Microsoft SharePoint, one of the most widely used software solutions in the world, has been successfully deployed and adopted across many organizations. No company invests in enterprise software with the intention that it not be used - becoming “shelf-ware” that is eventually forgotten. Too often, SharePoint suffers from this fate. No matter the initial intention and expectations, companies find that if their employees lack commitment and buy-in to the platform, adoption, engagement and productivity rate will suffer.

Why SharePoint Adoption Rates Suffer

1. Insufficient business cases

In a 2010 report, the Association for Information and Image Management (AIIM), a professional organization for information professionals, showed that half of all SharePoint implementations were pursued with no business case being made to justify the investment. And, only 23 percent of cases had financial justifications for the investment made at all. When business cases were made, the main justifications were focused on squishy and difficult to quantify metrics – such as “improved collaboration” and “better knowledge sharing.”

These statistics illustrate that too many business users see SharePoint as a magic bullet that will solve a broad range of internal communications and management issues, but have little understanding about just how, to what degree and at what cost. Too many buyers simply cross their fingers and jump.

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2. No shared decision making

In a follow up 2012 report, AIIM showed that 68 percent of implementation decisions were made by IT teams while only 8 percent were made by business users. Too many teams go it alone and believe that “if you build it, they will come.” Yet the truth is that the roots of low user adoption and engagement rates are seeded very early on, usually when planning and designing takes place, and key user groups and stakeholders are too often omitted from defining needs and expectations.

3. No user buy-in: Ambiguity is a killer

A lack of explanation, training and programs developed to build understanding and enthusiasm before, during and after deployment cultivates disbelief in projected advantage and resistance. Users may feel like they weren’t asked and didn’t ask for the change and become defiant about the implementation of SharePoint. The “if it isn’t broken, why fix it?” mentality tends to drive users back to existing solutions and processes and away from new investments. A lack of end user buy-in virtually guarantees low adoption rates and long-term failure.

4. Culture, people and organizational norms counter SharePoint

Some SharePoint adoption and engagement issues may appear to be focused on the technology, while that’s only a small part of the problem. Changing methodology, changing behavior and changing organizational culture can be a difficult and long-term project, not easily solved with a software deployment. Where a technologist may see a SharePoint deployment as a software implementation, for those who use it to manage their tasks, it can represent much more. Many people have a certain way of doing things, certain tasks to perform and see their contribution and evaluation based on their ability to do these things as they always have. To them, SharePoint can represent their loss of sovereignty, privacy and their sense of contribution.

5. Executive disengagement

In some cases, company leadership may not have adequately explained the reasons for making changes or demonstrated their own commitment to the new environment. And when executive and process-intensive functional areas like HR and Corporate Communications are not visibly on board with a SharePoint solution, others may not see the urgency of it. The roots of cultivating adoption may be organization wide, but the successes that demonstrate adaptation must emerge from within the teams that touch and manage corporate culture and communications.
Proven Adoption Strategies Based on Measurement

Alternatively, there are many ways to drive SharePoint user adoption and continued engagement. It’s never too late. The best strategies are based on:

Cultivating buy-in

- Involve stakeholders from the beginning. The highest rates of technology adoption and dependency happen when decision making involves users from across the company.
- Secure executive buy-in. Company leadership must explicitly show that they are using SharePoint for their own processes and communications.
- Improve the message. Define the “what’s in it for me?” as well as the productivity and ROI expectations.
- Resolve concerns. Show how daily tasks and processes are made easier. Address concerns around personal or team sovereignty, processes and job security.
- Make it count. The organization should communicate goals, intended accomplishments, positive performance and job satisfaction outcomes and demonstrate how each person can help.

Starting small and expanding

- Pick a visible team. Show how it is more efficient and happier using SharePoint and other teams will ask for it.
- Grow within a team. Within a team, demonstrate an ability to get things done with reduced effort in SharePoint versus existing legacy systems.
- Inspire trust. Enable users to create user groups and discussion groups, to share ideas, methods and expertise, as well as to freely air complaints.
- Make it contagious. A “we’re all in it for the team” approach and visible celebration of accomplishments can create contagious enthusiasm.

