



The Art of Governance for Your Digital World

An Essential Guide
for Creating and Maintaining
your Business Intranet in Office 365,
SharePoint and Hybrid Environments



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Governance Plan Summary

Governance Plan Benefits

A Governance Plan describes how your SharePoint environment will be managed. It describes the roles, responsibilities, and rules that are applied to both the back end (hardware, farm, application, database configuration and maintenance) and the front end (information architecture, taxonomy, user experience). Effective governance planning is critical for the ongoing success of your SharePoint intranet and/or extranet. A good Governance Plan is “necessary but not sufficient” to ensure success, so be advised: A Governance Plan alone will not guarantee the success of your intranet and/or extranet. The company still should ensure that the Governance Plan is applied. However, not having a Governance Plan or having a plan that is either impractical or unrealistic is a clear recipe for disaster.

This document focuses on what is called the “front end” of the SharePoint environment – the business aspect of governance - the areas that impact business users.

Why is the business aspect of governance so important?

A portal or collaboration intranet and/or extranet is only as good as the value of its underlying content. A strong governance plan is essential to ensure that an intranet and/or extranet delivers worthwhile content to its users in an effective way. Moreover, governance planning is especially important for SharePoint intranet and/or extranets because SharePoint is designed to empower users who are typically not Information Technology (IT) or content management experts and may not be aware of best practices that will not only improve usability but save them a lot of time and energy when creating and deploying new sites.

A governance plan establishes the processes and policies that you need to do the following:

- Avoid intranet, team site, and content proliferation (for example, unmanaged sites and content that is not periodically reviewed for accuracy and relevance) by defining a content and site review process.

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- Ensure that content quality is maintained for the life of the intranet and/or extranet by implementing content quality management policies.
- Provide a consistently high-quality user experience by defining guidelines for site and content team members.
- Establish clear decision-making authority and escalation procedures so policy violations are managed, and conflicts are resolved on a timely basis.
- Ensure that the intranet and/or extranet strategy is aligned with business objectives so that it continuously delivers business value.
- Ensure that content is retained in compliance with the company’s record retention guidelines.

This document provides information to assist the sponsors of the governance planning team in learning how to plan, organize, and create your governance plan. You will also find some examples of how to integrate your governance plan into the training and communications plans for your intranet and users.

Throughout the document, we'll give you specific examples of real governance plans that we've adapted for our sample company, so that you can see how the suggested best practices might be applied in your own organization.



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SharePoint Governance Considerations

Broad Intranet Vision Goals

Governance planning is even more important in a SharePoint environment because the increased emphasis and availability of social computing features means that there are more types of content to govern. In addition, because SharePoint offers new capabilities to manage metadata at the enterprise level, the company will need to consider the addition of a new organizational role that plans and monitors metadata attributes across your organization. Metadata consistency is important, with a few warranted modifications for some sites. We will share these areas in more detail later in the document, but here are some of the governance areas that the governance planning team needs to be aware of in SharePoint:

- SharePoint offers users a far more participatory role in the intranet and/or extranet information architecture through the use of “social data” such as tags, bookmarks and ratings. Users (at the very least Power Users) need to understand and internalize the value proposition for leveraging these features.
- SharePoint introduces new capabilities for sharing metadata across multiple site collections and even server farms which require planning and control. The company will need to consider the addition of a new role (or at least a new responsibility to an existing role) to manage and maintain the dictionary of shared metadata.
- SharePoint includes new and more user-friendly records management capabilities such as the ability to declare a record “in place.” The new records management capabilities introduce an opportunity to create and enforce your records management plan. Key members in the company should familiarize their options with the SharePoint record center capabilities.
- SharePoint offers many more opportunities for users to customize their sites with easy-to-apply themes, create custom designs and use sandboxed solutions to create custom solutions. The company’s Governance Plan needs to include decisions regarding who, how, where, and when to allow configuration by using these expanded capabilities.



Governance Plan Summary

- SharePoint does a better job of handling lists with large amounts of data. However, there is still a need to ensure that users understand the kind and quantity of information that they should store in the SharePoint environment. Through a new feature, SharePoint can automatically restrict user queries of large lists by using Resource Throttling. This policy setting should be considered when defining a plan for overall governance because it can impact overall usability of the system.
- SharePoint introduces a feature called sandbox solutions, which enables the site collection administrator to directly upload customization elements such as Web Apps.

Within your governance plan, the company should have a customization policies section that describes how you will deal with the numerous ways to create solutions that customize SharePoint.



Getting Started

First time Governance Planning is most effective when a small team is assembled to help define the key framing decisions for governance, and then divide up the work to document the details among the team members. The team should clearly include representatives from IT who are responsible for overall IT system use policies, but you will also want to include representatives from the team responsible for system maintenance within IT and outside of IT; people who can represent the interests of those responsible for training, human resources, and corporate communications; and if this role exists, people responsible for knowledge management in the organization. In addition, experts who have assisted multiple organizations with planning like **JFD** are truly invaluable assets to this governance planning team.

Members of the Governance Core Team at the Company

(Representative from each of the following Business Areas):

- Knowledge Management
- Corporate Communications
- Information Technology (Business Analyst/Information Architect/Information Security)
- Human Resources

Why is a Diversified Governance Team Preferable?

- Writing down your governance plan is easy compared with getting people from different lines of business to agree on how to use it!
- No matter what is in the document, people may ignore it completely unless they agree with the basic principles.
- New solutions often involve a lot of organizational change – and organizational change is never easy. For example, at the company, one business team wanted to share birthdays in each user’s profile – just month and day, not year. HR, on the other hand, was very reluctant to expose this information due to privacy concerns. In the end, the company’s HR team agreed to pilot an “opt in” approach for sharing birthdays in user’s profiles. Most users were happy to add the information and appreciated the birthday greetings from their colleagues at work.

