

AVANADE® PERSPECTIVE

Seattle Office:
2211 Elliott Avenue
Suite 200
Seattle, Washington, 98121
seattle@avanade.com
www.avanade.com

Avanade is a global IT consultancy dedicated to using the Microsoft platform to help enterprises achieve profitable growth. Through proven solutions that extend Microsoft technologies, Avanade helps enterprises increase revenue, reduce costs and reinvest in innovation to gain competitive advantage. Avanade consultants deliver value according to each customer's requirements, timeline and budget by combining insight, innovation and the talent of our global workforce. Founded in 2000 by Accenture and Microsoft, Avanade has more than 6,500 professionals serving customers in 22 countries worldwide. Additional information can be found at www.avanade.com.

Building a Collaboration Workspace

Enterprise portals are key components of successful digital collaboration

By Kevin Bellinger, Solutions Director

In the past ten years, the way we communicate and collaborate in everyday business transactions has changed dramatically. From e-mail to instant messaging to cell phones, people can now stay connected to each other anytime, anywhere. Today's companies are also more globalized, with geographically dispersed teams and greater dependence on cross-organizational and departmental collaboration. Instead of working in isolation, employees rely on each other for critical information and project deliverables.

Business success increasingly depends on companies having effective communication tools, and collaborative resources that let their employees work together in real time. The ability to collaborate efficiently across time and geographies enables teams to be more productive, make better decisions, and remain competitive in the global marketplace.

Most companies don't yet have communication and collaboration infrastructures that support this evolving work model. Employees struggle with information that's scattered across the organization, making it hard to find and share. IT departments are challenged to manage multiple intranets, siloed databases, proprietary applications, complex security needs, and increasing user demands for the latest technology and more connected workstreams.

Avanade believes that *digital collaboration*—the use of technology to enable efficient and valuable connections among people and information—represents the area of IT with the greatest potential for improving business performance over the next five years. Companies will replace disparate, disconnected systems with a comprehensive, integrated platform that enables employees to easily access and share information.

Our vision for digital collaboration integrates communication, collaboration, and presence tools within the applications that people use every day. Central to this approach is Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007, the web-based server solution that improves organizational effectiveness through robust content management, enterprise-wide search capabilities, coordinated business processes, and information sharing across boundaries. SharePoint Server supports all intranet, extranet, and web applications across a company within one integrated portal platform, instead of relying on separate, fragmented systems.

Avanade has designed, built, and implemented hundreds of SharePoint Server portals for customers around the world and across all industry sectors. In this paper, we'll review the benefits of SharePoint Server as part of a digital collaboration strategy, provide real-world examples of its business value, and discuss Avanade's expertise in developing collaborative environments that increase competitive advantage and employee productivity.

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The business need

With the influx of new technologies and the changing needs of information workers, companies worldwide are turning to digital collaboration because it helps them drive business processes, communicate with partners, and increase overall efficiency. In a recent McKinsey survey, more than 75 percent of business executives said they planned to maintain or increase technology investments that enable collaboration. Nearly half felt they should have acted sooner to boost their internal capabilities to exploit the new technologies. (*The McKinsey Quarterly*, March 2007: “How businesses are using web 2.0: A McKinsey Global Survey.”)

Demand for SharePoint Server deployments is strong, with Avande customers citing needs for document and content management, enterprise-wide search, portal-based collaboration, forms-based processes and workflow, project management, integrated instant messaging solutions, presence, performance management, and better governance.

Executives are spurred by the growing frustration and declining productivity of their information workers, who spend increasing amounts of time searching and managing unstructured information across multiple, disconnected systems. They need a platform that organizes, indexes, and presents information in an intuitive format that can be shared with coworkers. And they need a platform that delivers the flexibility to be integrated with line of business application data. And, of course, CIOs want to streamline IT management and associated costs.

To illustrate the business value of effective collaboration, consider the example of Joan, a sales manager who creates a web portal to store all her team’s resources. She uses SharePoint Server’s site templates to create a team portal that links together everyone in her department. Then, she creates a document library on the portal, where she stores the current sales and marketing pieces and contracts. Because there is one central repository, she knows that everyone will be using the most current versions. Team members can edit and track the documents, and Joan sets up alerts to let people know whenever a document is updated. Shared calendars and notifications make it easy to coordinate

teamwork. If someone has a question about a particular document, they can use presence features and instant messaging to contact the author—without leaving the portal. And timely business data pulled from the company CRM and finance systems can be presented through the portal. Joan and her team can even access the portal from their wireless devices.

In addition to improving how employees access and share information, collaboration can have a significant impact on time-to-market in specific industries, such as pharmaceuticals. As soon as a pharmaceutical company begins developing a new drug, it applies for a patent on the formulation. On average, it takes 10 years and \$800 million to bring a new drug to market. Research, testing, regulatory approvals—all of these take time, money, and extensive collaboration internally and externally. But time-to-market is critical, as the patent expires 20 years from the filing date, after which other companies can use the formula to market competing generic versions.

