SHAREPOINT GOVERNANCE BEST PRACTICES

Expert advice for getting the most value from your SharePoint investment
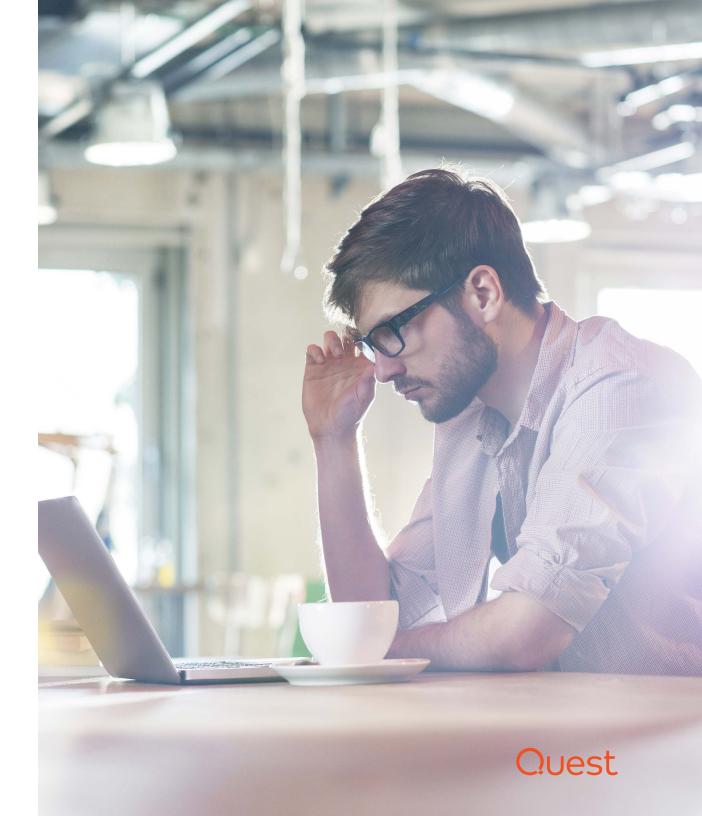
Quest®

Introduction

WHAT IS SHAREPOINT GOVERNANCE?

There are a couple of common misconceptions about SharePoint governance. First, organizations often think there's an accepted SharePoint governance model, endorsed by Microsoft and the SharePoint expert community, that they can simply download and install over a weekend. There isn't. Second, SharePoint owners and operators, who tend to be technologists, often treat governance as a technology issue. It isn't.

Governance is not a list of rules or a set of software functions. Rather, governance is a means to an end — a strategy for achieving your organization's unique set of goals under your unique set of business constraints. Technology offers methods for enforcing the governance policies set by your company leadership. For instance, setting a limit on the size of file uploads is not governance; it's a tactical activity, something you do to help achieve the business goal of reducing the risk of data theft, which is a part of your governance strategy.

Quest

Suppose your organization has a lot of intellectual property it needs to protect. That's a business goal. And you have a hybrid IT environment. That's a business reality or constraint. To help achieve that goal given the constraint, your governance policy might require all IP to be hosted onsite and be available to authorized users only. To fulfill that requirement, you might determine that you need technology that enables you to identify IP using a consistent taxonomy and content types, regularly audit access permissions, and continuously monitor user activity. Unfortunately, the out-of-the-box reporting capabilities for on-premises SharePoint and SharePoint Online are not consistent, which makes managing sites, content and permissions a very manual process that requires administrators to log in to both systems, run different reports, and then spend a lot of time normalizing data and building blended reports. Likewise, as changes are made to taxonomies and content types on the company intranet, the same edits must be made manually to the extranet, leaving a lot of room for human error. Those are technical constraints. Your governance model would help you meet the requirement of establishing common standards across platforms and identify where third-party solutions could help you overcome the business and technical constraints to better achieve your governance goals.

Of course, your organization's needs, the threat landscape, regulations, technology and other factors are constantly changing. Therefore, your governance plan must be a living document that evolves over time.

WHY DOES SHAREPOINT GOVERNANCE MATTER?

Collaboration platforms like SharePoint can add significant value to organizations — but the platform is often disconnected from business goals, which hampers its usefulness. A governance strategy connects the business needs to the platform. Much like a blueprint vetted by experts and used by qualified craftsmen will help ensure a house stands strong, a governance strategy helps support and secure the content and users of the SharePoint platform.

For instance, one common result of lack of governance is SharePoint sprawl: SharePoint is so useful and SharePoint sites can be created and deployed so quickly and easily that organizations end up with a cluttered mess. As a result, users can't find the content they need, and administrators can't keep track of sensitive content and protect it properly — the platform fails to meet the organization's goals due to the governance gap.

Having strong governance in place avoids these issues, enabling the business to:

- **Drive user adoption —** Strong governance helps ensure SharePoint content is easy to create, find and use, so users will embrace the platform rather than try to find ways to work around it.

