

Microsoft SharePoint Conference 2014 – Highlights & Viewpoint

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Overview

The recently concluded Microsoft SharePoint Conference 2014 was exciting, ground-breaking, and satisfying. Nagarro has put together a View Point paper on how Microsoft's strategy towards SharePoint and Office365 is going to impact enterprises. We have also captured the gist of the SPC14 conference itself so that the reader can get a summary of the conference highlights and what is in store from Microsoft for the upcoming year.

No major product release was the cornerstone of this year's conference, but Microsoft showed a clear commitment and a broad set of enhancements towards a more open, cloud focused product strategy with its key services - Office 365 and Yammer.

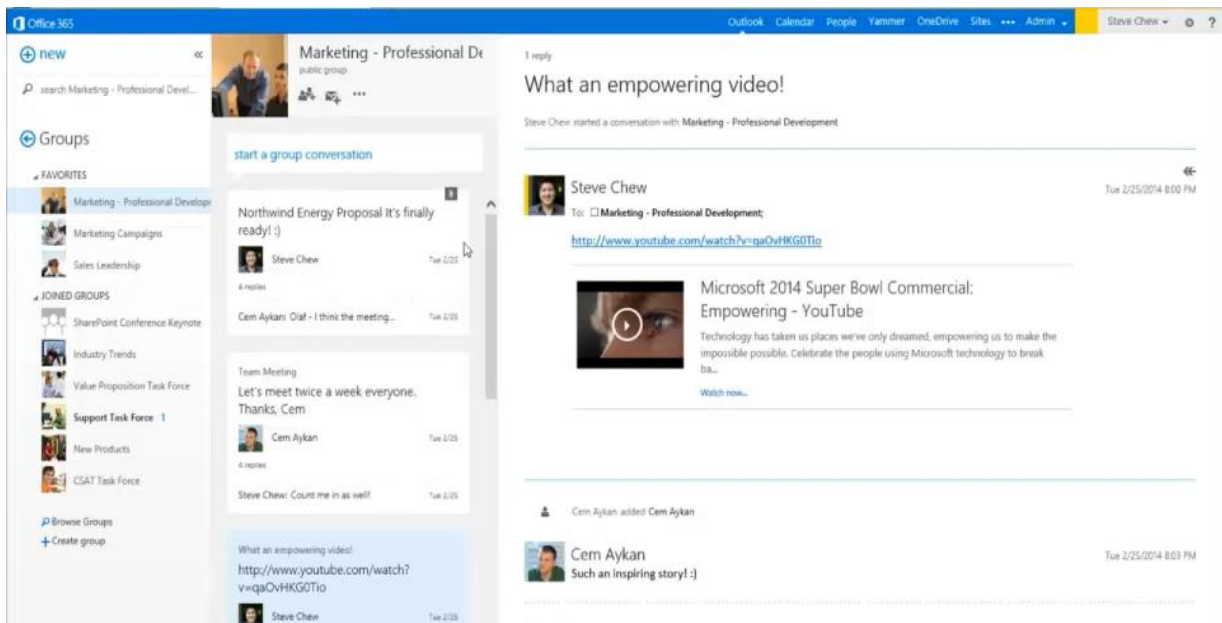
The key message from the keynote was, "Work like a network"

Highlights

Some of the prominent areas that were discussed include the following:

- ✓ **Enterprise Social is Yammer:** 'Go Yammer' is the loud and clear message from Microsoft when it comes to enterprise social collaboration. If you were one of those many SharePoint users who were getting impatient about the lack of proper Yammer integration in SharePoint 2013, Microsoft had an explanation for it – they wanted to take the time do it right. Instead of just creating an app part to surface Yammer's social feed, Microsoft went ahead to bake Yammer's social features throughout Office 365 and SharePoint experience. Whether you are reviewing documents or commenting on videos in SharePoint or having discussions on your team sites, you can choose to make Yammer your conversation hub – within the given context without leaving that application. Microsoft views Outlook and Yammer as a combined central hub for future office interactions. This means that you can participate in Yammer conversations through your choice of application – Outlook or Yammer or SharePoint. Yammer groups will be able to have associated team sites in SharePoint and be available within Outlook or social feeds available in PowerPoint when creating a power point presentation. Existing social functionality of SharePoint on-premise will remain available but will not be enhanced.

