

Microsoft SharePoint Online vs. Google Sites

Hosted services comparison

Organizations today have many choices regarding their collaboration and information management environments. As budget pressures continue to drive evaluations of new and existing technologies, hosted services offer the ability to reduce on-premises infrastructure and administrative costs. While these services offer attractive savings at first glance, it is important to understand the effects on user productivity and support resources necessary beyond deployment. This comparison overview document evaluates the capabilities, limitations, and overall business impact for hosted solutions from both Microsoft® Business Productivity Online Suite (BPOS) and Google Apps Premier Edition (GAPE). The categories were selected based on common business needs for hosted collaboration platforms and include user experience, IT administration and support, pricing options, and core capabilities that allow organizations of all size to connect and empower people, reduce costs with a unified collaboration infrastructure, and rapidly respond to business needs.

Feature/ Capability is:	Present		Not Present		Partially Available		Equal		Hosted Service Provider		Importance to Users		Importance to users:		
					Microsoft	Google	Power Users	Information Workers							
Feature/Capability									Issues and Comments						
Collaboration Feature Gaps SharePoint Online vs. Google Sites															
Sites: Share Information seamlessly and securely with employees partners & customers									Allow teams to work together effectively, collaborate on and publish documents, maintain task lists, and share information. Sites supports core document collaboration capabilities similar to SharePoint Online but lack some key points of integration with GAPE. Limited support for IT administrators and an inability to customize sites extensively make it less flexible than SharePoint.						
Communities: Empower people to work together in new ways incl. social networking									Communities provide a comprehensive, flexible platform that empowers people to work together in new ways, share knowledge and ideas, connect with colleagues, and find information and experts naturally. Integration with other GAPE apps is achievable but Sites doesn't provide today the kinds of site security, privacy controls and management capabilities many organizations are looking for.						
Content: Manage content lifecycle from creation to disposition incl. document, records and web content management with workflow and Office application integration									Content management helps organizations consolidate diverse content from multiple file shares and personal drives into a centrally managed repository. People can participate in the content management lifecycle, helping to manage diverse content, promote compliance and streamline business processes. Google Sites supports very basic document version control but any enterprise content management capabilities are not available today.						
Search: Find relevant content in a wide range of repositories and formats with actionable search results. Unlock information, find people, and locate expertise in the enterprise									Search provides employees the ability to find relevant content in a wide range of repositories and formats with actionable search results that respect security permissions. Integrated with the SharePoint platform and the Office System users can easily find, use, and share information and increase productivity. Search is available through Google Sites however additional investment in search appliance technologies are often needed.						

Feature/Capability is:	Hosted Service Provider		Importance to Users		Importance to users:
	Microsoft	Google	Power Users	Information Workers	
<div style="display: flex; gap: 10px;"> Present Not Present Partially Available Equal </div>					<div style="display: flex; gap: 10px;"> High Moderate </div>
Feature/Capability	Microsoft	Google	Power Users	Information Workers	Issues and Comments
Insights: Make informed business decisions and assemble and display business information from disparate sources using built-in Web parts					Insights make it easy for decision-makers to access information anytime, anywhere. People can get up-to-date information where they work, collaborate, and make business decisions faster. Google Sites allows you to copy and paste Google Sheets on a Google Web page but there is a 1Mb size restriction. There is no support today for Insights, business intelligence or connection to LOB data.
Composites: Rapidly create business solutions and process applications which collect and validate the data that drives your organizational workflows					Provides built-in workflow templates to automate approval, review, and archiving processes. There are no workflow capabilities available in Google Sites but solutions marketplace partners offer basic workflow solutions at additional cost.

Business impact details:

Collaboration technology is quickly becoming a critical communication and productivity tool in today's businesses. A consistent set of features allows users to complete tasks quickly and collaborate with coworkers more effectively. Moving from a Microsoft to Google environment may affect some of these day-to-day operations. Google Sites is not as easy to use as it may appear. Typical collaboration capabilities are spread across multiple GAPE applications and while these services offer attractive savings at first glance, it is important to understand the effects on user productivity and support resources necessary beyond deployment.

SharePoint Online provides the robust capabilities of Microsoft SharePoint Server and is hosted by Microsoft as a cloud-based service. With SharePoint Online, your IT team can provide a single, integrated location where employees can: efficiently collaborate with team members, find organizational resources, search for information, and manage content and workflow, without the operational burden that comes from managing the infrastructure associated with on-premises software. SharePoint combines a rich collaborative experience, but it also supports rich application development and integration.