- **Maximize ROI —** A governance plan helps you uncover the value of the platform and guide its strategic development, so you get the most from your investment.

- **Reduce risk —** A governance plan that protects business IP and is aligned with appropriate compliance regulations minimizes potentially devastating risk. For instance, a good governance plan will include provisions for regularly running audits on usage, security, content or permissions.

- **Improve productivity and business agility —** A well-governed SharePoint platform creates a deep pool of collective intelligence across an organization, arming users with the information and context to move faster and make smarter decisions.

Quest

Best practices for building a SharePoint governance strategy

Developing and maintaining a strong SharePoint governance strategy requires careful planning up front and continual nurturing and adjustments as you use the platform. The following best practices will help you throughout the process.

CREATE AN INTERNAL SHAREPOINT USER GROUP.

In an ideal world, organizations will build a SharePoint governance plan before implementing the platform. If you're proactively building a governance plan, the first step is to talk with your future users so you can understand their content, workflows and anticipated usage. However, as noted earlier, SharePoint is so useful and easy to deploy that often sites go up first and governance comes later. In that case, the first step is still the same — talk with your users! Find out how they are interacting

Quest

with SharePoint, including what sites are out there, how much they are used, who has access to them, what types of content are being stored there, and what frustrations users have.

> Tap into the SharePoint community to ensure your governance model serves their business needs.

But don't assume these conversations happen only once. You need to tap into the SharePoint community in order to refine your governance model to serve their business needs. Gather a group that includes people who run SharePoint, people who rely on it to accomplish their work, people who are interested in learning about SharePoint, and people who know your business. Meet weekly, monthly or whatever makes sense to bounce ideas off one another; then incorporate the various perspectives into your governance model so it better matches the culture and needs of your organization. When users participate in the governance process, they have a vested interest in its success.

BUILD A BROADER COMMUNICATION STRATEGY.

Don't limit your communications to the SharePoint user group; you also need to keep the larger SharePoint community abreast of what is happening with the platform, including details on the governance strategy, changes to policies, site redesigns or a platform upgrade. Make sure to solicit their feedback using strategies like community sites and polls, along with data such as search metrics — and consider their ideas seriously. Governance should enable them, not prevent them from being productive. Look for ways to ensure user adoption of the platform, such as offering training and support.

CREATE A GOVERNANCE SITE.

Make your policies visible. When people ask questions, point them to a SharePoint site with the answers. Make the site functional and refresh it frequently; it should not be a one-time dumping ground for rarely used process documentation. This should be a working platform from which you manage your process, accept suggestions and make changes as needed.

CLEARLY DEFINE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

Outline the functions required to deploy and govern your SharePoint environment at the enterprise, organizational and site levels. Who will be responsible for managing the SharePoint implementation and reviewing how effective the governance policies are? Who can create sites? Who will manage security? I'm a fan of the OARP model: Owner, Approver, Reviewer, Participant. It is simple and clear.

Determine which functions should be managed centrally and which are better handled at the site collection and site levels. SharePoint works best when management of its many functions is distributed to the people who know how the business should be run. Be clear on what you expect from each role so people can be held accountable.

DON'T START FROM SCRATCH, BUT TAILOR ADVICE TO MEET YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS.

Microsoft provides plenty of content around optimal settings and system limitations, and that's a good place to start. But remember you need to constantly refine your strategy based on a solid understanding of your own business requirements. Adapt your policies (content limits,

Quest

permissions, information rights management policies and so on) using a consistent and transparent change management process, so that employees and customers understand why changes are being made and where their requests fit into the priorities of the larger organization or project.

STANDARDIZE YOUR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.

Create policies and procedures that are consistent across your organization. A given business unit might have different information rights management rules than the rest of the company, but the policies that govern how those rules are managed should be consistent across the organization.

UNDERSTAND REGULATORY COMPLIANCE CONCERNS.

Are there any rules or procedures having to do with legal or financial guidelines that could affect how you set up and manage your SharePoint environment? Do you need to maintain audit trails? What about reporting? Workflows? Metrics? Consider these factors as you build your governance strategy and reassess them regularly, since requirements change and new regulations come into effect over time.

DEVELOP A TAXONOMY AND REVIEW IT PERIODICALLY.

Build a SharePoint taxonomy by establishing categories and naming standards that ensure consistency across your SharePoint deployment so information workers can easily find locate the information they need. A taxonomy also supports enterprise metadata management. For example, your taxonomy will guide your master pages, site themes and site navigation.