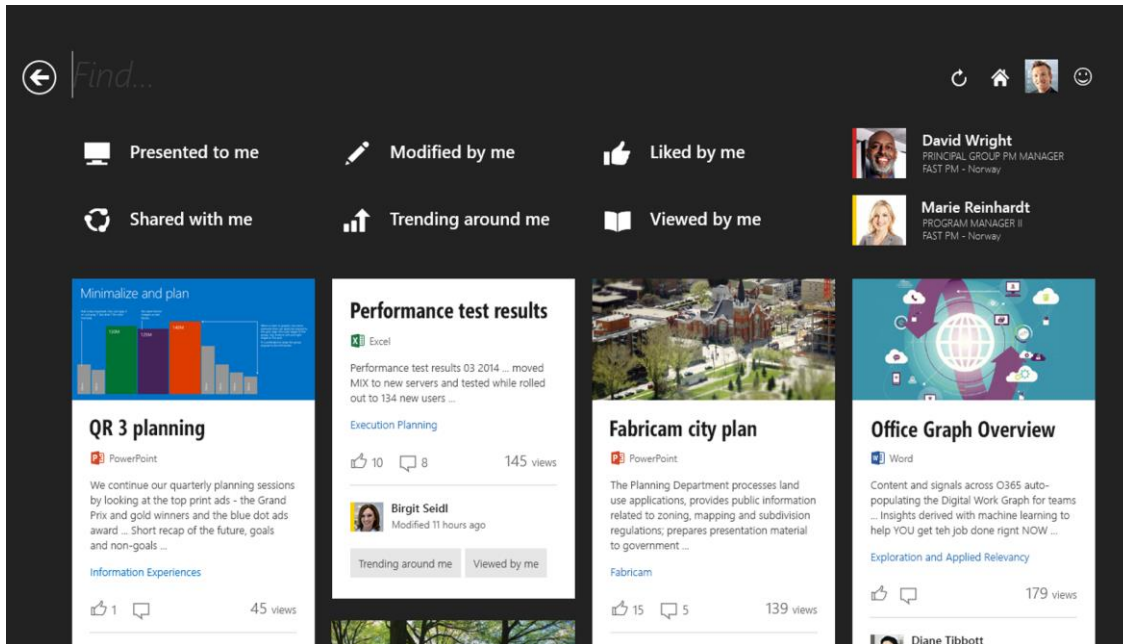
Yammer as a cloud service is the way to go. Office 365 users are now mapped to Yammer removing the need to re-authenticate. With the newly announced Service Pack 1 for SharePoint, the on-premise SharePoint and Yammer in the cloud can easily be connected. This was one of the most awaited feature announcements from Microsoft and it seems that they are right on the money with this one.



- ✓ **Collecting information with the office Graph – Surfacing it with Oslo:** Microsoft unveiled a new model for collecting and connecting enterprise information, called the Office Graph. Office graph can be considered as an enterprise equivalent of your social graph, a term popularized by social networks like Facebook and Google+. The new Office Graph gathers signals from various sources – social conversations, documents, emails, instant messages, meetings and more to map the relationship between people and things that people create or are interested in.



