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Best of Both Worlds
How to Embrace Office 365
& Strengthen Communications
Compliance Initiatives

Overview

Microsoft's cloud-based Office 365 is the updated version of the Office suite that we all know and love. It enables the modern worker to bring Office with them no matter which device they're using or where they're located. Email, instant messaging, video calls, online file sharing and storage, social media and numerous other features are all integrated and available on the go.

There are more than 200 million monthly active users of Office 365 today, and that number continues to grow[1]. As the clear market leader in cloud-based productivity and collaboration solutions, organizations in multiple industries continue to adopt Office 365.

The variety and complexity of communications data produced across an Office 365-enabled organization make compliance and recordkeeping more challenging. And though some archiving and e-discovery capabilities are built into Office 365, highly litigated and regulated organizations may need additional functionality to address the always-evolving regulatory and legal landscapes.

For organizations needing to retain and perform search functions across a limited set of locations for email and other Microsoft content types, this may be sufficient. However, organizations with frequent, high-volume e-discovery needs, those with systematic supervisory review policies and workflows, and those that also use non-Microsoft communication channels may still require the support of additional third-party tools.

First and foremost, Office 365 is a highly effective productivity suite. But it can't be all things to all businesses. As we'll outline in this guide, the magic happens when Office 365's extensive suite of communication tools is enhanced by comprehensive, purpose-built capture and archiving solutions that take on the burden of managing risk and compliance gaps.
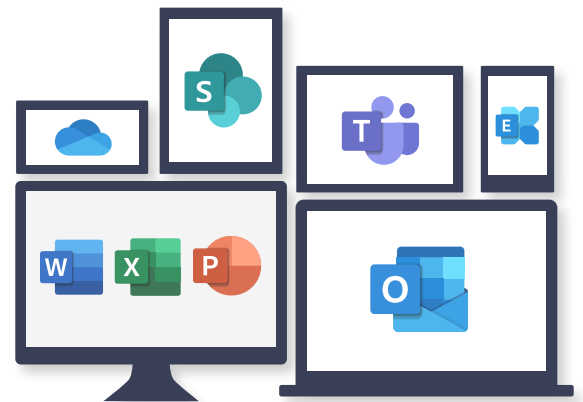
1) office365itpros.com/2019/10/24/office-365-hits-200-million-monthly-active-users/

Capturing Content

One of many benefits to using Office 365 is the variety of integrated communication and collaboration tools it offers, including SharePoint, Teams, Outlook and several others. But most organizations these days are also using apps and channels outside of Office 365. Content from collaboration platforms like Slack or Symphony, for instance. And while Office 365 can capture and archive data from some non-Office applications (with the help of external tools), it may lose valuable conversational context in the process.

For those that need to preserve conversation threads and metadata of communications for regulatory supervision or legal review, this becomes a problem. A solution for these gaps is found in the combination of Office 365 and Smarsh.

Smarsh supports more than 80 different communication channels with all media and context preserved for captured and archived messages. It enables capabilities to capture, review and supervise electronic communications from non-Office 365 channels like instant messaging, mobile messaging and social apps.

When it comes to Office 365 channels, Smarsh provides unique content capture capabilities, particularly for Microsoft Teams. Teams content is captured directly from Microsoft, on-prem or in the cloud, including content from one-to-one chats, multi-party chat and persistent channels. This includes messages (plus edits, deletes and replies), emojis, GIFs, files, stickers and links.

Within the Smarsh archive, content is automatically ingested, indexed and retained in a search-ready state, accessible at any time, and appearing as it looks within the collaboration tool.

Long Term Retention and Production of Data

Firms within regulated industries such as financial services, healthcare, energy, pharma and government all have explicit mandates to retain business communications for specific lengths of time. FINRA-registered broker-dealers, for instance, have a six-year default retention period. The records must be stored in an easily accessible place during that data's active retention period, and they must not be deleted or modified during this time.

Once the retention period for communications has been reached, this content can be disposed of or rendered irretrievable. However, items placed on legal hold will need to be saved independent of their retention period until that hold has been removed by an authorized legal staff member.

For many firms, storing data to meet regulatory and legal hold obligations is best accomplished if archived data is stored in a centralized, purpose-built repository that is separate from the original source content. This minimizes the risks that data can be tampered with, overwritten or altered by individual users.

When used in concert, Smarsh and Office 365's archiving capabilities form a solution that supports the retention of all ingested data to enforce specific retention policies and provides tools for managing data actively. Users may elect to set up data retention schedules, or to limit data storage capacity usage.

When necessary, organizations must be able to produce complete, unaltered copies of all content that regulators request. This requires robust search tools that can identify relevant communications and make it easy for these collections to be furnished for further review. FINRA firms that cannot or will not produce the requested documentation in-house need to have a third party that can download and produce the information on their behalf.