So every day the drug is in development reduces the time the company has exclusive rights to market the drug and recoup its investments. So, if the company could speed up its internal collaborative processes—get decisions made faster, shorten review cycles on documentation, and ensure the right people are involved—it might shorten the drug’s development cycle by, say, 10 percent. That’s 10 percent more time to drive revenue and profit before the patent expires and the drug becomes generic.

Lay the foundation for Digital Collaboration

SharePoint Server is a key component of the Avande digital collaboration vision because it unifies information management and streamlines workgroup activities. Avande believes that the best approach to collaboration is to consider your portal as a platform and an integration point for applications and communication. Here are just a few key components of our digital collaboration vision that are enabled and delivered by implementing the SharePoint platform:

- ➔ Tight integration with standard desktop applications, e-mail, and web browsers provides users with a consistent, familiar interface.

- ⇒ Employees can easily create and publish content to intranet or internet sites, and use out-of-the-box workflows to initiate, track, and report common business activities such as document review and approval, issue tracking, and signatures.
- ⇒ Simplified organization-wide access to both structured and unstructured data across disparate systems. Users can find and access information in common line-of-business applications, including those from SAP and Siebel.
- ⇒ Individuals and departments can create and maintain their own intranet sites to facilitate workgroup collaboration, using site templates that provide a consistent look-and-feel across the company.
- ⇒ Fostering communities and user-driven content with support for blogs, wikis, and My Site portals, which users can populate with personal data, documents, tasks, calendars, and contact lists.
- ⇒ Search features in SharePoint incorporate business data along with information about documents, people, and web pages to produce companywide, comprehensive results. Users can attach keywords and other metadata to content, which improves the findability and relevancy of search results.
- ⇒ The ability to find individuals with key expertise whether inside or outside the company and refine results by criteria such as department, job title, or skill set.
- ⇒ Enables collection of business-critical information from employees, customers, partners, and suppliers through a web browser. Built-in validation rules ensure consistent responses, and the data can be integrated directly into back-end systems.
- ⇒ Business intelligence (BI) data from disparate sources can be assembled and displayed on interactive portals, using reports, dashboards, scorecards, key performance indicators (KPIs), and web parts.
- ⇒ Ability to support multilingual content through library templates specifically designed to maintain version consistency between the original document and different translations.
- ⇒ Comprehensive control over content publication helps ensure your sensitive business records can be managed effectively and in accordance with compliance regulations. Your IT team can specify security settings, storage policies, auditing policies, and expiration actions.
- ⇒ Support of web services and interoperability standards, including XML and Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP), and has open application programming interfaces (APIs) and event handlers for lists and documents.

Training, implementation and support is also an important consideration when building a Digital Collaboration strategy and as SharePoint Server is integrated with the Microsoft Office suite of desktop applications, employees can work within software they know and are comfortable with. For instance, Word documents and Excel[®] spreadsheets can be published to SharePoint Server so that they are accessible on the web within Internet Explorer. Users can create and access libraries of PowerPoint[®] slides. SharePoint Server is also fully integrated with other products in Microsoft's unified communications platform, which combines email, instant messaging, telephony, conferencing, and video into a single, streamlined system that can be extended to include mobile solutions.

In short, Microsoft's integrated SharePoint platform, combined with Avanade's expertise, will help you lay a foundation for the future and enhance collaboration.

Case study: SharePoint Server in action at Avanade

At Avanade, we don't just implement SharePoint Server for other companies—we use it ourselves. With more than 6,300 consultants in 22 countries, we must be able to share our deployment tools, intellectual property, documents, and other content across boundaries to best serve our customers.

To accomplish this, we needed a content- and document-management system that would enable a large group of content owners to update web pages and documents collaboratively, while providing them with a consistent navigation experience. We wanted the environment to support collaboration natively and to have security features for content owners and

management. For example, our internal Solutions Portal was created to:

- ➔ Provide improved access for Avanafe personnel and trusted partners to content related to global, area, and industry solutions, offerings, campaigns, and assets, and to enable users to easily collaborate with the content owners of the sites and materials.
- ➔ Provide a development and collaboration environment for workgroups to collaborate on new ideas and offerings.
- ➔ Provide a central location to host documents related to strategy and the organization for companywide access.

With our implementation of SharePoint Server, Avanafe now has a highly scalable Solutions Portal, which allows our large community of content owners to update web pages, documents, blogs, and wikis from a range of internet-enabled devices. We can support multiple owners for individual sites—who can easily create new sites using standardized templates—and the site owners can see in real time who is editing documents or updating the site, and can review, approve, and publish at will.

