



Enterprises Need an Open Alternative to SharePoint

This white paper explores the key issues with SharePoint - such as vendor lock-in to a complete Microsoft stack, the burden and high cost of CALS, the high TCO due to the inability to reuse existing hardware, software and skills and how scalability is causing companies to seek more cost-effective and open alternatives

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Executive Summary

In September 2008, the analyst firm CMS Watch concluded that, although SharePoint has been incredibly successful for group and departmental collaboration, it has not succeeded in displacing Enterprise Content Management (ECM) solutions. Instead, ECM solutions still have a place in the enterprise, and now co-exist with SharePoint.

While many ECM vendors have come out with SharePoint integration strategies, few have emerged to truly challenge SharePoint's dominance in the collaboration space.

This white paper will review the core user cases of SharePoint - collaboration and light enterprise content management - while recognizing that some enterprises may be interested in it as a business platform that encompasses other components, such as business intelligence, portal capabilities, and other features.

The white paper will highlight some of the key issues with SharePoint such as vendor lock-in, cost, scalability, and lack of ECM sophistication that are leading enterprises to explore alternatives and other ECM vendors. It will also identify the top ten requirements of a viable alternative to SharePoint and identify how Alfresco meets and exceeds those requirements in order to help companies:

- Escape the lock-in to a complete Microsoft stack;
- Escape the burden of Microsoft Client Access Licenses (CALs);
- Lower total cost-of-ownership;
- Re-use existing skills;
- Increase scalability; and
- Increase collaboration through additional Social Computing.

Companies will learn how Alfresco Share, part of the Alfresco 3.0 Enterprise release, offers a great experience for team collaboration because it builds on top of Alfresco's well proven and scalable content services that enable true ECM capabilities.

Alfresco 3.0 also includes full SharePoint protocol support, allowing Microsoft Office users to use Alfresco as the back-end repository, negating one of the key advantages of using SharePoint.

These capabilities, in addition to the first implementation of the new Content Management Interoperability Services (CMIS), recently announced by Microsoft, EMC, IBM, Oracle, OpenText, SAP, and Alfresco, position Alfresco 3.0 as a viable alternative to SharePoint.

What is SharePoint really designed for?

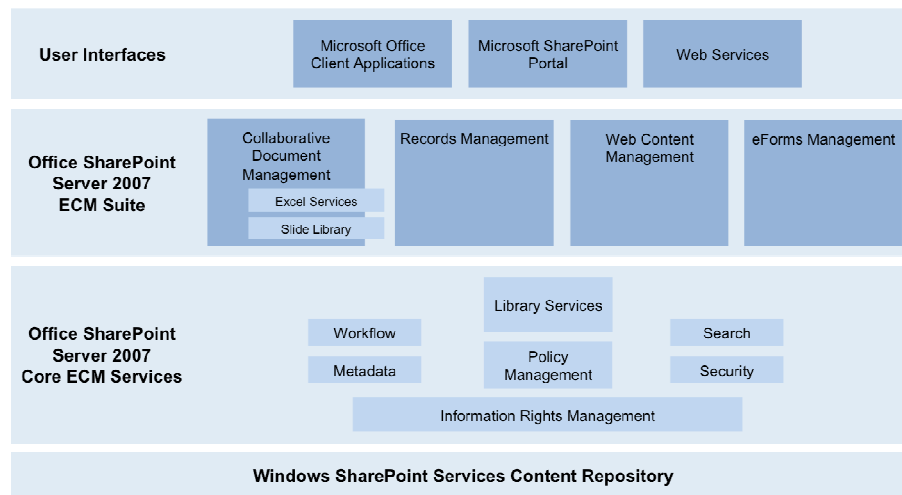
Microsoft's SharePoint is primarily used for collaboration within the enterprise. It offers a replacement to shared drives and email for project teams. Its key advantage is the tight integration with Microsoft Office client applications, as well as integration into the Microsoft ecosystem.

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In a recent industry analyst report entitled, “*User Generated Applications Drive SharePoint Value*”, Forrester Research noted that, “*defining SharePoint is no easy task*”. This is because it offers broad functionality - business intelligence, collaboration and content management - that users can add to a portal, search, forms and workflow, all within a .NET framework.