Google Sites is a simple document-sharing service with limited page layout templates. While it is possible for a Sites user to imitate some more complete SharePoint features, this usually requires HTML layout and configuration skills that are not required for the equivalent SharePoint capability. Google Sites is wiki-based, supporting basic group collaboration where individuals can share documents, images, videos, calendars, and a number of Google-based gadgets. It also provides a basic document library with permission-based content viewing/editing controls. However, it does not deliver a professional enterprise or small business Web site creation tool or business application solution. Many organizations are looking for a single platform to deliver this capability to their employees requiring flexibility and interoperability with existing technology investments.

The global economic environment will drive demand for less expensive cloud services that benefit from the economies of scale. Organizations will be reticent to compromise cost reduction for a lack of control of their data, or limit control of their policies and procedures. That's why a mixed approach to the cloud, with the choices afforded by [software plus services](#), is a much more flexible and realistic scenario for most organizations. While we are advocates for the delivery of cloud based services, there is a desire among many customers to avoid a technology ultimatum. We believe it's critical to focus on what customers want, and their readiness to embrace the cloud for various applications in the context of their circumstances, instead of forcing a decision to move everything to the cloud. Information management and security remains the single biggest IT issue for organizations. Taking advantage of the benefits offered by SharePoint Online in conjunction with other cloud based services delivered through BPOS and your existing on premises technology investments can help to simultaneously reduce the costs of managing your collaboration infrastructure without sacrificing control.

Feature/Capability	Hosted Service Provider		Importance to Users		Issues and Comments
	Microsoft	Google	Power Users	Information Workers	
Feature/Capability is: Present Not Present Partially Available Equal					
Importance to users: High Moderate					
Pricing and Options					
Collaboration Services Offering					Both Microsoft and Google offer enhanced collaboration services. GAPE offers support for corporate domains, an uptime SLA, and anti-virus and anti-spam. It costs \$50 per year, per user. Microsoft offers the same services with a monthly payment option of \$5.25 per month or \$63 per year. You also have the ability to localize your data into one hosted server. This guarantees that you know the location of your data. Google cannot offer this service. (Microsoft puts dedicated servers in place to support and differentiate our online offerings versus the consumer offering of Hotmail.) Google has consumer and business GAPE users on the same infrastructure. Both Microsoft and Google offer standard hosted collaboration services. Google's standard service supports corporate domains and is free, but it is an unmanaged solution and ad-funded.
Deskless Worker					Microsoft's SharePoint Deskless Worker provides information access and simple data input/editing for deskless workers whose main job does not involve working with a PC at a cost of \$24 per year but is a managed service offering technical assistance and support for corporate domains.
Additional Storage Options					Expanded storage options are also available for ongoing SharePoint Online growth and are priced per each terabyte used. Google also provides additional storage options priced per terabyte.

Business impact details:

Pricing and options: Hosted collaboration offers opportunity for cost reduction and delivery of services to users whose collaboration needs normally would not have warranted investment in the service. While Google offers two options, only one may be viable as a business solution. Its standard service is unmanaged and may expose your organization to risk in the form of data loss or theft. The business option provides some of the standard protections you would expect in a corporate environment, but it is a one-size-fits-all solution that offers little flexibility.

With Microsoft you have a choice of supported collaboration solutions allowing for greater cost savings where the standard service can be deployed. In addition, you can keep some of your users on your on-premises system and deploy other users in the cloud. This flexibility allows you to continue to depreciate existing investments while piloting new technologies. You can also take your time in evaluating the impact of the new solution with the assurance that all of your workforce can work together efficiently and effectively.

Feature/Capability is:	Present Not Present Partially Available Equal	Hosted Service Provider		Importance to Users		Importance to users: <input type="radio"/> High <input type="radio"/> Moderate
		Microsoft	Google	Power Users	Information Workers	
IT Administration and Support (Service Level Agreements)						
Administration Center and Customer Portal			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Microsoft Admin Center provides Web-based access for configuration and administration of SharePoint Online including Directory Synchronization, Migration, and Sign-In tools. Google Apps control panel is the equivalent offering.	
Configurable Storage and Quotas			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	GAPE provides 10Gb of storage for sites, plus 500Mb for each Premier Edition user account but storage quotas cannot be set. Microsoft offers 250 MB per user, aggregated across the organization but is configurable putting administrators in complete control of the online environment.	
Authenticated Access			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	GAPE provides for authenticated access but the SAML based single signon (SSO) supports Gmail and Calendar only.	
Directory Integration			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	The Microsoft Directory Synchronization tool can synchronize your on-premise Active Directory® with the Microsoft Online Active Directory. Active Directory support with Google Apps is a separate download/utility. Limited GAL support in Gmail, with groups and distribution lists are not supported.	
Software Add-ons and Client Installs			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	In many cases Google requires unsupported add-ons, plug-ins, or marketplace solutions to enable parity with many of the collaboration features available in SharePoint Online. (e.g. Social networking, RSS Content Syndication and Workflow).	
IT Architecture Flexibility			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	SharePoint can be configured for on-premises, off-premises, some capabilities such as directory synchronizations coexist with the cloud to ease the IT Administration burden for organizations with a mix of on-premises and cloud based collaboration environments. Google Apps supports only a hosted model for all users.	
Data Center Locations			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	SharePoint hosting is in known locations, with options for dedicated servers. Google stores data in multiple locations and will not track where the data resides.	
Service Levels and Uptime			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	SharePoint ONLINE provides a 99.9 percent financially backed uptime guarantee and 24/7 phone-based support for IT administrators. Google does not cover outages of less than 10 minutes, even if consecutive, and offers only service extension as compensation. Google provide web/email based support but phone support is only available Sunday-Friday (5PM PST).	























