs and streamlining processes. The depth of installation into an organisation directly correlates to the return on investment.***

## Conclusion

Masai has been involved in Business Intelligence since 1992 and has delivered information via SharePoint for a number of years. We have recently also become involved in Implementing workflows from reports that come from BI, such as forecasting events and correctly estimating stock levels, coordination of marketing events and gathering materials to site to ensure a successful outcome etc. Workflows come in to every operation within an organisation, and outcomes are reported, thus, every report, workflow and outcome are intertwined.

Our partners below are the best of breed in these areas.



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