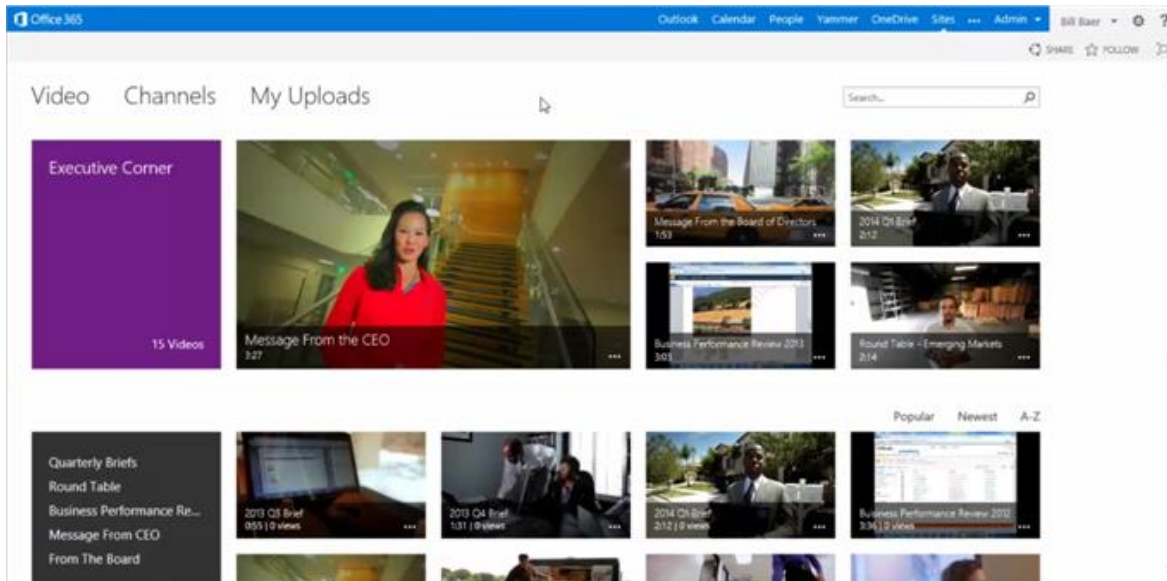
As the first application which makes use of the Office Graph and surfaces this personalized information - the "Olso" app was demonstrated at the conference. Through a Pinterest-like slick user interface, it provides information about content and people across an organization and its various sources in a contextual manner. For example, by reading information from your calendar and content lying in SharePoint sites, it can help you quickly locate that presentation which was presented to you last month by someone. The intent is to have the information to come to the people rather than people trying to search and figure out what is available. In that regard, a natural language interface is envisioned where one can type in general queries and Office Graph will be capable of understanding context and bring relevant information to the user. We believe this is a powerful concept and something which we are already seeing in action fields of social commerce and media. On the other hand, the success of its new visual user interface is a bit harder to predict. There is a larger trend on the web for 'Pinterestization' of look and feel of the websites but it requires real experience with the application to understand the value or pitfalls of this design approach. Microsoft understands this and is actively beta testing the product before it gets released to the world.



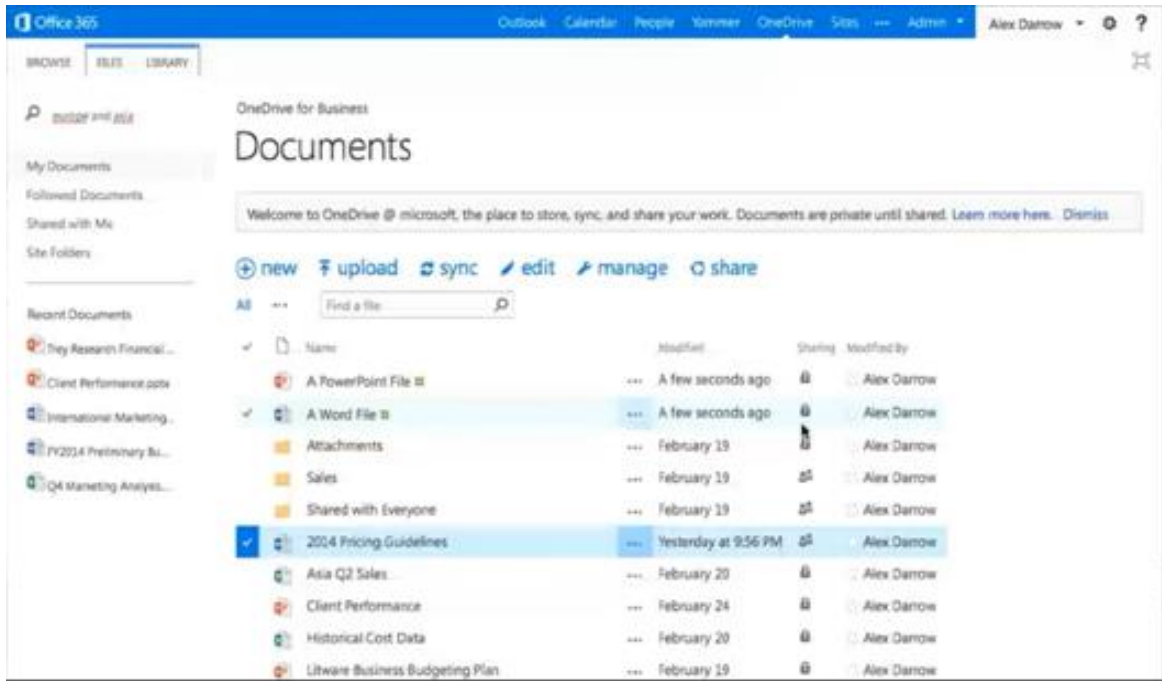
- ✓ **Video Portal:** As enterprises started to embrace multimedia at an ever-increasing pace, SharePoint’s rather limited video capabilities always posed a challenge in providing a scalable and high-quality video experience. With the announced video portal Microsoft wants to provide a “YouTube for the Enterprise” as part of Azure Media.

