

Microsoft Partner Campaign Discussion Guide: Microsoft Communication Services for Small and Midsize Businesses



Overview

Microsoft® Communication Services provides the tools that can help increase small business owners' mobility, productivity, collaboration, and competitive firepower—all for a low monthly fee. It starts with a free copy of the Microsoft Office Outlook® 2007 messaging and collaboration client, and thereafter continues to provide the user with access to the latest versions of Microsoft Exchange Server and Windows SharePoint® Services. By connecting Office Outlook 2007 to Microsoft Communication Services, Microsoft partners can enable Web, mobile, and desktop access to personal information.

Additionally business owners can use these services to help their organization become more productive through better communication coordination—by sharing messages, contacts, calendars, task lists, and important documents. Because the service is delivered by professional service providers via the Internet, business owners can worry less about security patches, software updates and upgrades, monitoring, backups, or other IT headaches. Your customers need only sign on and leave the hard work to you, the service provider.

Where's the pain?

C-level suite (chief executive officer [CEO], chief financial officer [CFO]):

- Lost productivity translates directly into lost revenue.
- Business leaders don't have the time or skill set to deal with IT headaches.
- Communication failures can threaten a business's brand and reputation.
- Up-front capital expenses are difficult to justify in today's economy.

Security (chief information officer [CIO], chief information security officer [CISO], marketing messaging managers):

- Pressure to keep e-mail system 100 percent available.
- As many as 80 percent of businesses say they value e-mail service more than phone service.
- Virus threats are on the rise, costing global businesses upward of US\$10 billion per outbreak.
- By some estimates, 80 to 90 percent of the world's e-mail traffic is spam.

Key messages

Microsoft Communication Services gives customers all the benefits of corporate-class e-mail and collaboration software, but at a fraction of the cost and without the IT headaches. Benefits include:

- **On-the-go access**—with mobile communication tools so customers can keep up with the competition.
- **Integrated company communications**—with the streamlined collaboration and connections that customers need to increase productivity.
- **Professionally delivered**—with solutions that help eliminate customer headaches and provide freedom from worry.

Integrated Company Communication

Access on the go from virtually any device | Professionally delivered



Microsoft Communication Services provides a wide range of offerings that include e-mail, fax, voice mail, document management, and personal information management on many different types of devices and even over the Web. These offerings help ensure that you can confidently help customers of all sizes to simplify their work life by combining their various inboxes and mail addresses into one consistent experience using Office Outlook 2007. Microsoft Communication Services can also help simplify the IT administration of your customers' messaging environments, providing simplicity of management and predictable costs.

Product offerings

Microsoft Communication Services—Exchange Messaging

Exchange Messaging utilizes Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 to provide flexible and efficient access to e-mail, calendars, attachments, contact lists, and other tools and applications that can help drive business—on the go from virtually any device.

Office Outlook 2007

Microsoft Communication Services dramatically changes a user's experience with Office Outlook 2007 and mobile devices. It gives users an integrated solution for managing time and information, allowing them to quickly search communications, organize work, and share information with others. Outlook is available to work on more than just desktop computers, including:

- Microsoft Office Outlook Web Access.
- Microsoft Office Outlook Mobile.
- Microsoft Office Outlook Voice Access.

Microsoft Communication Services—SharePoint Document Management

SharePoint Document Management is a collaborative tool that gives users a central location for sharing and managing business files of all kinds, enabling them to keep team documents searchable, synchronized, and available on the go.

Features

Messaging management for access, flexibility, and coordination

Exchange Messaging provides valuable messaging features that go beyond simple e-mail to empower business users to take control of their business messaging. This functionality includes:

- Contact management, event and calendar management, resource scheduling and administration, task management, and shared folders (see below for details).
- Ability to delegate access to allow others to check designated components like e-mail, task lists, and calendars.
- Server-side and client-side rules and spam filtering to manage the flow of incoming messages.
- Multicolored flagging to mark messages for follow-up, prioritization, searching, and categorization.
- Recovery of sent messages.
- Ability to delete and replace an unread message.
- Out-of-office automatic reply.
- Automatic synchronization with supported mobile phones.

Access on the go from virtually any device. Exchange Messaging provides flexibility and productivity for information workers by enabling an impressive variety of clients for mailbox connectivity, including Web browsers—through Office Outlook Web Access—and Windows Mobile® devices through Office Outlook Mobile. This service is also available to Mac users through the Microsoft Entourage® e-mail and personal information manager.

Support remote and mobile employees. Now teleworkers, field service personnel, and other out-of-office employees can stay up to speed and productively involved in business activities, even if they're in different time zones.

