

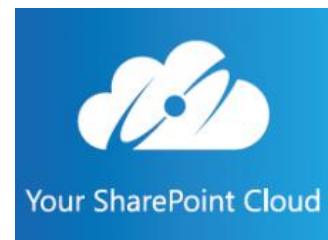
SharePoint Private Cloud Hosting vs. Office365 SharePoint Online

By Matt Duchek, Fpweb.net, 2012

Considering moving your SharePoint environment to the Cloud?

"Cloud" is certainly the hot topic in IT right now, and for good reason. Moving your IT infrastructure to the Cloud promises greater flexibility and lower overhead costs. **But not all clouds are created equal.**

For [SharePoint cloud hosting](#), there are two primary choices: Microsoft Office365 (ie. "SharePoint Online") or using a dedicated cloud hosting company. Compared to traditional on-premise server farms, both of these options can offer greatly reduced hosting costs. *Yet there are some important differences to be aware of between SharePoint Online and private cloud SharePoint hosting.*



Office365

SharePoint Online features in Microsoft Office365 represent an entirely new way to license and use the SharePoint platform. This new, hosted cloud-based offering delivers SharePoint functionality without the hassles of installation or deployment. For the first time, small business customers can rapidly implement a SharePoint environment for collaboration or document management without the help of an experienced partner or SharePoint consultant. It only takes a few clicks to checkout via the Office365 e-commerce site and you're ready to go. Plus, SharePoint Online has simple pricing with low-cost options that make SharePoint affordable for small and medium businesses.

However, that simplicity comes with a tradeoff: Office365 SharePoint Online is a limited product which lacks the full set of features available in SharePoint. With Office365, Microsoft has trimmed down SharePoint Online vs. the traditional SharePoint product hosted on-premise. To achieve the full functionality of SharePoint 2010, you need something more powerful than SharePoint Online. Only SharePoint private cloud hosting can deliver true parity with on-premise hosting PLUS the cost savings of the Cloud.

Let's take a closer look at the limitations of Office365's SharePoint Online and how it differs from the fully-featured version.

Custom Web Parts

Right off-the-shelf, the SharePoint platform includes a tremendous set of features for the most common business tasks and corporate IT needs. But SharePoint's native features can also be significantly extended through add-on software packages known as Web Parts. Most of these Web Parts are

designed for rapid, simple installation on top of the SharePoint platform. And most are compatible with Office365. However, sometimes organizations need some specific, desired functionality that isn't available in a standard SharePoint application. Luckily, there are SharePoint consultants who can write custom code, or create a new custom Web Part, to harness and transform data from SharePoint to fulfill special scenarios.

Installing these custom Web Parts - like Visual Web Parts, for example - may require direct administrative access to the underlying server components. But that means most types of custom-coded solutions won't be compatible with O365 since this degree of server control is restricted in SharePoint Online. **Yet SharePoint private cloud hosting from Fpweb.net, like on-premise hosting, supports custom web parts.** All of our hosting packages offer clients the complete control to modify SharePoint code, implement custom solutions, install all types of Web Parts and tweak system settings at the server level.

PowerPivot Support

Microsoft SQL Server PowerPivot enables tremendous reporting and analysis capabilities for large datasets stored within PowerPivot Excel Workbooks. [Installing SQL PowerPivot for SharePoint 2010](#) extends the native [Excel Services features of SharePoint](#). The combination of SharePoint Server and PowerPivot provides collaboration and document management support for PowerPivot workbooks stored in your SharePoint environment. That way it's easy to update and share critical business intelligence data. And looking forward, PowerPivot is only going to get more powerful. [Microsoft has already announced PowerPivot enhancements in the latest SQL Server 2012 edition.](#)

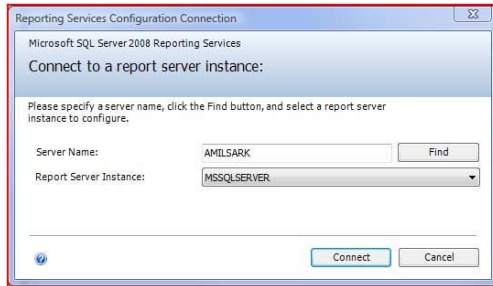


Does your firm have business intelligence applications or dashboards built in Microsoft Excel? Depending on the size of your datasets, SQL PowerPivot for SharePoint may be an ideal solution to monitor KPI performance across your organization. But PowerPivot is not currently supported in the Office365 version of SharePoint. For most SharePoint + Excel BI scenarios, the network infrastructure for SharePoint typically requires a farm configuration of three or more dedicated servers. So, installing and utilizing the SQL PowerPivot tools demands either on-premise servers or private cloud hosting. [Fpweb.net](#) provides dedicated SharePoint servers that support PowerPivot installation.