Many organizations already have their high-level taxonomy outlined — their websites show their product lines, business units, and so. That's a

Quest

good place to start. Sit down with your governance task force for a fixed amount of time (say, an hour) and create a high-level draft. Don't expect it to be complete and perfect. Then publish the draft to the user community for feedback, and revise your draft. Repeat this process several times, keeping the time short so that you have minimal impact on day-to-day business and you can step back and reflect after each iteration. You'll be amazed at quickly things will come together and, with everyone participating, how closely your taxonomy will reflect the way your users work and the way your business is actually run.

> **Work with the user community to develop and regularly refine your SharePoint taxonomy.**

Then your governance task force should perform a monthly or quarterly review of your taxonomy and metadata, sharing proposed changes with the community and incorporating feedback. This includes regularly reviewing and revising the enterprise term stores, various managed terms and managed keywords as needed to ensure that your model stays relevant.

DEFINE HOW YOUR TAXONOMY WILL BE MANAGED.

SharePoint enables you to create top-level taxonomy for your entire organization and have sites consume that taxonomy as a service. Each site can also create its own taxonomy, which other sites can consume as a service. However, be aware that enabling users to apply their own metadata will create more work for site and site collection admins if metadata is to be managed properly.

WHEN YOU NEED TO MIGRATE CONTENT, LEVERAGE YOUR METADATA.

Resist the urge to complete migrations as quickly as possible by simply dumping all data from the source environment into the target. Instead, use your metadata to sort your content by relevance, age, popularity, team, geography and other factors. By reducing the amount of sprawl and improving organization, you'll deliver a target environment that's easier for you to manage and easier for users to navigate, reducing overhead while improving user productivity and driving platform adoption.

Quest

Four secrets to success

More broadly, you need to build trust in your SharePoint governance strategy. Following these four principles can help ensure success.

MAKE THE PROCESS VISIBLE.

Make the work you do to define policies and procedures a matter of public discourse. One of the more successful governance initiatives I led started with a town hall event, with a Q&A for anyone interested enough to come and raise their hand. Our regular governance body meetings were open-door sessions, with end users and executives alike joining in when something they had a vested interest in was being discussed.

PROVIDE TIMELY UPDATES.

Keep people informed about your progress. Sometimes updating a SharePoint task list at the end of the day is sufficient; sometimes more frequent communication using other tools is the right choice. Use common sense to increase or decrease the level of communication based on the immediacy of the workload in front of you and the maturity of your governance plan over time.

CONSTANTLY OPTIMIZE.

Don't roll out a governance plan, document it in a binder, and put that binder on a shelf to gather dust and be forgotten. Project activities, reporting and communication strategies constantly evolve because of changing business requirements, customer needs and other factors. Constantly look for ways to improve your governance strategy.

ASK FOR FEEDBACK — AND ACT ON IT.

This tip was mentioned earlier but it bears repeating: Seek out feedback from your users and pay attention to it. Some people have no problem speaking up, but others people might not be so forth-coming. Look for opportunities to reach out and connect so that you can get a more complete view of what people think. When people are heard, it builds confidence in your strategy.

Quest

Conclusion

Strong SharePoint governance is critical to maximizing the value of your investment in the platform. My advice is to keep your governance model simple, let your processes grow and develop organically, and keep your users in the loop. If they understand the governance model and the purpose behind it, they'll follow it. Being transparent about the process and responding quickly to their requests will build trust and drive platform adoption — and your management team will view your SharePoint deployment as a success.

For help building and implementing your SharePoint governance model, be sure to check out Metalogix® ControlPoint. This comprehensive solution enables you to manage, secure, automate and govern your entire SharePoint environment — whether it's an on-premises, Office 365 or hybrid SharePoint deployment. For example, ControlPoint makes it easy to maintain a consistent experience across your environment by enabling you to set policies for site collection administration, quotas, and even regional settings across site collections, sites and lists. Comprehensive policy enforcement enables you to automatically control access privileges and use of SharePoint features such as versioning, file upload limits, site quotas and site templates. You can even securely delegate control to site administrators or power users. For more information, please visit quest.com/products/metalogix-controlpoint/.

Metalogix ControlPoint simplifies SharePoint governance, whether you have an on-premises, Office 365 or hybrid deployment.

Quest

ABOUT QUEST

Quest provides software solutions for the rapidly-changing world of enterprise IT. We help simplify the challenges caused by data explosion, cloud expansion, hybrid datacenters, security threats and regulatory requirements. We're a global provider to 130,000 companies across 100 countries, including 95% of the Fortune 500 and 90% of the Global 1000. Since 1987, we've built a portfolio of solutions which now includes data-base management, data protection, identity and access management, Microsoft platform management and unified endpoint management. With Quest, organizations spend less time on IT administration and more time on business innovation. For more information, visit www.quest.com.

If you have any questions regarding your potential use of this material, contact:

Quest Software Inc.
Attn: LEGAL Dept
4 Polaris Way
Aliso Viejo, CA 92656

Refer to our website (www.quest.com) for regional and international office information.

Ebook-SharePointGovernance-US-GM-37618

Quest