Our Solutions Portal running on SharePoint 2007 is accessible anywhere our consultants have an internet connection. This is an important consideration because Avanafe has a highly mobile workforce and more than half our users do not authenticate onto the corporate network via VPN. In addition, we often need to grant access to non-Avanafe personnel who are undertaking projects with our customers or partners.

Tighter control over user experience and content management was key to our internal requirements when implementing SharePoint Server. We created document libraries that contain site templates for a wide variety of deliverables, ranging from web pages to forms and documents, which enable us to be consistent in content and presentation across the company.

When documents are uploaded, our users assign keywords (metadata tags) from defined lists, which help sort and organize the content for more relevant search results. Using content lifecycle management, our site owners can determine how long a document will be made available, ensuring content is timely and fresh.

Avanafe has taken online collaboration a step further, extending and innovating with SharePoint Server as a platform. For instance, we have developed a subset of the portal environment that supports the creation and development of new ideas and offerings. Using this portal which is essentially a huge online brainstorming session, we share information and IP using blogs, wikis, and RSS feeds.

Finally, SharePoint Server integrates with Visual Studio® 2005 Team Foundation Server, which helps us manage code development, leading to faster development of proprietary assets within our global development teams. With this tight collaboration, our customers receive completed assets for deployment and management more quickly and economically.

Avanafe needed a way to foster worldwide collaboration and SharePoint Server has met our needs and requirements. As part of a system-wide technical refresh to the 2007 wave of Microsoft collaboration technologies, we are deploying SharePoint Server, along with Exchange Server 2007 and Windows® Vista™.

Building an implementation roadmap for Digital Collaboration with SharePoint Server

You may have a variety of databases, internal portals, file shares, and other ad-hoc collaboration solutions sprinkled across your company. So the first step in preparing for a SharePoint Server deployment is to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the existing infrastructure and business productivity.

Inventory all your existing assets, across every department and geography, and understand how they are being used—and how effectively. Figure out what you can leverage and what you'll need to upgrade or replace as you shift to a companywide SharePoint Server solution.

Avanafe experts can help you create an end-to-end view of your business needs, identify the significant pain points for digital collaboration, and help you develop the right roadmap to meet those needs, now and in the future. We advocate a strong methods-based approach to gain control of your infrastructure and information-management needs. For example, perhaps you require closer cooperation between Human

Resources and IT to identify the types of workers that your company has, so you can ensure the technology is modeled to meet their needs. Or perhaps you need to assist your CIO in understanding the current infrastructure and the business and user needs, and help them devise a strategy to better meet those needs through carefully planned upgrades and more efficient management. Whatever the situation, Avanade can help you build your business case and prepare for deployment.

Once you've completed your technology assessment and have built a business case, here are some key areas to address in planning your SharePoint Server implementation, to ensure you deliver the full vision and value it has to offer.

- ➔ Build a thorough transition plan that encompasses all aspects of your legacy systems and their phase-out or integration with SharePoint Server.
- ➔ Understand the organizational impact of consolidating your collaboration systems and introducing new technology, both to IT staff and end users. Be sure you have a training and support plan for your employees.
- ➔ Be sure your Active Directory and Exchange Server deployments are well managed and based on current technology. Ideally, you should upgrade to Exchange Server 2007, because it has built-in features for unified messaging and collaboration.
- ➔ Standardize your desktops processes and consider a move to Windows Vista and Office System 2007, to help reduce management costs and enable a wide range of collaboration technologies, such as Windows Live Search and Meeting Space.
- ➔ Because SharePoint Server makes it easy for people to build their own portals on the fly, develop an architecture plan that allows IT to establish business rules and maintain some control over the user sites.

Avanade can help

With 6,300 professionals around the globe including 700 SharePoint Server developers, Avanade is well positioned to help you capitalize on the benefits of this powerful collaborative tool. We have implemented more than 500 SharePoint portals worldwide and since the launch of

SharePoint Server 2007 in October 2006, have more than 77 engagements underway. We can also leverage our close working relationship with Microsoft, and the extensive investments we have made in training our staff and building collaboration solutions.

When you're ready to get started, Avanade can work with you to help you achieve project success. Using our proven methodology, we have helped many customers upgrade or migrate to new communication and collaboration technologies. Avanade can serve as a trusted advisor who will:

- ➔ Help you build a business case for upgrading or migrating to the Microsoft platform.
- ➔ Provide a comprehensive assessment of your infrastructure environment.
- ➔ Provide advice and recommendations on the optimal timing of a migration for a smooth transition.
- ➔ Build a project plan with realistic timelines and perform the actual migration using proven tools and best practices.
- ➔ Supply knowledge transfer and training for your existing staff.

For more information, please visit avanadeadvisor.com/campaign/collaboration

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