Use the vision statement during the assessment process the SharePoint project sponsors and stakeholders established to get your project funded as a foundation for your Governance Plan. Identify the basic governance principles at a high level before beginning to draft the actual Governance Plan.



Framing Decisions

Basic governance principles are your “framing decisions.” During your initial governance planning meeting, the company should review these framing decisions (see examples) to establish a general direction and high-level framework for your governance plan.

Then, meet with team members who have the appropriate expertise to draft sections addressing how the various aspects of your environment will be managed.

Review each major component of your plan with sponsors, stakeholders, and core team members to ensure you agree about the major components of the plan which include: The Vision, Guiding Principles, Roles and Responsibilities, Key Policy Decisions.

Examples of Key Framing Decisions

- Who is responsible for technical management of the environment, including hardware and software implementation, configuration, and maintenance?
- Who can install new Web Apps, Web Parts, workflows, features, or other code enhancements?
- Which social computing features do we want to deploy (if any)?
- Who can set up, or who will be responsible for setting up, new sites within the existing hierarchy? If this responsibility is controlled by the IT department, or a SharePoint support vendor then it is likely that a service level agreement (SLA) for site setup responsiveness with the business stakeholders needs to be discussed. If this responsibility is delegated, users will need training to ensure that they follow acceptable conventions for naming, storage, and so on.
- Who will be allowed to create a new level in the navigation or promote an existing site to the top level of the navigation?
- Who has access to each page or site and who can grant access to each page or site?
- How much responsibility for page or site design will you delegate to page owners? Can users modify Web Apps (Web-based data and UI components) on pages that they own in team sites? Can they modify Web Apps or Web Parts on pages that are part of a corporate intranet publishing solution?

- Will some Web Apps or Web Parts be fixed on the page, or will page owners be allowed to customize all the content on their pages?
- Who is responsible for managing metadata? Who can set up or request new Content Types or Site Columns? How much central control do you want to have over the values in site columns? (Content Types and Site Columns allow you to specify elements in your taxonomy.)
- If the Governance Plan says that page and site owners are responsible for content management, are you prepared to decommission pages where no one in the organization will take on page ownership responsibilities?
- How will the Governance Model be updated and maintained?

While you will begin preparing a governance plan for your SharePoint intranet prior to the launch, do not think of it as being “done” at any one point in time.

Your governance plan is a living, breathing document – make time in your project plan to revisit the plan as you learn more about how users are using the solution and capture feedback from their experiences.

As the company’s SharePoint environment evolves, revisit your governance plan to adapt to changing needs. The company may find that you need greater oversight to ensure conformance.

And the company may find that you need less oversight to encourage more creative application of core features.



Keys to an Effective Governance Plan

An effective business Governance Plan provides a framework for design standards, information architecture, and your overall measurement plan. It is intended to summarize, and tie together, but not replace, the documents that describe these activities in detail. Referencing this related content rather than embracing it in the Governance Plan will keep the plan from becoming unnecessarily bloated and unmanageable.

In addition, the company's Governance Plan should reference all your existing IT policies for topics such as:

- The appropriate use of technology resources
- Confidentiality of content
- Records retention



As the organization begins to deploy more functionality into your environment, new IT policies will emerge that will impact SharePoint governance. Again, your plan doesn't need to include these emerging policies, but it should reference them where appropriate.

The Governance Plan is a business document:

Its primary audience is the business (content) owners of your SharePoint sites and the users who produce and consume the content on those sites. Because all users can effectively produce content in SharePoint by using social tags and ratings (if the company allows these in your solution), everyone in the organization needs to be familiar with the Governance Plan.

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Governance Plan Outline (example)

SECTION 1: General Governance Guidelines

- 1.0 Governance Plan Objective
- 2.0 Vision Statement
- 3.0 General Guidelines
- 4.0 Roles and Responsibilities
- 5.0 Guiding Principles

SECTION 2: Detailed Governance Policies and Standards

- 6.0 Content Management Policies and Standards
 - Posting Content to Existing Pages or Sites
 - Posting Content to the Home Page
 - Posting Content to Personal Pages
 - Records Retention
 - Content Auditing and Review
- 7.0 Design Policies and Standards
 - Creating New Subsites
 - Page Layout and Organization
 - Content Types and Metadata
 - Content-Specific Guidelines/Policies
 - Security
 - Branding
- 8.0 Customization Policies and Standards
 - Browser-based updates
 - Updates based on SharePoint Designer
 - Sandbox Solutions
 - Centrally-deployed / 3rd Party Solutions



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Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities describe how each employee as an individual or as a member of a role or group is responsible for ensuring success of the intranet. Documenting roles and responsibilities is a critical aspect of the governance plan. The Governance Plan defines who has authority to mediate conflicting requirements and make overall branding and policy decisions. The policy decisions that will frame your governance plan and form the basis of the specifics of your roles and responsibilities definition were described earlier. Based on your discussion of framing decisions, you can adapt the following examples of roles and responsibilities that have been used in other successful organizations for your organizations. In smaller organizations, many roles may be fulfilled by a single individual. You will likely need to adapt both the responsibilities and even the terms you use to describe each role for your organization, but these lists will give you a good place to start.



Typical Enterprise Roles

Role	Key Responsibilities
Executive Sponsor	Serves as the executive level “champion” for the solution. The primary responsibility of the Executive Sponsor is strategic, positioning the solution as a critical mechanism for achieving business value and helping to communicate the value of the solution to the management levels of the organization.
Governance Board/Steering Committee	Serves as a governance body with ultimate responsibility for meeting the goals of the solution. This Board is typically comprised of representatives of each of the major businesses represented in the solution, including Corporate Communications, HR and IT.
Business Owner(s)	Manages the overall design and functionality integrity of the solution from a business perspective. The Business Owner does not have to be an IT expert but for intranet solutions, their job function typically includes responsibility for internal communications.
Solution Administrator (Technology)	Manages the overall design and functional integrity of the solution from a technology perspective. Works in partnership with the Business Owner(s).

