

EGUIDE – OFFICE 365 VS. GOOGLE APPS: WHY MORE BUSINESSES ARE CHOOSING OFFICE 365

Office 365 Vs. Google Apps: Why More Businesses Are Choosing Office 365



INTRODUCTION

Small-to-medium sized businesses (SMBs) and entrepreneurs are accustomed to having to do more with less. Budgets are tighter and available resources are limited at best. Thankfully there is scalable new technology available to help today's SMBs remain competitive against businesses with deeper pockets and a more robust technology infrastructure.

Microsoft Office 365 - a cloud-based office productivity suite - is one product being leveraged by SMBs today to reduce costs, streamline operations, and bolster collaborative efforts among employees.

Many SMBs are fearful of the cloud, but the term itself is basically industry jargon for off-site file hosting. Nowhere near as ominous as it sounds or is made out to be.

Microsoft Office 365 brings the familiar Office desktop suite into the cloud creating web-based versions of widely used Microsoft software like Word, Excel, Outlook and Powerpoint. Everything from documents, spreadsheets, slideshows, emails, websites, conferencing tools, and storage space reside off-premises in the cloud rather than on an employee's hard drive or an on-site server. This allows for anytime/anywhere remote access, easier filing sharing, and more collaborative approaches to editing.

In this e-guide, we will discuss eight benefits of moving Office documents into the cloud and address the most common concerns that SMB owners or Chief Information Officers (CIOs) have about migrating to Office 365. The goal of this e-guide is to help SMBs better understand the basic fundamentals of Microsoft Office 365 so they can make a more informed decision as to whether or not this solution best accommodates their current needs and circumstances.

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OFFICE 365 – A HISTORY

Prior to Office 365’s introduction, many businesses were migrating to the cloud-based Google Apps for Business. Microsoft was starting to be perceived as the old stalwart when it came to business email and communications software. Meanwhile, Google was garnering a reputation as the young upstart in the industry.

Since Google was fully utilizing the cloud, small businesses and organizations were turning to Google Apps for Business to eliminate the need for an on-site server and to facilitate communications and sharing among an increasingly dispersed workforce in the BYOD (Bring-Your-Own-Device) era.

This meant that many businesses were bypassing the expensive licenses of the Office desktop suite for the more mobile and affordable Google Apps for Business. “Send us a Word attachment” suddenly became “Put that in a Google Doc and share it with us on the Google Drive.”

Rather than lose a share of their marketplace to a competitor, Microsoft opted to introduce a cloud-based suite of their own targeting enterprise customers, small businesses, non-profits and the education market, all of whom were being priced out of the desktop Office 2013 suite.

After several missteps, Office 365 was introduced. Here are the four key components that make up Office 365’s cloud-based services

<p>Microsoft Office Web Apps</p>	<p>Microsoft Exchange Online</p>	<p>Microsoft Sharepoint Online</p>	<p>Microsoft Lync Online</p>
<p>The classic MS Office suite modernized with web browser-based versions of Excel, Word and PowerPoint</p>	<p>Users can access and share emails, contact lists and calendars from any desktop, laptop, or mobile device</p>	<p>Colleagues can share and collaborate on documents and track project milestones from virtually anywhere</p>	<p>Connect with friends, peers, customers, and colleagues with text, audio, and video messaging/ conferencing</p>

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THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN OFFICE 365 & GOOGLE APPS

You’ll note different names, yet very similar capabilities, during a quick side-by-side comparison of Microsoft Office 365 and Google Apps for Business. This is because Google basically developed their software to be cloud-based replicas of the already established enterprise-grade Microsoft Office products. The following table is a breakdown of each comparable function between Office 365 and Google Apps.

FUNCTION	MICROSOFT	GOOGLE
Spreadsheets	Microsoft Excel	Google Sheets
Word Processing	Microsoft Word	Google Docs
Presentations	Microsoft Powerpoint	Google Slides
Web Pages	Microsoft Sharepoint	Google Sites
Emails	Microsoft Outlook	Gmail
Storage	Microsoft Skydrive	Google Drive
Video Conferencing	Microsoft Lync	Google Hangout
Instant Messaging	Microsoft Lync	Google Talk
Social Networks	So.cl	Google+
Note Taking	Microsoft OneNote	Google Keep

Despite the old adage of “Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery,” Microsoft versions have been around for quite some time and are much more refined than Google’s offerings.

For instance, while many appreciate the simplicity of Gmail for personal use, a much larger percentage of workers are likely to be more familiar with Outlook for business email.

When it comes to note taking, OneNote has advanced capabilities and better integration with other programs than Google Keep.

Anyone who has ever used Google Docs has likely experienced formatting nuisances and understands that the software’s format and layout options aren’t always WYSIWYG (What You See is What You Get).

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EIGHT SIMPLE REASONS SMBs ARE CHOOSING OFFICE 365

Ensured Privacy and Better Security

Whenever cloud migration is suggested, security is one of the first subjects to come up, as many SMBs fear their data is less secure in the cloud. However, only a very small number of security breaches have been linked to data stored in the cloud. In fact, the cloud offers SMBs a level of consistently updated security that many otherwise can't afford. Here are a few ways Office 365 keeps your business information private and secure:

- Not only does the data reside in a well-secured state-of-the-art data center, but data encryption and frequently updated antivirus and spam protection also offer greater protection.
- Microsoft's privacy policy states your data WILL NOT be scanned and given or sold to third parties. In contrast, Google's Privacy Policy states that any data they collect CAN

BE used for advertising purposes. Make no mistake about it; Google's cash cow is Google Ads. Google crawls your data in search of specific keywords to trigger ads from paid advertisers. It's important to read all fine print as many businesses, particularly those that must adhere to HIPAA regulations, may run into a compliance conflict with Google Apps. Office 365 protects against data crawling and adheres to its privacy standards at no additional cost beyond its base price.