Primary applications for SharePoint are team collaboration, Intranet portals, and Microsoft Office document approval. All of these are closely integrated with Microsoft Office client applications, and accessible via the Microsoft SharePoint Portal Web application.

The SharePoint ECM platform can be viewed as follows:



The primary user interfaces are the Microsoft Office client applications, the Microsoft SharePoint Portal, and Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP) Web Services. These access an ECM suite of collaborative Document Management, Records Management, Web Content Management, and eForms Management. Core ECM services access a Windows SharePoint Services content repository with content being stored as BLOBs in the database, SQL Server 2005. SharePoint 2007 represents Microsoft’s first real entry into ECM and thus can be considered a 1.0 release.

What is the Difference between WSS and MOSS?

Windows SharePoint Services (WSS) 3.0 is freely available with Windows server 2003. Microsoft Office SharePoint Services (MOSS) adds a lot of extra functionality at a significant extra cost. Many of the advanced features you cannot live without are only available in the MOSS which can add hundreds of dollars per user to the budget. To complicate things further MOSS is available in “Standard” and “Enterprise” editions and is also available as a hosted offering. It is important to understand the differences between each of these products to avoid swallowing the CAL (Client Access License) elephant.

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A summary, overview of the functionality of WSS 3.0, SharePoint Online, MOSS 2007 Standard, MOSS 2007 Enterprise is shown below:

FUNCTIONALITY	CAPABILITY	WSS	MOSS Standard	MOSS Enterprise
Collaboration	Calendars	✓	✓	✓
	Tasks	✓	✓	✓
	Office Integration	✓	✓	✓
	Email Integration	✓	✓	✓
Basic Document Collaboration	Check-In/Out, Versioning	✓	✓	✓
Social Networking	Wiki site template	✓	✓	✓
	Blog Site Template	✓	✓	✓
	Presence , Communication	✓	✓	✓
	People Search		✓	✓
	Social Networking Web Part		✓	✓
Office 2007	Slide Libraries		✓	✓
ECM	Workflow - Review Approval		✓	✓
	Retention and Auditing		✓	✓
	Records Repository		✓	✓
	Email Contents as Records		✓	✓
	WCM Publishing and Deployment		✓	✓
Enterprise Portal	MySite		✓	✓
	Content Syndication - RSS		✓	✓
	User Profiles		✓	✓
	Site Manager		✓	✓
	Portal Site Template		✓	✓
Enterprise Search	Enterprise Content Sources		✓	✓
	Security		✓	✓
Management	LDAP Authentication		✓	✓
	Single Sign-On		✓	✓
	WSRP		✓	✓
Forms	Browser Based Forms			✓
	Forms Management			✓
Business Intelligence	Excel Services			✓
	Business Data Catalog			✓
	Report Center			✓

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More detail can be found at:

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/sharepointtechnology/FX101758691033.aspx>

The SharePoint hosted offering is essentially a hosted offering of Windows SharePoint Services and not to be confused with MOSS, which has portal, content management, forms, workflow, integration and search.

CAPABILITY	MOSS OnLine	MOSS Enterprise
Workspaces	✓	✓
Business Data Catalog		✓
Business Process Forms		✓
Excel Services		✓
Enterprise Data Search		✓
Site Search	✓	✓
My Sites		✓
Enterprise Web Content		✓
People and Personalization		✓
Social Networking Web Part		✓
Blogs, Wikis, Intranet Sites		✓
Workflow - Review Approval	✓	✓
Templates and Web parts	✓	✓

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What is the SharePoint Protocol?

For a long time, Microsoft Office supported several protocols for accessing files over the network. The shared drive protocol known as CIFS (Common Internet File System) and the shared Web folder standard WebDav (World Wide Web Distributed Authoring and Versioning) have worked well.

The advantage of using CIFS or WebDAV is that Office works directly with the file in the remote Web folder when a user opens or saves it. However, there is a disadvantage with this approach because Office does not offer basic content services such as versioning, check-in/out, document-level security, metadata management or search with these protocols.