Information Technology Support Team – Internal and/or Outsourced SharePoint Experts	Ensures the technical integrity of the intranet and/or extranet. Makes regular backups of the intranet and/or extranet and its content. Also, usually sets up and maintains the security model, at least the components in Active Directory Domain Services (AD DS). Develops new Web Apps and provides support to Site Sponsors/Owners seeking enhancements to their pages or new uses of the intranet and/or extranet.
Metadata Steering Committee/Content Steward	While some large organizations may already have an individual or group serving in this role, enterprise content capabilities of SharePoint require an overall metadata management plan and an individual or team responsible for maintaining the “metadata dictionary” over the life of the solution. 
SharePoint “Coach”	Provides coaching and design consulting to new users who have “full control” design privileges to ensure that best practices are followed and that the appropriate SharePoint features are applied in individual sites or site collections. In many organizations, a particular SharePoint feature becomes the effective solution for any business problem – a “hammer in search of a nail.” For example, you don’t want to see users creating wiki sites when what they really need is a custom list. If you will be delegating site “design” capabilities to users who have limited solution design experience (which pretty much means every organization), having experienced site design “coaches” available to help users get started can ensure that you end up with a solution that actually gets used. One successful organization implemented “drop in” office hours where new site owners could come and spend an hour or two with an experienced solution architect to ensure that they got appropriate guidance (in addition to formal training). Several others have established in-house consulting services to help new site owners get started. In many cases, the first hour or two of consulting is “free” and services beyond that require a charge code.
“Power Users”	Supports the successful deployment of SharePoint in the organization by sharing best practices and lessons learned in a Community of Practice team site. Members serve as SharePoint advocates and change agents.

Roles for each Site

Role	Key Responsibilities
Site Sponsor	Serves as the centralized, primary role for ensuring that content for a particular page/site is properly collected, reviewed, published, and maintained over time. The Site Sponsor is an expert in the content that is showcased on the site or page. The Site Sponsor will likely need to learn about SharePoint, but his or her primary expertise is business focused. The Site Sponsor/Owner may designate a Site Steward or Contact who will provide the primary day-to-day interface between their business and the users of the page or site.

Site Owner/ Steward	Manages the site day-to-day by executing the functions required to ensure that the content on the site or page is accurate and relevant, including records retention codes. Monitors site security to ensure that the security model for the site matches the goals of the business and Site Sponsor/Owner and support users of the site by serving as the primary identified contact point for the site. Acts as the Content Steward for the sites for which they are responsible.
Site Designer	In an environment where site design is delegated to business users, creates and maintains the site (or site collection) design. Follows design best practices and guiding principles to ensure that even sites with limited access are optimized for end user value. Defines and executes the security plan for the site.
Users/Contributors and/or Readers	Uses the intranet and/or extranet to access and share information. Users may have different access permissions in different areas of the intranet and/or extranet, sometimes acting as a Contributor (content producer) and other times acting as a Readers (content consumer).

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Guiding Principles

Guiding principles define organizational preferences that support the vision. These critical statements reflect best practices that all users and site owners must understand and internalize to ensure the success of your intranet and/or extranet. It is very likely that the company will share many of the same guiding principles that we've developed in successful SharePoint deployments.

Use the examples shown in the table below to help define a "starter set" of guiding principles for the company's intranet intranet and/or extranet. Think about how you might create some supplemental reference material to help users internalize these principles – or consider adding a "principle of the day" to the home page of your intranet. If users have a good understanding of the guiding principles, you have a reasonable shot at getting them to follow your company's governance guidelines.

Guiding Principle	Consequence	Note
General		
Policies are tied to the scope and intention of the site. Governance policies will be more flexible for sites with more limited access than they will for sites that are shared with a broad audience.	The different audiences for sites allow you to adapt the governance model according to business needs. While some policies will be enforced across the entire organization, others may be determined by each site owner.	<i>One size does not fit all. Yes, we've got rules but be smart enough to know when it's appropriate to deviate from a standard in order to achieve a business objective more effectively.</i>
Even though SharePoint may be a new vehicle for collaboration, SharePoint content is governed by all general policies pertaining to the use of IT resources, including privacy, copyright, records retention, confidentiality, document security, etc.,	Content ownership, security, management, and contribution privileges are distributed across the entire organization, including users who may not have had content contribution, security or records management privileges in the past. All content contributors need to be aware of organization policies for business appropriate use of IT resources.	<i>Existing rules still apply – would you want your /boss/customer to see this picture? Should your boss/customer be able to see this content?</i>

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Security		
Overall firm security policies about who can see what content still apply and govern the portal.	Users need to think about where content is published to ensure that confidential content is only shared on sites with limited access.	<i>Publish to meet the “need to know” standards for your organization: no more, no less!</i>
Role-based security will govern access control and permissions on each area of the portal.	Users may have different permissions on different areas of the portal, which has an implication for both governance and training. While most users may not have content contribution privileges for tightly governed intranet pages, all users have “full control” privileges on their My Site Web sites.	<i>You may not have the same permissions on every page.</i>



Site Design		
Provide a consistent user experience - users should be able to consistently find key information on any collaboration site and search for the content that they need.	All sites will also follow a consistent baseline design template to ensure consistency and usability across collaboration sites.	<i>Hey – it’s not about you, it’s about our decedents! It’s about the new employee who jumps in feet first and needs to find his/her way around your digital world.</i>
Design to minimize training requirements for end users – use the best (and simplest) feature for your business objective.	Any user with site design privileges will be encouraged to participate in training to ensure that they use the most appropriate Web Parts and lists for each task.	<i>Nothing wrong with Phases here! Just because you <u>can</u>, doesn’t mean you <u>should</u>. You don’t really need to try <u>every</u> new feature!</i>