Videos can be grouped in channels and be provided for many devices. Video upload process has been simplified through features like drag and drop, transcoding, server-generated and user-selected thumbnail options. The video portal closes a missing link in rich-media content management capabilities of their platform offering.





- ✓ **OneDrive for Business:** Microsoft is not only rebranding its SkyDrive Pro but also beefing it up to compete effectively with Dropbox, Box, Google Drive and several other similar offerings coming to the market place. For starters, it will be a standalone product with a competitive price tag of \$2.5/month for 25 GB of space per user which can be extended to 100GB by enterprises at an additional cost. For companies that are still heavily invested in using shared drives which are always running short of space or companies where users share lot of documents with external agencies and vendors often through unapproved cloud services, this may be the answer. OneDrive's tight integration with Outlook, SharePoint and other Office 365 products means a seamless experience in uploading and downloading documents. With the new features which are slated to be released later this year, not only can you directly attach files to your email from OneDrive, you can also view all the document libraries from your SharePoint team sites in OneDrive. It also seeks to simplify the experience for the external file sharing scenario, by allowing you to send documents through Outlook while it uploads it to OneDrive and takes care of the permissions. The collaborative editing feature, which many users are not aware of, allows you to co-author a document with your team members from any device in real time including your iOS and Android devices. Microsoft will also be releasing a native Android app for OneDrive later this year.



- ✓ **Opening up to the omni-channel reality:** Working like a network is a call for enterprises on how to transform their structure and culture. Furthermore it is also a technical challenge to the existing enterprise products. Microsoft showed at the conference on various levels how to tackle this and how they enhanced the product stack. Various sessions explained how to implement BYOD, responsive design, combine external information with internal data, establish hybrid environments to seamlessly integrate on-premise and cloud platforms. The announcement of a free and open-sourced SDK for Android Apps was a key highlight to open up and support new network based collaboration scenarios and non-Microsoft platforms. From a development perspective Microsoft announced new robust APIs for Office 365 to make building solutions with contextual Apps. This enables Office 365 to be a real option, as an enterprise platform with integration needs.

Challenges Facing Enterprises

There were several Executive Roundtable Discussions and other opportunities to hear leaders from various industry verticals and enterprises voice their opinion on the new features as well as open up on the challenges facing their existing SharePoint strategy and investments. The key issues and challenges are below:

1. Integration
2. Identity Management and Single Sign-on
3. User Adoption
4. Migration to SharePoint 2013
5. Cloud Strategy and Adoption of Office 365 (Most of the enterprises are still on SharePoint 2007 and 2010)
6. Visibility and Governance
7. Sharing documents across SharePoint, Dropbox and other similar emerging document stores.
8. Consolidation and Rationalization of SharePoint versions for companies that have multiple versions of SharePoint in use.
9. Implementing a mobile strategy around SharePoint

Conclusion

Overall Microsoft reinforced its strategy to embrace the social enterprise and cloud opportunities with various enhancements in their products. While several enterprises are considering Office 365, most of them are yet to draft a well-thought out strategy for cloud adoption. For organizations with stricter regulations and compliance needs, it may take much more time to adopt this anywhere and everywhere paradigm of information access.

Microsoft has always been unparalleled in its leadership in the office productivity applications space. By open sourcing its SDK, connecting information across applications through Office graph, building personalized context-aware multi-channel content discovery and consumption experiences, it has strengthened its case for next phase of enterprise dominance.



Nagarro specializes in building complex, business-critical software and IT projects for leading companies across multiple industries. Headquartered in Silicon Valley and a member of the Allgeier Group in Germany, Nagarro is recognized worldwide for its technical expertise, agile deployment, and bedrock commitment to customer service.

In particular, successful companies around the globe leverage Nagarro's SharePoint expertise to meet their strategic objectives with confidence and ensure proven best practices. Nagarro's SharePoint services include: solution strategy and roadmap consulting, system architecture and user experience design, development of custom applications like collaboration portals, social intranets, globalized corporate websites, executive dashboards and mobile applications, enterprise integration, migration, maintenance and support.

Nagarro is a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner for application development, collaboration and content. Nagarro has also been named to the Global Outsourcing 100® List by the IAOP® (International Association of Outsourcing Professionals®), earning the highest possible scores in three categories – Customer References, Employee Management and Executive Leadership. Identifying Nagarro among the 25 "Rising Stars", this ranking reinforces Nagarro's reputation as a top global provider of business-critical outsourced IT services.

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