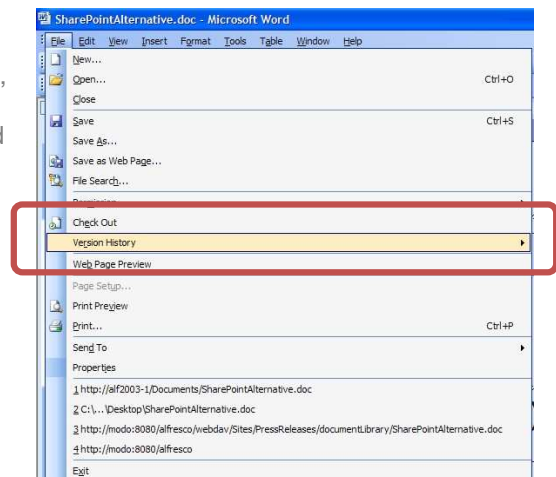
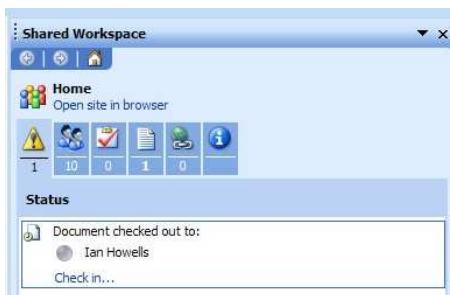
SharePoint has focused on addressing the weaknesses of CIFS and WebDAV while keeping the same close integration into Office. By using the new Microsoft Office SharePoint protocol, Office again works directly with the remote file when users open or save them. What is different with SharePoint is that users are accessing a remote “document workspace” as opposed to a “remote folder.” This shift from a folder to a document workspace has the biggest impact on end-users.

The “Document Workspace Web Service Protocol Specification” (MS-DWSS) defines a document workspace as follows:

“A convenient and centralized place for people to collaborate on a project. For example, team members can create and update documents and publish them on the document workspace site. One will always see the most current version of documents the team is working with on the workspace site, so team members do not have to send large files through their e-mail system each time content changes.”

These workspaces consist of a document library, a calendar, a discussions forum, a list of announcements, a list of tasks, and a list of links. The remote document workspace appears as a web site and can be accessed via: <http://SharePointServer>

When users save the file into SharePoint there are new options added to the File menu such as “Check Out” and “Version History.”



A new sidebar reveals access to the document workspace. Within this Window, users can “Add a New Document” or “Add a New Folder” and be “Alerted About Documents”.

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This is the new Microsoft Office SharePoint protocol in action, working directly against a document workspace (not a folder) and offering basic content services. If an ECM vendor wants to offer SharePoint protocol access then exactly the same requirements apply. The alternative to supporting the protocol means forcing users to perform the cumbersome five-step procedure.

Why are Enterprises looking for a SharePoint alternative?

For organizations that already have a strong Microsoft infrastructure investment and skill set, SharePoint is a natural choice.

However, no product, no matter how great, will solve every problem an enterprise may have - and even those enterprises need to be mindful of content-oriented applications that can be achieved faster and cheaper outside of SharePoint. For example, some managers use SharePoint for collaboration, but feel they need more of a true ECM system for some of their more sophisticated requirements.

SharePoint should not be force-fitted to applications it's not well suited for as it typically results in push-back from users and bad experiences on the implementation side.

The Hidden SharePoint Cost of Ownership

It is important to recognize that SharePoint only runs on a Microsoft stack, thus creating a long-term vendor lock-in with Microsoft. Some have speculated that SharePoint is the next operating system from Microsoft, and it certainly seems to be the cornerstone of their business-focused applications. A typical Microsoft stack includes:

- Internet Explorer;
- SharePoint Portal;
- MS-Office (more functionality in 2007 than 2003);
- SharePoint Designer;
- Web Parts, ASP.NET, C# API;
- .NET;
- SQL Server;
- Internet Information Server (IIS) v6.0 and higher;
- Windows Server 2003 and higher.

Therefore, an enterprise's skills, hardware and already paid corporate licenses do not apply if they are not using SharePoint with Microsoft's stack. So, this means:

- No Linux, Unix;
- No Oracle, DB2, MySQL;
- No J2EE – JBoss, BEA, Web Logic (Oracle), WebSphere (IBM);
- No PHP, Java, Adobe;

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- No DreamWeaver;
- No MS-Office on a Mac, no Open Office; None of a company's existing portals;
- No Adobe Flex; and,
- A system more friendly to IE than Firefox.