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Sites													
Collaboration* & Meeting Site Templates**													SharePoint Online allows users create and control collaborative workspaces using standard meeting and team site templates. Google Sites allows users to build a template, replicate and maintain site structure, content, and permissions but these need to be developed manually by the end user.
Surveys													Surveys provide a way of polling team members. You can configure a survey so that team members can respond once or multiple times. You can optionally display results in a graphical view. Surveys can be presented through Google Sites but created in Google Spreadsheets and copied and pasted into the site.
People and Groups													GAPE supports multiple applications for managing people and groups but with limited integration with Sites. As a site owner, control of what users or groups of users can access your SharePoint sites is critical. This transfers the task of managing users from the server administrator to site owners. Three SharePoint groups are provided by default, but you can customize them easily and create new SharePoint groups.
Document Collaboration													Similar to SharePoint Online, Google Sites supports document sharing and basic version control. Multi-user authoring is provided by Google Apps.
Email Alerts, Notifications & Issue Tracking													Google Site change notifications are available and issue tracking is available through Google Site Action Lists and Templates.
Presence Integration													Presence is available through Gmail and Google Talk but there is no integration with Sites. Online presence allows users of your site to see if other users are online and send instant messages to them. SharePoint Online Dedicated utilizes presence awareness with Microsoft Office Communications Server to connect and empower people and extend the value of the collaboration platform.
Site Administration & Extensibility													SharePoint Designer provides tools for rich customization of sites, and creating reporting tools and application templates, without any coding. Google Sites by comparison is inflexible in terms of allowing for customization and extensibility - uploads of CSS and third-party Page templates as an example are banned.

* SharePoint Online Standard does not include My Site Host, News Home Template, and Internet Presence Web Site today.

** SharePoint Online Standard does not include Blank Meeting, Decision Meeting, Social Meeting, and Multipage Meeting Workspace today.

Feature/Capability	Hosted Service Provider		Importance to Users		Issues and Comments
	Microsoft	Google	Power Users	Information Workers	
Feature/Capability is: Present Not Present Partially Available Equal					
Importance to users: High Moderate					
Communities					
Client Integration					There is a moderate level of integration of Google Apps with Google Sites. SharePoint Online allows users to seamlessly interact with SharePoint sites using Microsoft Office programs and Office SharePoint Designer.
Audience Targeting					Audience targeting lets information owners decide how SharePoint groups get information. Within GAPE there is no "targeting" Web part or capability to selectively target part of a site's content to non-Sites users. GAPE instead provides document sharing and mail distribution lists for audience targeting.
RSS Content Syndication					Google Gadgets allows users to get an RSS (text) feed from an external blog. RSS feeds for each SharePoint list, provides a mechanism for end users to retrieve the information using RSS-enabled programs such as Internet Explorer and Outlook 2007.
Site Manager					SharePoint Site Manager feature allows changes to a SharePoint site's navigation, security access, and general look and feel using an easy drag-and-drop tool. Google Site map is informational and doesn't support management, modification of links, or site structure
Site Privacy & Security Controls					Google Sites are either public or private. Users are unable to make a single page, or page area, or a field in a list "private" or "permitted only for a certain user role," SharePoint Online provides additional enterprise grade security and privacy controls that can be individually tailored for each organization.

Feature/Capability	Hosted Service Provider		Importance to Users		Issues and Comments
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Content					
Document Information Panel/Action Bar					The document information panel makes editing document properties an integral part of the Microsoft Office system document-authoring experience. Google Docs don't have document properties and Google Apps can't import MSFT document properties. The document Action bar describes to users what business policy or workflow governs the current document and what action they are expected to take.
Content Authoring & Publishing					Google Sites allows anyone to be a web site author, portal author, wiki author. The WYSIWYG editor and Office Information Panel and Action Bar (described above) streamline site content authoring
Master Pages, Layouts & Controls					Master pages provide centralized control of the layout and style of all the pages in a SharePoint site. Each site has a master page gallery that the site owner can use to customize the look of all of the pages on the site. Site themes are possible in Google Sites and there are a number of consumer templates but there is limited customization permitted.
Workflow					SharePoint allows you to automate document review, approval, signature collection, and issue tracking using workflow applications. There are no workflow capabilities available in Google Sites but solutions marketplace partners offer basic workflow solutions at additional cost.
Retention & Audit Policies					Defines customized information management policies to control retention period, expiration actions, and document-auditing settings. GAPE doesn't support this capability.