Enhanced security. Designed for optimal security and privacy, a variety of features at both the server and mailbox level enable users to digitally sign and encrypt e-mails and attachments and access their mailboxes more securely, without a virtual private network (VPN) connection, when working remotely. Antispam features include support of real-time safe and block lists, and both server-side and client-side filtering help reduce the amount of unsolicited e-mail.

Corporate-class messaging

SharePoint Online provides valuable messaging features that help customers boost productivity by keeping in touch and well coordinated, both in the office and on the go. Messaging functionality includes:

Shared contacts. Contacts in the company directory—Global Address List (GAL)—are centrally maintained for sharing throughout the organization and can be downloaded to Office Outlook 2007 and synchronized for access from Office Outlook Web Access and Office Outlook Mobile. Distribution lists also can be shared centrally and maintained to facilitate communication to groups such as departments or customer lists.

Shared calendars. These rich features for personal, group, and resource scheduling integrate with e-mail, contacts, and tasks. Users can share their calendar information and view multiple calendars simultaneously to send meeting requests for shared open times. Recipients can decline, propose a different time, or accept and have the meeting automatically entered in their calendars. Schedules for shared resources like conference rooms and projectors may also be incorporated.

Appointment requests. The Scheduling Assistant automatically suggests the best time for a meeting when given a list of desired attendees, making it unnecessary to place time-consuming phone calls to determine coworkers' availability for a meeting or conference call.

Shared task management. A task list provides the ability to create and assign tasks and can be integrated with e-mail notification and scheduling for basic project management and personal time management. Users can track progress as a task moves from active to complete to overdue, while managing the status, organized by the person responsible or by task type.

Voice mail. The voice-mail service enables Office Outlook Voice Access to integrate a user's mobile phone voice mail with their e-mail. Because most cell phone providers can forward unanswered messages, users can set their phone to forward to the Office Outlook Voice Access voice mail service. Users can then retrieve their voice mail and play it back and forward it, as they would an e-mail message, while also retaining a record of the call.

Fax. Microsoft Communication Services enables customers to send faxes from their PC and receive them in a mailbox. This capability, usually provided for a small additional monthly fee, eliminates the need for a separate fax line, especially if their office has a scanner for documents they want to send by fax. Customers can then receive faxes wherever they have an intranet connection, and make their fax machine one fewer inbox to check for business inquiries.

Additional messaging services*

Add-ons are available through some partners to enhance functionality:

Message filtering. Microsoft Exchange Hosted Filtering applies accurate, multilayered message filtering methods to help stop e-mail-borne threats before they reach the firewall. These measures help maximize productivity by promoting e-mail uptime and removing distractions. Exchange Hosted Filtering includes a range of spam blocking techniques, virus scanning capabilities, policy enforcement tools, and disaster recovery features.

Continuity. Microsoft Exchange Hosted Continuity provides backup e-mail access to help ensure uninterrupted service. The message continuity service is always on, enabling users to read, compose, receive, and reply to messages in real time—even if there are problems with the main e-mail system. The service also retains a rolling 30-day store of messages.

Encryption. Microsoft Exchange Hosted Encryption provides message encryption for e-mail and e-mail attachments leaving the corporate network gateway. The service uses Identity-Based Encryption, an advanced encryption technology that allows security-enhanced communication with anyone who has an e-mail address. There are no certificates or encryption infrastructures to support and maintain.

Archive. Microsoft Exchange Hosted Archive can help companies with compliance and legal discovery protection initiatives that require the retention and retrieval of electronic messaging. The service captures e-mail and instant messages (IM) in real time, archiving and indexing them for immediate monitoring, search, and retrieval.

SharePoint Document Management

SharePoint Document Management provides valuable document management features that make businesses documents accessible to the entire company. Functionality includes:

Centralized document management. The procedures, policies, customer lists, and other files that drive business undergo constant change and refinement. SharePoint Document Management provides the foundation for saving files from Microsoft Office 2007 applications directly to the service, enabling a place for backup and collaboration with shared documents. In addition, posting documents for customers and vendors—with appropriate security—becomes a straightforward ability in Microsoft Office 2007 when connected to Microsoft Communication Services. SharePoint Document Management makes it simple and economical for users to distribute updated information to everyone who needs it, whether they work inside or outside of their organization.

Public folders. Public folders are a shared resource, available offline and online, for instantaneous storage of company data such as documents, content, and communications. Any user with access to the services can retrieve and contribute information from a public folder while working in Office Outlook 2007 or Office Outlook Web Access. Rather than exchanging e-mail attachments, files can be stored in a common location for sharing and discussion.

Project management. Now users can coordinate project schedules, tasks, documents, time sheets, and progress reports with employees and outside-project participants. With SharePoint Document Management, it's more automated than ever before—eliminating the need for multiple data entry.