Communications Supervision

Some industries have specific rules about ongoing systematic supervision of employee communications. For instance, firms that market and sell financial products. But it's become an increasingly complex challenge to filter and monitor all the communications produced in Office 365 and across other digital interactivity tools.

Compliance teams need to pore through an always-expanding volume and variety of communication types, including instant messaging, texts, social media posts and collaboration platforms. On top of that are a number of interactive variables that affect the integrity of data preservation, like edit/delete and enter/leave metadata, and digital images like emojis and GIFs.

Converting all these dynamic communications to email can compromise efficient review, as context and important conversational metadata (when did an individual enter or leave a meeting?) are lost. Large volumes of data in Microsoft Teams that are missing all those rich components will take longer to review.

And when organizations are reviewing conversation streams in separate environments, they lose the ability to connect the dots of information traveling among various people and between a variety of applications.

Reviewers need an easy-to-use application that allows them to identify violations and risks and act as quickly and efficiently as possible in response. At the same time, supervision applications must have the policy sophistication necessary to greatly reduce false-positive search results, and the flexibility to customize workflows and escalation processes for varying groups of supervised participants.

A sophisticated supervision program requires the most cutting-edge, scalable solution for managing all the components of global, multi-platform, interactive communication. Smarsh enables reviewers to expertly monitor all the communications data that today's organizations produce, in one place, with policy filters that cut down on white noise and fine tune what truly needs to be flagged for review.

The Smarsh solution provides a single point of control for all Office 365 content and non-Microsoft content sources. When Smarsh and Office 365 are integrated, compliance teams can easily implement, configure, automate and report on supervisory procedures.

E-Discovery: Legal Preparedness

Organizations are subject to a growing array of regulatory requirements and data privacy laws across the world. They span from GDPR in the European Union and several laws spanning the APAC region to new and developing state-specific laws in the U.S., like the recently passed California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA).

In the event of a discovery request or investigation, companies are under court-imposed deadlines to process large volumes of content from multiple channels, and in short order. It can be a disruptive and expensive process.

Organizations must be prepared to deliver selected information, in the original format and with relevant context to preserve the chain of custody. Once again, critical details are lost when converting the captured content to a consolidated email transcript.

Corporate risk can manifest in many forms, like compliance, data privacy, security and litigation

While Microsoft has advanced its e-discovery capabilities in the Office 365 Security and Compliance Center, firms need to consider:

1 how much information needs to be processed within an average legal matter

2 how often these events typically occur

3 what specific file types need to be searched and produced

Since e-discovery is conducted with strict time limits, firms need to be confident that Office 365 can support the search, review and export of content at the volume and frequency that it typically experiences. It must be able to process all forms of electronic content that are required for e-discovery readiness.

When Office 365 is complemented by Smarsh, the preservation and review of archived content are more efficient. Users can quickly collect, organize and cull data to enable informed strategic decisions during early case assessment, while managing risk. The combined solution provides a highly secure, defensible and auditable workflow across all electronic communication.

Smarsh & Microsoft Together

While every organization's compliance, legal and productivity needs are different, many will benefit from adding the advanced capabilities of the Smarsh Connected Suite to their Office 365 environment. When industry-leading productivity applications meet cutting-edge, specialized archiving, compliance and e-discovery solutions, organizations are empowered to get ahead, and stay ahead of potential litigation events or records requests that might come their way.

Additionally, Smarsh now supports deployment of its cloud-native Enterprise Archive on the Microsoft Azure cloud platform. Users can leverage the scale, flexibility, performance and extensibility benefits of the cloud infrastructure with a sophisticated archive purpose-built for large, global organizations.

This ongoing relationship provides a unique vantage point into how to best leverage the investment in Office 365 and enable compliance and legal preparedness for regulated organizations. Together, Smarsh and Microsoft empower organizations to compliantly engage with modern workplace tools to increase productivity and collaboration, and fully harness the value of their data.

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Smarsh helps organizations get ahead – and stay ahead – of the risk within their electronic communications. With innovative capture, archiving and monitoring solutions that extend across the industry's widest breadth of channels, customers can leverage the productivity benefits of email, social media, mobile/text messaging, instant messaging/collaboration, websites and voice while efficiently strengthening their compliance and e-discovery initiatives.

A global client base, including the top 10 banks in the United States and the largest banks in Europe, Canada and Asia, manages billions of conversations each month with the Smarsh Connected Suite. Government agencies in 40 of the 50 U.S. states also rely on Smarsh to help meet their recordkeeping and e-discovery requirements. The company is headquartered in Portland, Ore. with nine offices worldwide, including locations in Silicon Valley, New York, London and Bangalore, India. For more information, visit www.smarsh.com.