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<p>Ensure that “findability” governs design decisions – optimize metadata and site configuration to provide the best value for the end-user audience, not just the content contributor.</p>	<p>In situations where design trade-offs must be considered (more metadata versus less, information above or below “the fold,” duplicating links in multiple places), decisions should be made to make it easier for end users rather than content contributors. “Findability” means designing sites so that important information is easily visible and that navigational cues are used to help users easily find key information. It also means using metadata to improve accuracy of search results. Both the “browse” and “search” experience for users will guide design decisions in initial site development and modification over time.</p>	<p>That's all you need in life, a little place for your stuff. That's all your house is- a place to keep your stuff. If you didn't have so much stuff, you wouldn't need a house. - <i>George Carlin “A Place For My Stuff”</i></p> 
<p>Site owners must understand the objectives of the recommended site design standards and make changes only when they can be justified with a valid business need.</p>	<p>Even though site owners may have permissions that allow them to change site templates and other “controlled” site areas, they agree not to arbitrarily make changes to the basic site templates based on personal preference. Suggestions for changes to the standard site templates should be elevated to the Governance/Steering Committee.</p>	<p><i>It's all about the Force Luke: “With great power comes great responsibility.” Use your powers wisely.</i></p>
<p>All sites/pages must have a clearly identified content “owner.”</p>	<p>Users need to know who to contact if information on a page or site is out of date or inaccurate.</p>	<p><i>Make it obvious who owns the content on all pages and sites.</i></p>

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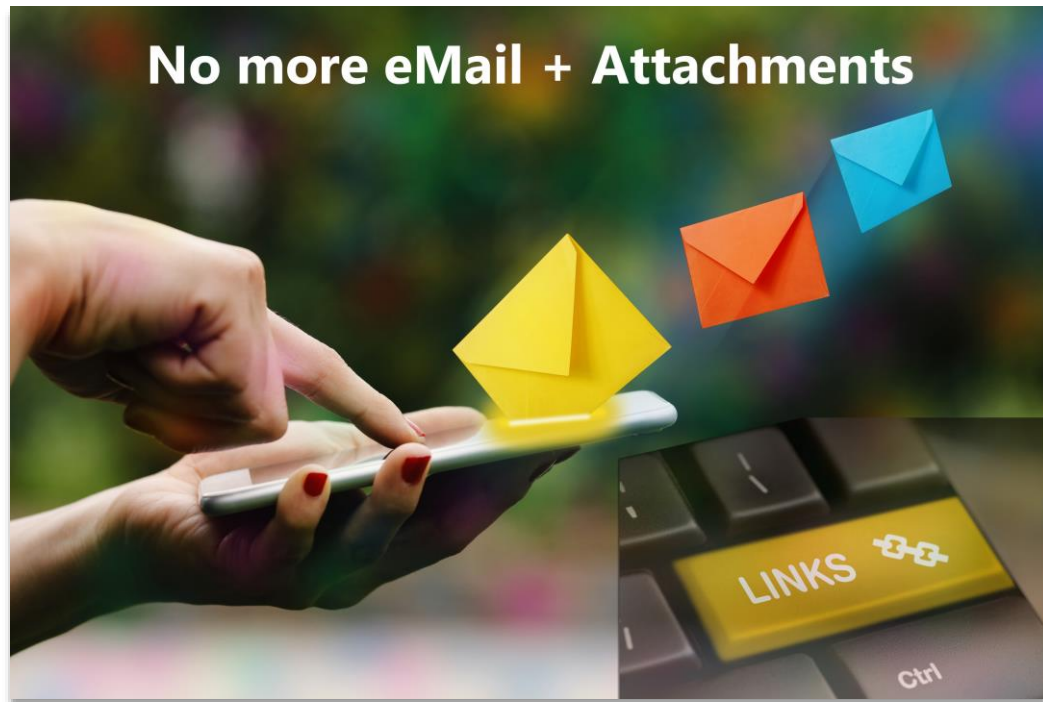


Content		
<p>All content is posted in just one place. Users who need access to content should create links to the Document ID for the document to access the content from its “authoritative” location.</p>	<p>This means that the official version of a document is posted once by the content owner (which may be a department, not necessarily an individual). For the reader’s convenience, users may create a link to the official copy of a document from anywhere in SharePoint but should not post a “convenience copy.” Users should not post copies of documents to their personal hard drives or My Site Web sites if they exist elsewhere in the intranet and/or extranet.</p>	<p><i>One copy of a document. One Source of the Truth!</i></p>  <p>Source of the Truth</p>
<p>Edit in place – don’t delete documents to create new version.</p>	<p>Version control will be enabled in document libraries where prior versions need to be retained during document creation or editing. If prior versions need to be retained permanently for legal purposes, “old” versions of documents should be stored in an archive location or library. Documents will be edited in place rather than deleted and added again so that document links created by other users will not break.</p>	<p><i>Someone may be linking to your documents. Update, don’t delete!</i></p>
<p>Site Sponsors/Owners are accountable, but everyone owns the responsibility for content management.</p>	<p>All content that is posted to a site and shared by more than a small team will be governed by a content management process that ensures content is accurate, relevant, and current. Site Sponsors/Owners are responsible and accountable for content quality and currency and archiving old content on a timely basis, but site users are responsible for making Site Sponsors/Owners aware of content that needs updating.</p>	<p><i>We’re all responsible for content management.</i></p> 

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<p>Copyrighted material will not be added to the portal without the proper licensing or approval.</p>	<p>Copyright violations can be very costly. This is probably one of the most frequently ignored principles on corporate intranets and one that your corporate librarian (if your organization still has one) is going to be particularly concerned about.</p>	<p><i>Don't publish what we don't own.</i></p>
<p>Links instead of e-mail attachments.</p>	<p>Users should send links to content whenever possible rather than e-mail attachments</p>	<p><i>Let's reduce email and email storage requirements by 35% by next year! Work from anywhere and find your document and data assets in your Intranet. Remember One Source of the Truth!</i></p>



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Email Problems SharePoint Can Solve Today

Information workers live in email – it’s the most important application they use, daily, hourly. They communicate by email. They share massive volumes of files by email. They manage projects by email. They take files home by email.