- Microsoft provides detailed documentation on their privacy policy and security measures.
- Microsoft has long been regarded as one of the most cooperative cloud-service providers when it comes to signing a liability agreement committing to HIPAA compliance.

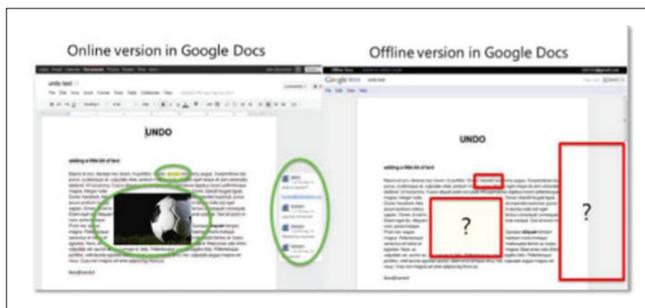
Work from Anywhere at Anytime

Although Google has enhanced its capabilities offline, there are still limitations to its offline app. Meanwhile, Office 365 allows users to access

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documents, spreadsheets, Outlook, etc. from virtually any device with a Wi-Fi connection and a web browser. Here are a few reasons Office 365 is strengthening productivity.

- In addition to the web-browser based Office suite, most Office 365 plans include desktop installations of Microsoft’s software for up to 5 PCs/Macs per user. The standard Small Business package is the one exception. Otherwise, anyone who needs to create, review or edit documents without a Wi-Fi connection can still get work finished using software installed on his or her laptop or Macbook.
- Office 365 offers a consistent experience across online and offline platforms regardless of the device used.



Ease of Use Both Online and Offline

Office 365 users can get started immediately with a minimal learning curve because Microsoft’s products are widely recognized and have been used

in workplaces and homes for decades. The same tailored experience is applied across all platforms – mobile, online and desktop applications.

Anyone that has already used Microsoft Outlook and desktop Office has an instant familiarity with the products that should help them smoothly transition to the cloud.

Effective Integrated Solutions

Familiarity goes a long way and more people are proficient at using the Microsoft software than its competitors. The cloud enhances the Microsoft Office Desktop suite experience because it facilitates greater collaboration. Office 365 allows SMBs to:

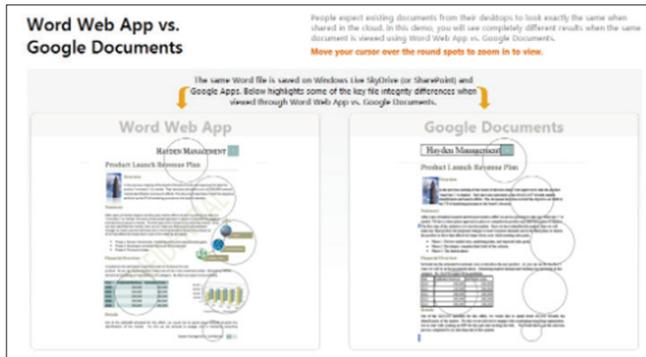
- See real-time presence and calendar availability
- Initiate a web conference within Office applications or Outlook, Sharepoint or Lync

Google on the other hand relies on third parties for features like video conferencing and many of its core services.

A Uniform Look Regardless of Device

Have you ever opened a Word document in Google Apps only to see disheveled formatting or a missing table of contents, headers, footers, watermarks, page numbers and tables?

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It’s pretty common. Office 365 preserves formatting whether documents are edited using a desktop version of Microsoft Office or a mobile device in the cloud.

This gives you the confidence of knowing that the documents you’re sending to customers, clients, or prospects look just the way you intended.

Flexible Solution

Office 365 offers a hybrid environment allowing you to easily do business both in and outside of the cloud. If certain parts of your business operations aren’t necessarily “cloud-ready”, they can stay out of it. Users of Google Apps can’t experience this kind of hybrid deployment.

Additionally, Google also has very limited management and administrative capabilities in comparison to Office 365. With Office 365, you will know exactly who has access to your data and control their conditions and privileges.

Financially Backed Service-Level Agreement

The most successful SMBs are confident that their business critical operations are optimally running at all times. Not only does Microsoft provide a Service Health Dashboard that lets you see the current status of their online service, but they are also one of the few cloud-service providers to offer a financially backed service level agreement (SLA) any time their service availability drops below 99.9 percent.

Meanwhile, Google offers a less transparent approach to system availability. They only begin to count downtime when at least 5 percent of their users are affected. This doesn’t work very well for any business relying on meaningful performance metrics to assess productivity.

No Surprises

SMBs get exactly what they pay for with Microsoft - ready-to-go features that are fully supported with predictable pricing and no hidden fees or gotchas. Office 365 is also flexible enough that it allows SMBs to change or remove services based on their needs. Office 365’s technology roadmap means no surprise updates. Advance notice accompanies any significant update.

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Summary

Office 365 offers a tried-and-true business standard in a new technology environment. Although it may seem to be priced slightly higher than Google Apps, the enhanced security, superior MS Office software, and better flexibility actually make it a more cost-efficient solution for SMBs. Since Office 365 allows for a hybrid deployment of both cloud and on-premise services, Office 365 also allows SMBs to gradually move to the cloud with less anxiety.

For even more support transitioning to an Office 365 environment, an expert managed services provider that has successfully deployed SharePoint, Exchange and Lync both on-premises and in the cloud can help minimize the administrative burden of Office 365; helping you achieve a greater ROI on your Microsoft investment.

For Additional Information Please Contact

David Cross

dcross@elevative.com

T: 703.226.3419

1577 Spring Hill Rd., Vienna, VA, 22182

<http://elevative.com/>