Demonstrating impact

- Invite users. Create an inviting, dynamic and efficient SharePoint environment.
- Deliver it right now. Regularly update engaging page content.
- Create incentives. Allow users to directly influence site design enhancements and define routes to the information and content they want.
- Create competition. Enable gamification and scoring of favorite content, comments and user groups to clearly identify preferred content and expertise.
- Make it personal. Allow for customizable design and the open integration of web parts. Users are more attached to something that is ‘theirs’ than a standard page.
Continuous training

- Open training up. Create open sand-boxes for experimentation and hands-on capability testing. Encourage over-the-shoulder coaching by peers.

- Build peer champions. Heroes and champions can be identified and cultivated and can lead their peer groups into adoption and engagement. The “Mikey likes it” sales pitch is more credible than executive directives.

- Don’t hide problems. Shielding problems creates mistrust. Transparency helps build a “we’re in this together” mentality. Open forums and user access to trouble tickets build confidence.

- Showcase successes. Shine a light on interesting uses and approaches, disseminate real success stories to drive interest and long-term engagement.

- Change the culture. User adoption is habit-forming. Across the cultural organization, benefits and not consequences should be what users talk about.

Central to all of these is a strategic measurement program built around basic concepts of baselining performance, setting targets, evaluating successes and being able to learn from and adapt based on results. In the end, you can build the most effective adoption strategy for your specific organization. The more information, data, and insight you have, the easier to build measurably effective strategies.

Use Webtrends to Get the Most Out of SharePoint

SharePoint Analytics: Science and Art

Measurement is a valuable tool for assessing and improving SharePoint performance and end user engagement rates. With the right solution, you can capture details about how individual content is being used, how site design and search performs, how users interact and collaborate with each other in social groups or around pages and content, and how your communications infrastructure delivers value to your organization.

But it’s the art of translating this science into action that’s essential to optimizing a SharePoint deployment. With the right data in hand, you can set baselines, define adoption and engagement targets, enact strategies to alleviate trouble spots, and clearly assess whether or not those strategies delivered on the expected results.

The Better the Data, the More Effective the Strategies

There is plenty of evidence that shows the better the data and the better the analytic strategies, the more effective adoption and engagement strategies will be. Some real-world scenarios include:

- For HR managers who find that 40 percent of remote employees are unaware of changes to their benefits packages, identifying this population enables targeting of engagement strategies to the divisions, locations and individuals who aren’t yet aware of the HR pages and/or the content within them.
For the Corporate Communications manager who uses measurement and analytics to discover that virtually all of the company’s in-field operations managers have not viewed the critical CEO message about changes in regulations, the identification of that lapse should spur pointed tactics to ensure that the entire company is compliant.

For the IT team, understanding how users find and access content, which navigation paths are used, how onsite search is used, and what content surfaces in activity over time can suggest site and page reconfiguration and design optimization.

For business analysts, uneven adoption rates across the organization may signal communication issues as well as certain divisions or locations being out of compliance with corporate objectives, alignment, and software decisions and investments. These analysts could use the specificity of reporting to isolate problem areas and investigate misalignment issues.

For many organizations, these are not minor issues, and get to the heart of why an investment was made in an enterprise internal communications system in the first place.

Benefits of Webtrends SharePoint Analytics include:

- Built specifically for the nuances and intricacies of SharePoint
- Dozens of SharePoint-specific metrics out of the box + easily configurable additional reporting
- Detailed metrics with user, action and content-specific reporting
- Plug-and-play integration with SharePoint

Armed with quantitative proof of performance, more than 300 companies are already building effective adoption and engagement strategies using Webtrends. With its inherent applicability and flexibility, Webtrends Analytics for SharePoint stands alone in the measurement and analytics marketplace.

Measurement matters, accountability matters and the confidence an organization has that it is doing all it can to ensure employee, customer, partner and community engagement matters. That’s why it’s important to put the systems put in place to make this happen. And it is with analytics that you have the ability to prove it.