SQL Server Reporting Services

Sound decision-making relies on accurate, credible and meaningful information. SQL Server Reporting Services (SSRS) is an excellent data mining tool to gather business intelligence metrics and facilitate smart, efficient business decisions. With SSRS, enterprise data can be surfaced, analyzed and organized into intelligible reports and dashboards.

But how do you collaborate on and share that information with other key internal and external stakeholders? *That's where SharePoint comes in.* As your organization's central collaboration point and

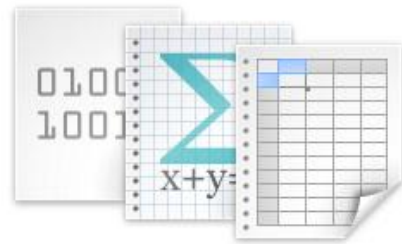


business intelligence platform, SharePoint Server 2010 integrates with SQL Server Reporting Services so SharePoint administrators can [build Report Server applications](#). However, don't count on running these sophisticated reports on Office365 infrastructure. The advanced capabilities of SSRS are only available for on-premise or dedicated cloud SharePoint environments. *At Fpweb.net, our team of SharePoint hosting experts is keenly familiar with SharePoint*

support for SQL Server Reporting and Microsoft Access Services. We can help you determine the best configuration for your specific needs and design a SharePoint Server farm ready for SSRS reporting integration.

Business Connectivity Services

SharePoint Business Connectivity Services (BCS) – aka SharePoint BDC – provides access to external data. That way critical business metrics can be imported from external sources directly into SharePoint applications via the [SharePoint Server 2010 Composites Feature](#). If your organization accumulates data in back-end server applications like SAP, Oracle or Siebel systems, BCS allows you to surface that data inside SharePoint without coding a custom solution. Unfortunately, though, the full Business Connectivity Services features are only available for on-premise or private hosted SharePoint farms. BCS in SharePoint Online is limited to Windows Communication Foundation (WCF) applications; SharePoint Online is not capable of connecting with other types of external systems.



So, if you need access to data stored in external back-end systems from inside SharePoint applications, [Fpweb.net SharePoint hosting](#) is a perfect choice. Fpweb.net hosting enables complete BCS features while also delivering the cost savings associated with the Cloud.

Web Analytics Customization

Whether you're using SharePoint For Internet Sites or you have a private-access SharePoint portal for intranet or extranet purposes, analytics are critical to understanding user needs. Analytics programs gather data about how visitors interact with and use your SharePoint-driven site to provide metrics such as time-on-page and length-of-visit. Analyzing these metrics can supply information, for example, on which documents are accessed the most, which documents are rarely used or content that may be triggering errors. Various analytics services are available for SharePoint, including built-in reporting functions.



But sometimes the standard SharePoint analytics reports just aren't enough. The [Enterprise edition of SharePoint Server 2010 adds an impressive set of "Insights" features](#) (which include Business Data and Chart Web Parts, dashboard data filtering and Office 2010 Services). Among these

powerful Insights features in SharePoint Server Enterprise is the ability to customize Web Analytics reporting. This customization empowers SharePoint administrators to modify Web Analytics reports as well as to build altogether new data views and reporting models. Yet this is another powerful SharePoint utility you won't find in Office365. Web Analytics Customization requires SharePoint Server Enterprise licensing. And the Enterprise edition license requires robust, dedicated server architecture. As a result, customizing Web Analytics reports demands using on-premise infrastructure- OR, a hosted private cloud environment.

Site Collection Size

Office365 is capable of handling (at most) 100GB worth of site collection content. Compared to the limitations of other low-cost hosted application offerings such as Google Docs and Box.net, 100 gigabytes is a relatively large data allotment. However, is 100GB really enough to store all of your organization's materials – including legacy content and document archives? If your company has more than 100GB of SharePoint content databases, or if your current storage trends indicate you may quickly exceed that limit, it's time to look for a hosting solution beyond Office365.

Private cloud SharePoint hosting from Fpweb.net, on the other hand, offers up to an unlimited amount of cloud storage for SharePoint content databases. We specialize in designing and implementing custom hosting solutions for SharePoint environments, and we can devise a SharePoint farm tailored to your precise storage requirements. Unlike the Office365 "one-size-fits-all" approach to SharePoint, our flexible hosting services can deliver the **exact** amount of storage space you need for SharePoint content.

FAST Search Server

Microsoft's [FAST Search Server 2010 for SharePoint](#) is an entirely new breed of enterprise search. The FAST Search Server product enables enterprise-scale indexing and introduces new customizable functions that extend beyond the out-of-the-box search functions of SharePoint Server or Server Enterprise editions. Exclusive FAST Search features like relevance tuning and automatic metadata tagging enhance workplace productivity by delivering lightning-fast, relevant search results to users within your organization. FAST Search results can also be enriched with visual cues (*like thumbnails, preview images or 'Visual Best Bets'*) to improve the utility and usefulness of enterprise search features. Deep linguistics, text analytics technology and powerful contextual matching – combined with exclusive enterprise functions – make FAST Search Server for SharePoint an excellent choice for large-scale corporate search engine configurations.