Designed specifically for communication, email causes serious problems for the enterprise when used by information workers for file-sharing and personal content management.

Sharing

A 10 MB email attachment was forwarded to 7 Senior Executives, replicating content, creating issues with version control, and bloating multiple inboxes. Remember... one source of the truth, so we are all working from the same version of the document.

Mobility

A document once secure within a SharePoint environment can be sent to an employee’s email so it can be accessed from a mobile device while offline and working from anywhere.

These problems can be easily solved by integrating the email system with SharePoint, a solution that is purpose built for collaboration and enterprise content management.

Silos

An important email received one month ago is not shared with a new employee who needs to get up to speed. The employee has gone to the intranet to access the document, but the document attached to the email is simply lost within someone’s inbox.

Risk

During an eDiscovery an email with an attachment is “lost” in an archived PST file. Too bad...it won’t be found for the court case resulting in legal actions.

Overview Policies and Standards

Policies **define rules for SharePoint use**; **standards describe best practices**. From a governance perspective, policies are usually driven by statutory, regulatory, or organizational requirements. Users are expected to meet policies without deviation. Because the company is subject to regulatory oversight, be sure you can enforce your policies as a failure to do so may target you as being “non-compliant.”

Standards are usually established to encourage consistent practices. Users may adopt some elements of the standard that work for them while not implementing others.

As applied to the topic of file names, a policy might state

“Do not include dates or version numbers in file names” while a standard might state “File names should be topical and descriptive.”

In another example, the policy might state “All SharePoint sites will have a primary and secondary contact responsible for the site and its content,” the standard might state, “The site contact is listed on the site home page and in the site directory.”



Each organization will have its own set of policies and standards. General topics should include content oversight, site design, branding and user experience, site management, and security. To ensure your governance plan remains relevant:

- Verify that your SharePoint policies, and standards do not conflict with broader organizational policies.
- Publish policies and standards where users can easily find and follow them. Some policies may need to be published to “all readers” while others may need to be secured to protect the integrity of the application.
- Regularly review and revise policies and standards to keep them aligned to organizational needs.

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Content and Policies and Standards

Consider the following example content policies and standards, each of which is discussed in more detail in this section:

- Posting Content to Existing Pages or Sites
- Posting Content to the Home Page
- Posting Content to Personal Pages (User Profiles)
- Social Tags and Ratings
- Records Retention
- Content Auditing and Review

Posting Content to Existing Pages or Sites

You will need a policy or standard to ensure that the **“one copy of the truth - a document”** guiding principle is enabled. Site Sponsors need to be accountable for ensuring that the content posted on their pages is accurate and relevant and complies with records retention policies.

Ownership means that the document is or was created by someone in your department and your department is committed to maintaining the content for its entire lifecycle. If a document is not owned by your department but access to the document is needed on your site, ask the owner to post it and then create a link to it on your site.



Do not post content that we do not own the legal right to post electronically, including. PDFs or scanned images of journal articles or other documents from sources to which our organization does not have online publishing rights. A link may be created to this content on the content owner’s site.

In addition, consider creating policies for these other content topics:

- **Content Posting Cycle:** Create a policy to remind users to delete content from its original source or collaboration environment when it is “published” to the official SharePoint repository (or use automated content disposition policies to make sure this happens routinely).

- **Content Editing:** Because content contributors on one site may have a link to content on a site they don't own, it is important to have some standard reminding users to "edit documents in place" so that links do not break.
- **Content Formats and Names:** Decide whether you need policies for where certain types of content are stored in your intranet and/or extranet and whether or not you need file naming standards. Consider a policy for defining what types of content belong in your Intranet and what types of content belong in other locations. Given the rich search capabilities in SharePoint, it is not always necessary to define strict standards for file names other than to encourage users to choose names that will help someone else identify the file contents.



"Findability is everyone's responsibility."

- **Content Containing Links:** Clearly define who is accountable for making sure that links in content or on a site are not "broken."

Posting Content to the Home Page

You will want to consider creating a specific policy for posting content to the home page of your intranet and/or extranet. Most content on the home page should be carefully controlled, especially for your intranet. After all, you get one chance to make a first impression and your home page is where users get that impression! On an enterprise intranet, the home page can become a battle for "real estate" among several business units, usually Corporate Communications or Marketing and Human Resources.

Even if your "intranet and/or extranet" is a project team site, you will need to carefully consider how information is presented on the home page of the site and who is allowed to create and place content in this critical location. Some organizations solve the battle for home page real estate by assigning areas of the page ("neighborhoods") to specific departments.

Others assign primary ownership to one specific department (often the department responsible for internal communications) but use the Governance Team or Steering Committee to provide oversight and escalation if there are disagreements about content.



Posting Content to Personal Pages (User Profiles)

The user profile is where users can declare both their interests and expertise so that other people in the organization can make connections or just learn more about them. The more information a user chooses to share in their profile, the richer the potential social network and professional relationships they can build. The company may not be comfortable allowing or encouraging users to attach personal information to their profile. Before users are encouraged to add their interests in basket weaving, rock-climbing, and extreme sports to their profile, verify that you are not violating any privacy laws or norms.

You can also trust that the community will quickly identify if someone has shared something that is not appropriate – which will help enforce your governance plan.