It is also worth noting that SharePoint stores content in the databases as BLOBS. Apart from imposing a performance penalty this also prevents companies from using the free SQL Server edition which, for all but the most trivial applications, has a 4GB limit.

The basic SharePoint pricing is available at:

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/sharepointserver/FX102176831033.aspx>

More specific pricing of a configurator for SharePoint (note that pricing configurator only works in IE on a PC) is available at: <http://www.microsoft.com/licensing/mla/default.aspx>

An example configuration and pricing are shown below:

PRODUCT	VOLUME	COST DOLLARS	COST POUNDS	COST EUROS
SharePoint Standard	1000 CAL	\$136,609	£77,180	€ 94,931
SharePoint Enterprise	1000 CAL	\$109,280	£61,740	€ 75,940
SharePoint Standard	2 Server	\$12,992	£7,340	€ 9,028
SQL Server 2008 Standard	2 Server	\$16,468	£9,304	€ 11,444
Windows Server 2008 Standard	3 Servers	\$2,124	£1,200	€ 1,476
		\$277,472	£156,764	€ 192,820

Top Ten Reasons Enterprises are looking for a SharePoint Alternative

- 1) **To Escape the Lock-in to a complete Microsoft Stack** – A commitment to SharePoint is a commitment to a 100% Microsoft stack today and in the future.
- 2) **To Escape the cost of the Microsoft Client Access Licences (CALs) Elephant** – The cost of CALS for not only SharePoint, but also CALS for the whole supporting Microsoft Stack (SQL Server CALS, Windows CALS) is often too expensive for many companies.
- 3) **To Lower TCO by re-using Existing Hardware, Software** – TCO can be dramatically reduced by re-using the existing hardware and software infrastructure licenses for Linux, Unix, Oracle, DB2, MySQL, JBoss, BEA, and WebSphere.

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- 4) **To Re-use Existing Development and DBA Skills** – The speed and cost of development and support can be dramatically reduced by re-using existing skills in PHP, Adobe, Java, JBoss, BEA, WebSphere, Oracle, DB2, MySQL vs. specialist SharePoint skills.
- 5) **To Improve Scalability** – As the number of sites rises (SharePoint Sprawl) performance decreases and administration costs increase.
- 6) **To Increase Reliability, Availability and Scalability** – Clustering, replication, distributed access, backup, indexing, recovery strategies and single sign-on across multiple content stores need to be developed for a 100% Microsoft environment bypassing existing infrastructure strategies.
- 7) **To Avoid the Cost of Customization when pre-built Application Functionality is not Enough** – When the out-of-the-box application functionality is not enough, the cost of customization through SharePoint requires specialist skills that are scarce. Re-using existing rapid lightweight scripting skills vs. C# and SharePoint .NET skills often delivers customization more rapidly at a lower cost.
- 8) **To Control “SharePoint Sprawl”** – To many, SharePoint is to the 21st century what Lotus Notes was to the 1990’s. As hundreds of SharePoint sites are created, users have to create lists just to keep up with the number of URLs. Strategies for cross-site search and site indexing need to be developed and managed to help business people find their way around SharePoint.
- 9) **To Maintain Consistent Policy Management across SharePoint Libraries** – SharePoint’s inability to apply policies across all SharePoint libraries is an issue for any company in a regulated industry. Numerous SharePoint sites scattered throughout an organization can contain a mix of documents, spreadsheets and presentations with inconsistent policies.
- 10) **To Avoid Conflicts with other Applications and Web Platforms** – SharePoint often conflicts with other key infrastructure applications that use Java or PHP and integration is often difficult and slow.

The Problem Alfresco Addresses

Alfresco is the leading open source enterprise content management system built by the most experienced team in the industry drawn from Documentum®, Vignette® and Interwoven®. The team believes that the Enterprise Content Management industry is driven by:

- **High Cost** – Application driven purchases with a high up-front investment and per user pricing.
- **High Complexity** – Long rollout cycles and complexity resulting in software either not being implemented or used.
- **Lack of Customer Control** – Proprietary control preventing choice and ability to switch to other vendors.