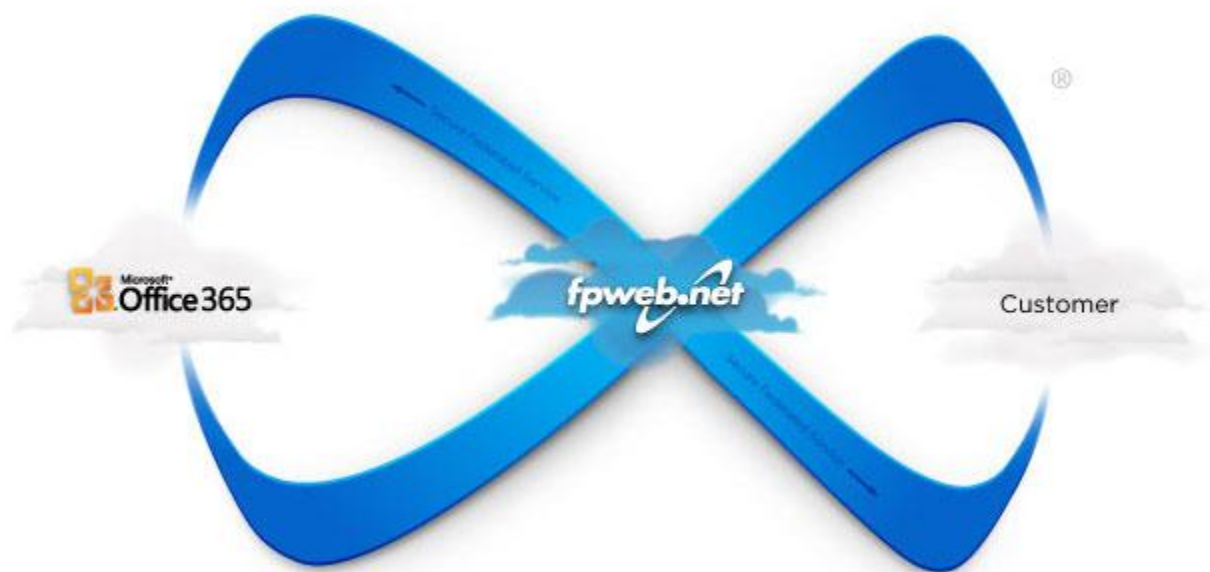


Yet FAST Search Server is an "infrastructure-intensive" product. **Powering a complex search application like FAST demands IT architecture that is both flexible and robust.** Typically, a FAST Search Server for SharePoint installation requires multiple dedicated servers linked together in a farm configuration. Unfortunately, that level of dedicated computing power simply isn't available from the Office365. As a result, O365 'shared cloud' SharePoint Online version cannot support FAST Search integrations. Utilizing these tremendous new features, then, depends on using in-house hosting servers – or trusting your

FAST Search environment the security and reliability of **Fpweb.net's SharePoint Cloud**. Of course, only the [cloud-hosted option offers specific benefits](#) like dramatic ROI improvements and a 100% uptime SLA guarantee.

Where & When to Consider Office365

Despite its limitations, SharePoint Online can be a smart solution for many types of clients. The simple, affordable pricing terms for Office365 may make this option more viable – especially for smaller companies with a smaller number of (*fewer than 100*) users. Per-user monthly subscription pricing, with no need for upfront investment in hardware or software, is also a draw to the SharePoint Online platform.



Please recognize, also, that SharePoint Online and Fpweb.net's *FLEXible* SharePoint Hosting services are NOT mutually exclusive. We specialize in designing custom 'hybrid cloud' SharePoint farms. Customers can **combine** dedicated, private cloud hosting with assets hosted in Office365 or on-premise. *In fact, [Fpweb.net hosted SharePoint enhances Office365](#).*

Conclusion

If your organization needs a powerful and fully-featured SharePoint deployment, Office365 may **not** be your best choice. Using the complete features of Microsoft SharePoint requires a server farm with CPU and memory resources dedicated to SharePoint processing. In fact, the demanding needs of most enterprise SharePoint installations call for multiple dedicated hosting servers. But hosting your SharePoint farm with on-premise servers isn't necessarily cost-effective either. **Private cloud SharePoint hosting, though, may strike the ideal balance.** [Fpweb.net SharePoint hosting services](#) offer full parity with the features and administrative control of on-premise installations while simultaneously delivering lower IT costs associated with the Cloud.