In addition to skills and interests, SharePoint provides a place for users to identify their areas of expertise in a space called “Ask Me About.” This field allows users to define topics where they are essentially saying, “I can help you with this.”



Your Governance Plan should have a suggested format for About Me descriptions and provide examples of well written descriptions.

SharePoint status updates allow users to describe "what's happening" on their profile page. Status updates are not intended to be used for verbose activity descriptions, but rather quick updates of milestones or tasks that let others know what someone is working on or thinking about.

Your governance plan should include guidance or examples to help users who are new to creating status updates understand how to use this feature. In addition to encouraging users to add key milestones, consider asking users to “narrate their work,” adding an update when they are at a critical point in a project or need some help from others.

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Records Retention

The company has defined clear policies regarding how your records retention policies will be implemented in your intranet and/or extranet and the responsibilities content owners have to identify content as records and associate the appropriate record retention code to a given content item. In SharePoint there are two ways to declare that an item is a record: in-place and in the records archive. Choosing the appropriate method for applying records management policies will have implications on how users find documents so your records management approach must be clear and consistently applied.

Content Auditing and Review

Consider a policy to define the frequency and type of review that you will have on each type of content or site.

All content posted to sites should be governed by a content management process that ensures content is accurate, relevant, and current but even private team sites should have a content management strategy.



For most sites, the maximum content review cycle should be no more than 12 months from the date content is posted. Confirm that your review cycles conform to any regulatory or statutory requirements.

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Design Policies and Standards

Consider creating policies and standards for each of the following design elements:

- Creating New Subsites
- Page Layout and Organization
- Content Types and Metadata
- Content-Specific Guidelines/Policies
- Security
- Branding

Creating New Subsites

If individual “end user” site owners will have permissions that enable them to create their own information architectures for sites under their control, it is important to provide some guidance to help them understand best practices for creating “nodes” in an information hierarchy.



For example:

- **Content Ownership:** If a particular business group is the primary owner of all of the content to be posted on the page or site, creating a separate subsite (“node”) for that business group may make sense.
- **Security:** If a significant group of content is highly sensitive, create a separate subsite, workspace, or “node” to more easily control the security settings for that content.
- **Database Administration:** If there is a need to back up, restore, or otherwise manage content in a single group, a unique subsite or page for that content will make these processes easier to manage.
- **Navigation:** Minimize the levels of nesting in the information architecture. It is a good practice to keep the number of levels in the hierarchy to no more than three so that users do not have to continuously “click through” to get to critical content. If a new node in the architecture is not needed for any of the other reasons just outlined, don’t create it.

Page Layout and Organization

Nothing makes a site more confusing than a random collection of disorganized Web Apps or WebParts that clutter a page. Anyone with page design permissions needs to remember the guiding principle about focusing on the end user, but these page designers should also be familiar with general design usability best practices.

Some of the recommended best practices for page design include:

- **Consistency:** Establish a standard design for all pages for each site to ensure that users can navigate without getting surprised by changing page layouts.
- **Speed:** Make sure that users can get important information as quickly as possible.
- **Scrolling:** Users tend to focus only on information that is “above the fold” in your page design. Design a page to fit your organizations standard screen size and then make sure that users do not have to scroll to find the most important information or Web Apps on the page. Scrolling should never be tolerated for critical information.
- **Important Content in the Upper Left:** Put the most important content towards the top-left part of the page. This is where readers will “land” visually when they get to the page. If the most important information is in this location, chances are better for capturing the user’s attention than if the information is buried somewhere else on the page.



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Content Types and Metadata

- A Content Type is a collection of settings that define a particular type of information, such as a project plan or financial report.
- A Content Type can be defined for the entire enterprise or for an entire site collection. It can also be defined “locally” for a specific page or site. Site Columns are the “properties” of a particular type of content.
- Columns are part of the attributes or properties of a Content Type. Site Columns can also be defined across the entire intranet and/or extranet or for an individual site or site collection.
- Content Types and Site Columns are both types of “metadata” in SharePoint.
- The values for many Site Columns (metadata) are specific to specific sites.
- Your governance plan needs to include your standards and policies for the Content Types and Site Columns used in your intranet and/or extranet as well as policies for how users can request the creation of a new enterprise Content Type or Site Column.



Content Policies

High impact collaboration intranet and/or extranets ensure that content is easily accessible by end users.

This means that the content is not just “findable,” but that it is structured and written to be consumed online. Assuming that your content contributors are good writers to begin with, they may not be familiar with best practices for writing for the Web. It’s helpful to provide some standards and policies for specific SharePoint lists and libraries. Let’s cover a few of the standards, policies, and best practices that the company should consider for your SharePoint intranet and/or extranet.

Blogs and Wikis

End users should be aware of what your organization considers appropriate for posting social content to personal sites such as blogs and wikis. While in some organizations, blogging about your hobbies is acceptable, in others, it’s not. Be very thoughtful about how you define governance policies for social content because you need to be sure that you are not placing so many rules on your content that you will discourage content contributions. There is no single right answer for every organization.

Announcements

Overall, the tone of all text should be concise and helpful. For Announcements, create a descriptive but succinct title. In the announcement text, put the important information first and write briefly, using no more than four to five sentences. Try to avoid using large fonts and avoid lots of white space in Announcement text. In text, do not underline anything that isn't a hyperlink. Make the link text a concise description of the link to let the link aid the reader in scanning:

- **Bad:** Click here for the latest application form
- **Better:** Download the latest application form
- **Best:** Download the latest application form



Discussion Boards

Effective Discussion Boards must have someone who will serve as the discussion board moderator to ensure that questions are answered, and that the discussion board adds value.

In some organizations, you will need to consult with the Legal Department to ensure that information about products, research, patients, data, regulated content, or legal issues are appropriate in online Discussion Boards.