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For these reasons the vast majority of people do not use ECM systems but instead work with shared drives and email to create, share and store content.

How Alfresco is Different

In the current economic climate organizations need to do more with less. Alfresco's passion is to offer a solution that focuses on:

- **Low Cost** – A low cost, open source, subscription model with minimal upfront investment that can be driven out of operating expense (op ex) as opposed to capital expense (cap ex).
- **Simplicity** – Rapid deployment to deliver immediate business value and rapid application development using pre-built components and lightweight scripting.
- **Choice** – Lower Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) by reusing existing hardware, software and skills. No lock-in to one ECM vendor or one stack, so when a vendor tries to dramatically increase maintenance fees a user has have a choice to go elsewhere.

Enterprise Content Management (ECM) is traditionally thought of as very expensive to license, extremely costly to roll-out and scale, and often requiring expensive hardware and supporting software in the underlying stack. However, there is now an alternative - the most scalable collaboration and web sites in the world now run on open source software. These Web 2.0 sites have commoditized the scaling process and changed the ways content is both accessed and mashed-up.

- **The New Low Cost, Lower TCO Way to Scale** - Scale on a set of loosely coupled, low cost, commodity hardware and software - the open source way.
- **The New Way to Access and Mash-up Content with No Tie-In** - Deliver Content-as-a-Service as simply as accessing a URL and simply mash-up internal and external content.
- **Alfresco – A Content Platform from the 21st Century** - Most commercial ECM systems were built in the early 1990's and have added layer upon layer over the last 20 years to update their systems. Alfresco is different. It offers a modern content platform, built on a modern architecture using modern tools that power the most scalable collaboration and web sites in the world today.
- **The Most Scalable Java Content Repository** - Alfresco is the most scalable Java content repository that runs on commodity hardware and software. An independently certified benchmark test conducted by Unisys Corporation demonstrated linear scalability up to 100m objects.
- **Lightweight REST Mashup Architecture for Rapid Application Development** - The old world of web applications was the complex, heavyweight world of C# or Java. The new world of web applications is one of lightweight scripting using, for example, languages such as JavaScript, PHP or Ruby. These are what power the most dynamic, most accessed web applications today often with a Rich Internet Application (RIA) interface written in AJAX or Flex.
- **Standards – Escape the Proprietary ECM Tie-In and ECM Stack Tie-In** - Most ECM application developers will know that you cannot develop an application for one ECM repository and deploy it on another. This proprietary approach is made worse when an ECM

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system forces you to use one sort of operating system, database, .NET, portal, language or browser.

Alfresco is one of the contributing members of the draft Content Management Interoperability Services (CMIS) specification that is supported by all of the leading ECM vendors and has been submitted to OASIS for review and adoption as an industry standard.

Alfresco is built on standards such as REST, RSS, Atom publishing, JSON, OpenSearch, OpenSocial, OpenID, Web Services, JSR 168, JSR 170 Level 2, MyFaces, CIFS, FTP, WebDAV, DeltaV, SQL and ODF. This compliance with standards makes integration into existing IT architectures much simpler and lower cost.

Alfresco SharePoint Protocol Support

Alfresco natively supports existing Microsoft protocols by exposing the internals of the repository through CIFS and WebDAV. It extends these protocols further by internally treating the folders as “smart spaces” on which actions can be performed.