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Search						
User Experience, Relevance & Security					With SharePoint Online Users can locate content that is stored in lists, document libraries, and other locations in a SharePoint collection with security-trimmed search results displayed. Search is available through Google Sites however additional investments in search appliance technologies are often needed.	
Enterprise Content Sources*					Bringing together data from structured, unstructured and semi-structured data sources is key to helping individuals find the right information to help empower them to make better business decisions. This is not presently available within Google Sites but this can be provided by Google's search appliance and additional 3rd party apps.	
Cross Site Collaboration*					Microsoft provides a single indexing and search infrastructure that scales from the desktop, through team sites and divisional portal sites, to the largest corporate intranets. Cross Site collaboration is not available today through GAPE but is planned - this is often requested.	
People Search*					People Search within SharePoint Online enables individuals to find and collaborate with subject matter experts within their own organization. Shared Contacts through GAPE provides some of this capability but it's not native to Google Sites.	

* SharePoint Online Standard does not allow for searching cross-sites, for enterprise content or people but this is planned for an upcoming release. It is available today for dedicated customers.

Feature/Capability is:	Present Not Present Partially Available Equal	Hosted Service Provider		Importance to Users		Importance to users: High Moderate
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Business Insights*						
BI Dashboard					Interactive business intelligence dashboards display business information from disparate sources by using built-in Web parts such as dynamic KPIs, Excel spreadsheets, Microsoft SQL Server Reporting Services reports, to enable end users to visualize information residing in back end line-of-business applications. Not native to Google Sites but lightweight dashboarding tools are available through Google marketplace.	
KPI and Filtering Web Parts					Google sites cannot support KPI and filtering. With the SharePoint KPI Web Part, a user can create a KPI list within a Web Part page, without writing code. The KPI Web Part can display KPIs from Microsoft SQL Server Analysis Services, Excel spreadsheets, SharePoint lists, or manually entered data. Filters enable dashboards to be personalized by communicating shared parameters among Web Parts on a dashboard.	
Report Center Templates					Report Center is an out-of-the-box site optimized for report access and management, including a report library, data connection library, and a dashboard template. Google Sites cannot provide this capability today.	
Excel Services					Excel Services empowers spreadsheet authors to easily share spreadsheets that use the new business intelligence functionality through the browser. Fully interactive, data-bound spreadsheets including charts, tables, and PivotTable views can be created as part of a portal, dashboard, or business scorecard, without requiring any development. Google Sites allows you to copy and paste Google Sheets on a Google Web page but there is a 1Mb size restriction.	
Data Connection Libraries					Data Connection Libraries are centralized SharePoint document libraries that store Office Data Connections (ODC); ODCs describe connections to external data. Centralizing these makes it easier to share, manage, and discover data connections that can be used by any Microsoft Office program. Some Google Web Gadgets can funnel information, but this is limited to third-party information, connection to line-of-business data (LOB) is not possible today.	
Business Data Catalog					This is not possible with GAPE today. The Business Data Catalog (BDC) tightly integrates external data into the SharePoint user experience, providing access to external data residing within back end line-of-business applications, and enabling the display of and interaction with external data through a set of Business Data Web Parts.	
Business Data Web Parts					Used for viewing lists, entities, and related information retrieved through the Business Data Catalog. This is not possible with GAPE today.	

* Business Insight and Intelligence capabilities only available today through SharePoint Online (Dedicated) but some capabilities are planned for release in upcoming SharePoint (Standard) releases.

Feature/Capability	Hosted Service Provider		Importance to Users		Issues and Comments
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Composites					
Custom Non-Code Workflows					Use online business forms and custom "no-code" workflows to move projects toward completion. The Publish Wizard in InfoPath makes it easy to publish forms that do not have any managed code components to SharePoint Services library. Basic spreadsheet forms are supported in Google spreadsheets.
Centralized forms management and control					Provides administrators with a centralized form solution catalog that makes it easy for users to find a form and minimize form solution downtime when upgrades are necessary. It also provides tools to manage form solution security and accessibility. Google doesn't have a product today to support centralized form management.
Form import wizard					Forms designers can design their forms once and deploy them for use both within the rich Office InfoPath client and through a Web browser. Administrators and form designers automatically converts the form into ASP.NET Web forms, with no additional work. GAPE provides some capability for importing forms which are built in Google spreadsheets and copy and pasted to Google Sites.