Picture or Video Libraries

Content posted to picture or video libraries should be business-related and appropriate for publication in the corporate environment.

Be sure to obtain permission from any individual in a picture or video that will be posted to a site before it is uploaded. Also make sure that your organization owns the image or has obtained the proper licenses for its use.

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Links

In some cases, users and site owners will have the option to indicate whether or not a link should open in a new window.

In general, the following standards are recommended for links:

- Links to documents or pages within the site collection: Do not open in a new window.
- Links to documents or pages in another site collection: Open in a new window
- Links outside your intranet (to another application within the company or to an Internet site): Open in a new window.

Forms and Workflow

Intranet forms provide companies with the ability to easily collect employee insights and feedback.

In some cases, users and site owners will have the option to create forms and track responses in real-time to share and act on findings.



In general, the following standards are recommended for forms and workflows:

- Keep users on track and ensure data consistency with multi-stage business process flows in Power Apps.
- Create workflows to have everyone handle requests the same way or require approvals before submission.
- Determine who will create Power App Forms and Power Automate workflows and how they will receive the appropriate level of training.

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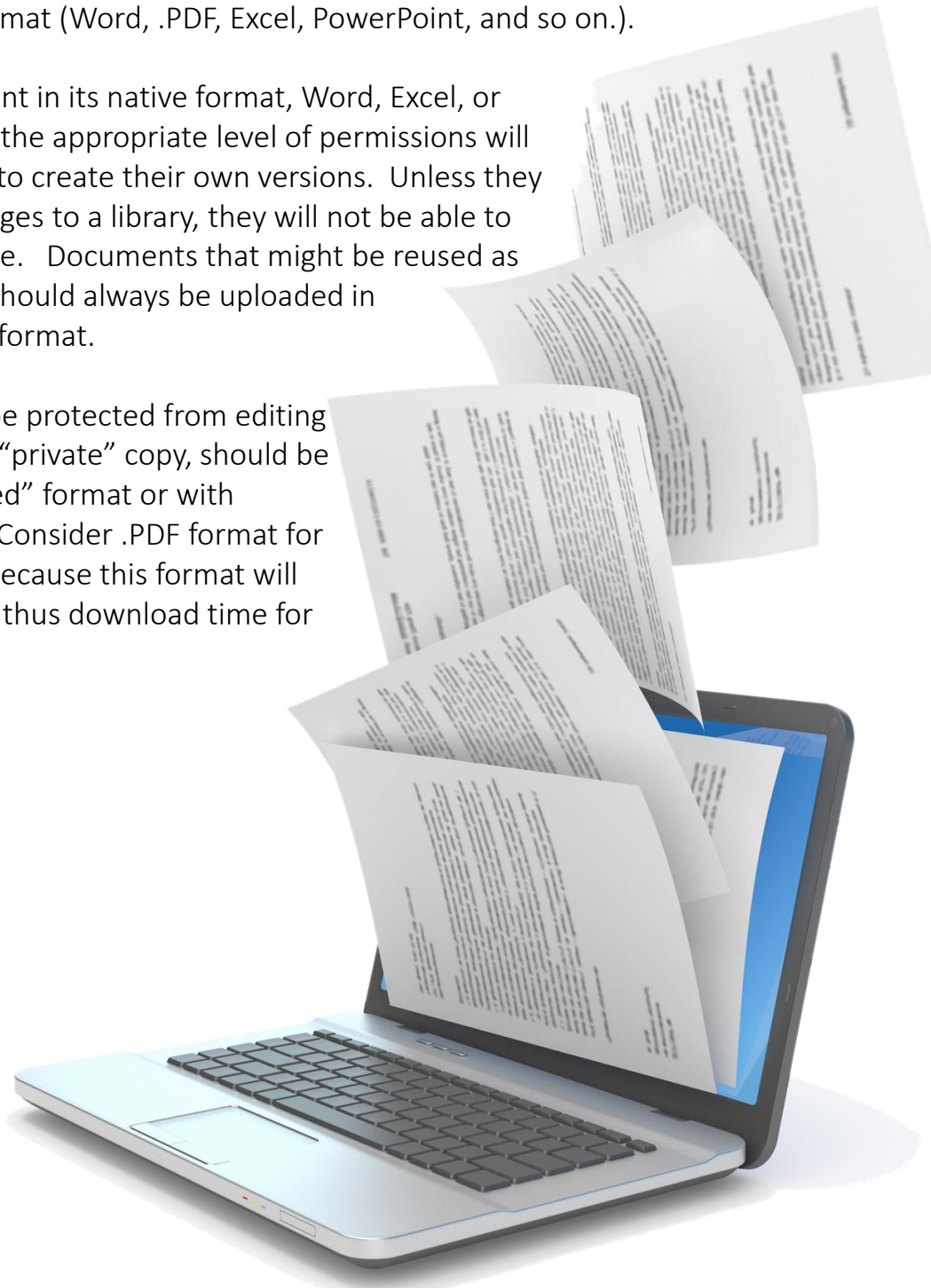


Document Libraries

Consider how documents will be used when you migrate or upload documents to your SharePoint environment. Documents are uploaded to SharePoint by using most any document format (Word, .PDF, Excel, PowerPoint, and so on.).

If you upload a document in its native format, Word, Excel, or PowerPoint, users with the appropriate level of permissions will be able to easily edit it to create their own versions. Unless they have contributor privileges to a library, they will not be able to post documents to a site. Documents that might be reused as an example for others should always be uploaded in their “native,” editable format.

Documents that must be protected from editing or changing, even on a “private” copy, should be uploaded in a “protected” format or with passwords for editing. Consider .PDF format for very large documents because this format will reduce the file size and thus download time for others.