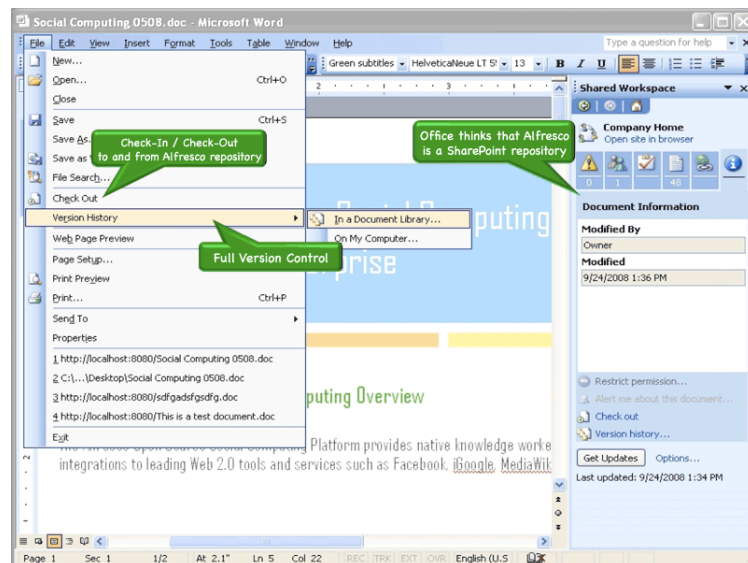
For example, what appears to be simply a folder or repository to an end-user is actually a smart space that will automatically and transparently backup a document and convert it into a PDF.

Microsoft released the specifications for the SharePoint protocol as part of its compliance with the European Commissions’ decision issued on March 24, 2004.

Alfresco is the first ECM system to implement the Microsoft Office and Windows SharePoint

Services protocols as a compatible server. From the server perspective, the new document workspace functionality is enabled the same way as with SharePoint – by an underlying SOAP-based request-response protocol, working over HTTP or HTTPS.

This is what Alfresco now supports as a native API to the repository. It means that end-users can get the same great experience and extensions they typically enjoy with SharePoint, only now it works with an Alfresco server. This offers companies a great alternative, including the ability to take advantage of the protocols while running Linux servers on the backend.



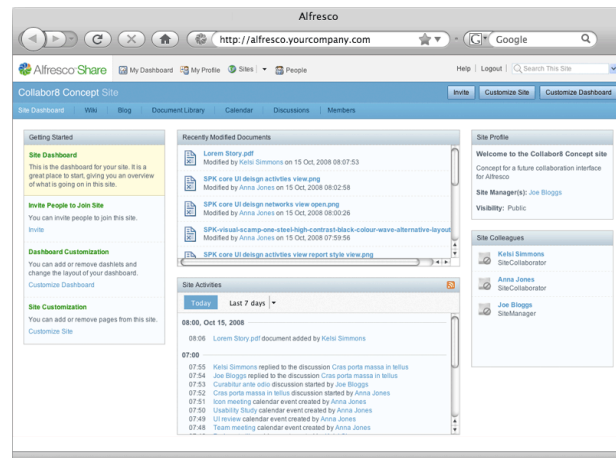
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By natively using the SharePoint protocol, Office works directly with the remote ECM repository in the way end-users would expect so that it increases user productivity and overall ECM adoption.

Introducing Alfresco Share

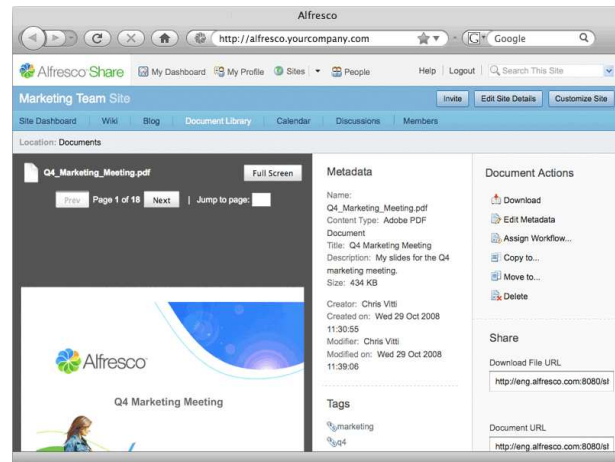
Alfresco Share is built on the Alfresco enterprise-class document repository and delivers out-of-the-box collaborative content management. It simplifies capturing, sharing and retrieval of information across virtual teams. Team or project members can rapidly find relevant content, experts, look at past or similar projects and keep on top of any relevant changes to make them more efficient.

