OFFICE 365 -
What you need to know

Are you considering investing in Microsoft Office 365? Whether you already use the Microsoft Office Suite and are now thinking of switching, or thinking of opting for this Microsoft product as your first Office tool, this whitepaper is here to help. In this whitepaper, we discuss the pros and cons of Microsoft Office 365 to help you determine if it is the right fit for you.

What is Office 365?

Let's start with what Office 365 is. Office 365 is a suite of Microsoft Office programs that includes email client, spreadsheet, presentation, document, calendar/reminder, collaboration, and chat tools.

How is it different from the regular Office package?

Unlike the regular Office package, Office 365 is web-based. That means all your data is stored in the cloud and retrieved from there every time you need to access it. It is not necessary to store the software on your computer, though you also have the option to install it if you wish.

What are the benefits of Office 365?

Web-based

The regular Office package stores your data locally, on a computer. When you store your data locally, there are chances of downtime and data loss if the hard disk becomes corrupted or fails. Furthermore, you need to have access to the specific computer or hard disk it is stored on to have access to the data. Since Office 365 is web-based, your data is accessible from anywhere.

Standard data security is taken care of

Office 365 uses encryption, so, in general, your data is safer than it would be on the desktop version of Office suite. Plus, it is HIPPA and FERPA compliant, which makes it easier if you are operating in the healthcare or education industry. Plus, the security in cloud-based storage is generally stronger than what you get when storing at the local level.

More storage

Office 365 offers more storage space compared to the traditional version of Microsoft Office. In the traditional version, when you use Outlook email client, the emails are stored on your hard drive, slowing down your system and eventually making you run out of space, forcing you to delete a lot of those older emails. Often we see that clients don't want to lose old emails. Maybe they find them all too important to let go of, or they don't want to spend time browsing through hundreds of them deciding which ones to delete. In any case, Office 365 comes with 50GB of storage space for emails, so you don't have to worry about this issue anymore.

More efficient

Office 365, being the most recent version of Microsoft Office, is one of the most efficient versions. It has updates and improvements that can boost your productivity better than the traditional Office Suite. Microsoft is continuously at work, innovating to make Office 365 more efficient, the most recent example being, its ability to capture printed data in Excel. If you have a printed data chart, you can instantly convert it into a spreadsheet by just clicking a picture using your smartphone and Office 365 app.

Mobile compatibility and real-time synchronization

Office 365 is mobile compatible and has an app that you can use on your phone to access and edit your Office files anytime, anywhere. Since the files are in the cloud, multiple people may work on the files simultaneously.

Upgrades are much easier

Since Office 365 is online, you don't have to implement software updates or version upgrades the old-fashioned way, for each device. Updates and revisions can be both expensive and cumbersome, so businesses tend to stick with the older version, rather than paying for and installing a new one. Relying on old versions and updates can create security issues. In Office 365, you receive automated updates and version upgrades across all your accounts at once.

Offers a good number of support tools

Office 365 is more than Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. It offers many other support tools that make collaboration more manageable and can help boost the overall productivity of your team. Examples include-Sharepoint, Skype for business, OneNote, etc.,

You are paying only for what you use

In the traditional set-up, you are paying for installing and using the software program on each individual device. That means staff working remotely from home or other locations, won't have access to the programs. With Office 365, you are paying per license, irrespective of the device you are using. That means anyone can access it, from anywhere, using their credentials. This flexible approach also makes it easy when you scale up or down in terms of staff.

You don't have to pay upfront

When you subscribe to Office 365, you can pay the licensing fee on a monthly basis. It is more of a pay-as-you-go format. In the traditional Office set-up, you had to pay for the number of licenses you bought, then they were yours to keep--but they were tied to the device you bought them for, meaning legally, you could install them only on one device.

Don't worry, what you love, stays the same

If you are already well versed with the traditional Office, you don't have to worry about Office 365 being any different. Microsoft has not made any significant changes in the cloud version of the Office that might confuse users that are used to the desktop version.

Great admin tools

Office 365 offers IT administrators tools that provide them a lot of control and visibility over activities related to Office. Here's what administrators can do with the new Office 365.

- ▸ Create and delete users.

- ▸ Manage users; create user groups based on user roles and requirements and set different access and permission levels for each user group.

- ▸ Manage the security of data in Office 365 by setting access restrictions, password expiry, etc.

Using the admin control tools, administrators can generate reports that tell them usage patterns, draw attention to bugs, or program downtimes. The reports also provide usage patterns which can help you streamline subscription costs.

No matter how intuitive a software suite is to install and use, making sure it is regularly updated, the security patches are in place, and the tool is in compliance with industry regulations, and standards, can be time-consuming--especially when you have a business to run and customers to attend to. Consider getting assistance from a Managed Services Provider (MSP) who is authorized by Microsoft to provide Office 365 services for you. Office 365 also has multiple versions of it--each suitable for different business sizes/uses. Your MSP will guide you through which version suits your needs best based on your business and industry.