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Security

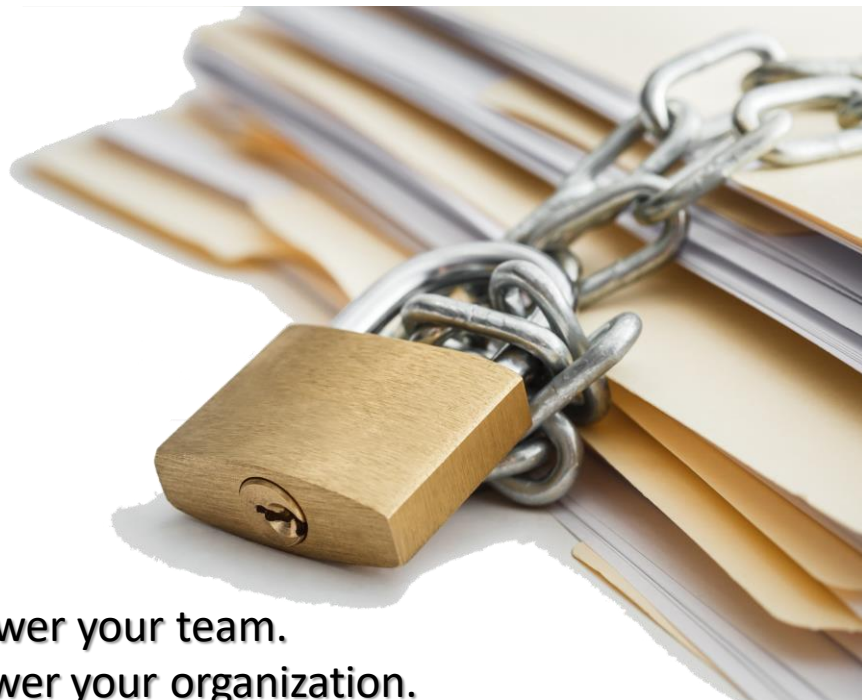
Security considerations are one of the most important design elements for a SharePoint site. It is important to think about security during the design process since understanding how objects will need to be secured on the site will affect the site structure, page layout, and metadata design.

Because in almost all SharePoint deployments, end users will have some capabilities to manage security for sites that they control, it is critical to ensure that anyone with permissions to assign security understands how SharePoint security works.

SharePoint provides the capability to secure content down to the item level and provides multiple options for creating security groups. This is both a blessing (*due to the flexibility it enables*) and a curse (*because it makes it very easy for users to create overly complex and virtually unmanageable security models*).

As a best practice, it is helpful to offer “security planning” consulting to users who are new to SharePoint because planning security can easily fall into the category we call “don’t try this at home.”

In your governance plan, you need to clearly articulate specific security policies and how they should be applied within SharePoint sites.



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Branding

The Corporate Communications department (or its equivalent) in most organizations will typically define branding standards for your intranet and internet presence. A key governance decision you will need to think about is whether the corporate branding can be changed in a given site collection.

Within an intranet, users may find it confusing and wonder “Where am I?” if the site branding changes from site to site so you need to consider defining branding standards and policies with the site user in mind.

Using some elements of color or brand variability in the site branding might help reinforce your security model. This can help to provide visual cues to content contributors reminding them when they post to a site with the “public” brand, the content can generally be seen by everyone in the organization.



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Governance Training and Communications

In this document, we've described how we would recommend creating a governance plan document.

As you think about creating your Governance Plan, consider how users will consume and internalize the content in your plan.

Putting in the extra time needed to make sure your plan is as concise as possible will make it easier for your users to understand and follow the rules.

In addition to writing concisely, you will also want to ensure that your governance plan is well represented in your training curriculum. While not every user will need to know how to design a SharePoint site, every user of your intranet and/or extranet needs to have a basic understanding of your company's governance plan.

If you empower your team and you enable user-defined tags and ratings, every user is a content contributor – and a key outcome of your governance plan is content contribution guidelines.

JFD recommends that your Governance Training be built right into a Training Video site available 24/7 to users.

More Great Content

See **JFD's** eBook
How Your Staff Really Learns Teams and SharePoint and Why You Might be Surprised.



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Summary

To be useful and effective, your governance plan needs to remain “alive.”

Be sure that you have a plan for keeping your document up-to-date, especially as policies change over time. Remember to do the following:

- Establish a governance plan to ensure quality and relevance of content and to ensure that all users understand their roles and responsibilities.
- Make sure that you have a Governance Board or Steering Committee with a strong advocate in the role of Executive Sponsor.
- Keep your governance model simple. Solutions need a strong governance model, but they don't need complicated models with lots of bureaucracy.
- Don't make the intranet and/or extranet itself more complicated than it needs to be. Be careful about "over designing." Just because SharePoint has a cool feature doesn't mean that you need to deploy it – at least not right away.
- Ensure that all users with design or “full control” privileges have internalized your design guiding principles and that content contributors understand guiding principles related to content.
- Think about how you will ensure compliance with your governance plan over time, particularly for highly visible sites. You may want to carefully monitor and review some sites and only spot check others.
- An effective governance plan doesn't have to constrain every move – it has to provide guidance to users to ensure that your intranet and/or extranet remains effective and vibrant over time.
- Ask **JFD** (Experts) to Participate in Governance Meetings

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The JFD Difference

Our team of subject matter experts can help you design and implement your intranet, extranet as well as help drive your innovation agenda through an effective implementation.

Our Business architects can:

- Determine the state of your intranet
- Assist in defining a intranet strategy aligned with your business strategies and needs
- Build a business case to support an intranet strategy and implementation plan

Our technology subject matter experts include frontend and backend developers, designers and server administrators. These SME's can:

- Align your technology initiatives and information management needs to deliver the right solution.
- Deliver your technology initiatives (large or small) with the employee experience in mind
- Train and roll out your intranet initiatives to drive user adoptions

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