Problem resolution. SharePoint Document Management gives businesses an ideal environment for bringing multiple users into a unified environment for managing everything from customer complaints to product returns, special requests, etc. SharePoint Online offers a more automated way to assign responsibilities, track progress, and help ensure rapid response and clear resolution to a variety of problems.

Manage customer-vendor relationships. SharePoint Document Management automates and enhances communications and project tracking with contractors, vendors, and customers. By improving the accuracy and timeliness of critical shared information, users help maintain and preserve their most vital business relationships.

Text search. Searching the Web has become commonplace; now SharePoint Document Management can make searching e-mail and remote files as straightforward and fast.

Customizable forms. Design and publish forms for common organizational functions that require basic routing and communication, including time sheets, expense reports, and vacation requests. Custom forms will be available to employees who are in the office, remote, or mobile.

Summary of features and benefits

Service features summary:

- Corporate-class messaging
- Enhanced security
- Enhanced antivirus and antispam protection
- Public folders
- Shared calendars
- Shared contacts
- Shared task management
- Customized forms
- Virtually anytime, anywhere access through Office Outlook, a Web browser, or a compatible mobile phone

Service benefit summary

The benefits of using Microsoft Communication Services versus installing in-house servers include:

- Instant deployment with no capital investment or installation complexity.
- More cost-effective ownership.
- Enhanced security, including automated installation of antivirus and antispam capability.
- Robust bandwidth that provides increased availability and performance.
- Higher reliability.
- Professional technical support.
- Security-enhanced access over standard Internet lines.
- Facilitated operations—Microsoft handles the difficult maintenance tasks.
- Daily backups are stored offsite.

Ten qualifying questions:

- Do they use an in-house mail server today?
- Do they use Office Outlook 2007 today for managing e-mail?
- Does their company have multiple locations that IT must support?
- Does their business need the advanced e-mail and information sharing and collaboration features of Exchange Server 2007, but does not desire or cannot support an in-house server situation?
- Do they have adequate in-house IT staff to deal with IT problems and implement sophisticated communications systems?
- Would they like to have offsite backup, message retrieval, and archiving?
- Do they have in place comprehensive protection and preventive measures against viruses and spam?
- Do their employees have access to contacts and calendars from anywhere through PCs or mobile devices?
- Does their workforce have the ability to share information with employees or business partners outside of the office?
- Does their support staff need to coordinate and schedule between multiple groups or offices?

Responding to objections

Why change my e-mail service when it's working?

The answer, in a word, is *productivity*. Moving files manually between users and locations is risky business, an inefficient use of time, and provides no guarantee that the most up-to-date file will always reach the intended user—if at all. SharePoint Online puts customer files in one place where users can access or update as needed, ensuring quality control and reducing time lost while waiting for someone to send or receive.

Microsoft Communication Services also gives users real-time access to employee schedules, making it easy to set meetings or appointments without having to call everyone individually. It helps maintain productivity by saving time and preventing scheduling miscommunications. It also gives out-of-office employees mobile access to send and receive information on demand—keeping information up to date. This makes important information readily available to those who need it, when they need it. These capabilities and others just aren't available with Post Office Protocol (POP) mail or free mail alternatives. Users who want to do effective business need effective services.

Cost to implement versus in-house deployments

When businesses consider server costs, running regular backups, providing proper bandwidth, and overall maintenance, going with Microsoft Communication Services is significantly less expensive and a lot easier to deal with than investing in an internal deployment—especially when considering the low-to-no startup cost and the quality of Microsoft products and support.

Full-featured service productivity with automatic updates versus in-house deployments

Even if a business has the latest version of its in-house e-mail server, chances are, add-ons like fax or smart phone integration are not supported by in-house deployment. Microsoft Communication Services makes these features available for the users who need them and helps to eliminate compatibility and integration headaches.

Security concerns

With Microsoft Communication Services, users get the experience and expertise they expect from Microsoft. They can be more confident that the Microsoft infrastructure uses advanced security measures offering high reliability, follows standardized security procedures, performs third-party security and penetration tests, and implements recommended patches automatically and in a timely manner.

Internet service provider (ISP) stability and performance concerns

Providers who offer Microsoft Communication Services have an entire management team overseeing their implementation of the service, whereas the IT staff at a small company might have one or two employees with little experience handling key problem scenarios. Microsoft has supported these services for years and has experience businesses can count on. Unlike many smaller companies, Microsoft also has the financial backing to help ensure that businesses will have the support and technology they need in the future.

Need to see "like companies" using Microsoft Communication Services

Microsoft Communication Services provides services to millions of mailboxes on three continents.

*Not every feature is available from every provider. Please ask your providers which features they support.