- The ability to **create preconfigured sites**, such as collaboration sites. Alfresco Share allows users to create customizable sites that can be rapidly provisioned for team collaboration. Additionally, it includes a Facebook-style activities feed to receive notifications about updates to relevant content.
- **A versioned document library** - Simply bulk upload project content and let others choose content via thumbnails and view content in a Flash viewer – allowing users to view content regardless of the originating application or product version (i.e. Microsoft Office 2007). Simply search rich meta-data of document properties and tags. Allow access via an RSS feed.
- **Create virtual teams** - Search for people and experts as simply as content. Create the right virtual team for the project at the right time.
- **Activity feeds** – Users can stay on top of what is new or changing in a project site, track the “who, what, when and where” activities on content that is added or edited, comments, new team members and critical calendar dates.
- **Search** - Teams can search for people and experts to contribute to their projects as easily as searching for content.
- **Personalized Dashboard** - Use a rich interactive interface to configure a customizable dashboard and sites based on what is most important to a specific role or project.
- **N-tier Architecture** - Deliver scalability and accommodate more users on existing hardware resources.



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- **Automatic Flash Document Previews** for better usability (illustrated below) because Alfresco natively supports both Microsoft Office and non-Microsoft document formats such as PDF and Open Office. Users can read online, or examine a large document before downloading.
- **Rapid Application Development** - Develop applications in an environment that uses lightweight scripting and reusable components avoiding .Net and Java.
- **Draft CMIS Support** - A draft implementation of the proposed Content Management Interoperability Services (CMIS) specification is included to provide a platform for developing and testing new applications. The proposed CMIS standard is currently undergoing OASIS committee stage review and is backed by all of the leading ECM vendors.



Benefits of Alfresco Share

Alfresco Share enables organizations to control costs and boost productivity in the following ways:

- **Rapid deployment delivers immediate business value:** Alfresco's Web 2.0 functionality enables organizations to simply and rapidly rollout collaborative content solutions;
- **Supports initiatives for knowledge retention, best practice and virtual teams:** Organizations can support virtual team collaboration for home and distributed working, as well as support initiatives for employee knowledge retention and more effectively access best practice information;
- **Cost reduced to operating expense rather than capital expense:** Alfresco's open source subscription model allows customers to implement an enterprise wide collaboration tool at a low cost, without incurring capital expenses (cap ex) associated with traditional licensing models;
- **Re-use of existing investments in hardware and software:** Alfresco's open standards architecture enables organizations to leverage existing investments in hardware and software;
- **Use existing skills:** Utilize internal developers, DBA and systems administrators skills sets; and
- **Quickly create new applications to support departmental requirements:** Alfresco supports rapid application development with components produced using lightweight, standards-based scripting as opposed to a proprietary stack tying customers into a single vendor and the related maintenance costs.

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Conclusion

Alfresco Share introduces key collaborative capabilities on top of its true Enterprise Content Management repository that either meet or exceed SharePoint in many areas. With Alfresco's open and easy-to-integrate architecture, support for open standards such as CMIS, JCR-170, REST, and SOAP Web Services, Alfresco represents a great platform for building content-oriented applications. In fact, Alfresco's social computing capabilities enable higher productivity for teams than SharePoint offers. The first non-Microsoft implementation of the SharePoint protocol support allows native integration with Microsoft Office.

Alfresco meets and exceeds the requirements for a SharePoint alternative in order to help companies:

- Escape the lock-in to a complete Microsoft stack;
- Escape the burden of Microsoft CALS;
- Lower total cost-of-ownership;
- Re-use existing skills;
- Increase scalability; and
- Increase collaboration through additional Social Computing.

With the Alfresco repository as the backend to Share, this adds true Document Management, Web Content Management, Records Management and Digital Asset Management services. Enterprises and IT managers now have a great alternative to SharePoint simultaneously co-existing with an integrated ECM system. This allows them to re-use existing investments in infrastructure, and escape SharePoint's high hidden costs. Finally, Alfresco's CPU-based pricing model allows enterprises to scale their investment both from the technical and cost perspective.

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To learn more about Alfresco as an Alternative to SharePoint view the following recorded webinars on www.alfresco.com/about/events/ondemand

- Webinar: The World Needs an Alternative to SharePoint
- Webinar: Introduction to Alfresco 3.0

For more information on Alfresco, including downloads, webinars and events, please visit www.alfresco.com

References: <http://www.cmswatch.com/Trends/1377-Three-continents,-one-SharePoint-story>



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