

Introduction to Collaboration

Most people spend the greater part of their work day involved in collaborative tasks. They share information, they work together in teams, and they manage projects. It can be a challenge to collaborate effectively if you do not have tools to easily communicate, share information, and coordinate projects details and deadlines among a large group of people.

Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007 can help you get your work done more efficiently because it provides organizations with a platform for sharing information and working together in teams. A SharePoint site offers specific kinds of tools and workspaces that you can use to communicate with team members, track projects, coordinate deadlines, and collaboratively create and edit documents.

Improve team productivity

Office SharePoint Server 2007 includes many different kinds of site templates that you can use to create a site. For example, the Marketing Department at Adventure Works uses a site created from the Team Site template to manage a range of team projects and document-related tasks. The members of the Marketing Department use their team site every day to create and manage documents, track issues and tasks, and share links and contacts. Because they have one location for these activities, members of the Marketing Department can save time and enjoy increased productivity.

The site template for a team site includes:

- Shared Documents library
- Announcements list
- Calendar
- Team Discussion list
- Tasks list
- Links list

If you want to get your team up and running quickly, you can easily create a site by using the site template for a team site. This all-purpose template can meet a diverse range of needs. It can store long-term routine information for a single department or short-term information for a special project that spans several departments. By creating a team site to use as a collaborative workspace, your team can become both more efficient and more productive and ultimately achieve better business results. You can also customize your site to meet the needs of your team or project by adding lists, libraries, or other features.

Manage projects more efficiently

An Office SharePoint Server 2007 site includes several features that you can use to manage projects and coordinate tasks and deadlines among people. The Marketing team site at Adventure Works has a calendar that team members use to track important meetings, industry events, and trade shows. Marketing team members link the calendar to their personal calendars in Microsoft Office Outlook 2007 so that they can view this information along with their personal calendar information. The Marketing Department also uses a Project Tasks list to visualize and track the key phases of marketing projects.

There are several different ways you can use a team site to manage projects more efficiently:

- Use built-in features such as the Project Tasks list template, which enables you to visualize task relationships and project status with automated Gantt charts.
- Coordinate the team's work with shared calendars, alerts, and notifications. You can connect a calendar on your SharePoint site to your calendar in Office Outlook 2007, where you can view and update it just as you do your personal calendar.
- Create Meeting Workspace sites to gather materials and documents related to a meeting.

Create, review, and share documents

An Office SharePoint Server 2007 site also helps groups of people to create and edit documents collaboratively. For example, the Marketing Department at Adventure Works uses two different kinds of libraries to manage the content that the team creates:

- Team members save general marketing and budget documents to a Shared Documents library, where other team members can easily read them or check them out and edit them.
- The team uses Slide Libraries to save and reuse slides for various presentations.

For special projects that involve only a few people, team members sometimes create Document Workspace sub-sites on their team site. Document Workspace sites help you to coordinate work on a single document or a group of documents.

There are several different ways to save and work on documents and other files on a team site:

- Use document libraries to store and manage important documents. Features such as versioning help you keep track of revisions to a document. Or you can require check-out for documents in a library to prevent multiple people from making changes at the same time.
- Create Document Workspace sites to coordinate the development of specific documents.
- Use Slide Libraries to share and reuse Microsoft Office PowerPoint 2007 slides in a central location.
- Take document libraries offline in Office Outlook 2007 to enable people to view and edit documents while they are not connected to the network.
- Use workflows to manage collaborative tasks such as document review or approval. To learn more about workflow, see the Enterprise Content Management section of this training course.

Capture and share community knowledge

An Office SharePoint Server 2007 site provides organizations with a central location to capture best practices, share information, and promote standardized business processes. The Marketing Department at Adventure Works uses both a wiki site and a blog site to capture and communicate information of interest to the team. Marketing team members use a wiki to compile general information about company and team processes that will be helpful to new team members. Any member of the team can add information to the wiki or update the wiki posts.

Several members of the team also routinely post industry-related or marketing-related information to a blog site, where other team members can read the posts and comment on them. The marketing blog provides team members with a forum to share new ideas, opinions, or inspiration.

Here are some ways you can use a team site to capture and share collective team knowledge or important information:

- Track updates and information with alerts or Really Simple Syndication (RSS).
- Use blogs to share or promote information.
- Capture community knowledge or document internal processes by using a wiki.
- Use surveys or discussions to gather information or encourage dialogue.