Journal of Advances in Developmental Research (IJAIDR)
E-ISSN: 0976-4844 ● Website: www.ijaidr.com ● Email: editor@ijaidr.com

SharePoint Document Library sharing globally, reporting and audit features Versus other collaborative tools

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Abstract
The article provides overview covering different features, use cases, benefits and capabilities of SharePoint a Microsofy product used for content writing and documentation of Software products/projects. Integrating and connecting Lepide to provide audit and reporting functionality for organizations. Comparing SharePoint with other collaborative tools in the market and bringing out the gist for organizations to pick one that suites their environment.

Keywords: SharePoint, Microsoft Teams, Teams, Office 365, Content writing, centralized storage, Cloud based, Document library, Library, document, Share content, Site creation, One Drive, Lepide project management, bug tracking, issue tracking, audit, reporting

I. INTRODUCTION TO SHAREPOINT

SharePoint is a Microsoft web-based application that has existed since 2001 that allows organizations to store and organize any content and information. That includes documents, images, videos, news, links, lists of data, web pages, and tasks. Think of SharePoint as a one-stop shop for any content you have. All one needs to access all data stored on SharePoint is a web browser, such as Microsoft Edge, Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, or Mozilla Firefox. SharePoint mobile app can be used to stay connected from mobile devices.

SharePoint has changed since 2001 and has undergone many revisions. Every time Microsoft revamped SharePoint, they designated it by major versions. For example, SharePoint 2003, SharePoint 2007, SharePoint 2010, SharePoint 2013, SharePoint 2016 and SharePoint 2019. We also now have SharePoint Online, which refers to SharePoint which is part of Office 365.

The platform's features make it much easier for people to work together on ad hoc projects and establish standard business processes for sharing information, publishing documents and recording data.

For a web-based collaboration platform, SharePoint is easy to maintain and, at a fundamental level, it's easy for business users to understand. It is also infinitely customizable and extremely scalable, and there are many different ways in which companies can use SharePoint to significantly increase their productivity and achieve a great return on investment.

SharePoint allows increased productivity and visibility for workers in all sectors, businesses and companies of all sizes and has been fundamental for the last 23 years in increasing work efficiency in Fortune 500 companies as an intranet platform that crosses all business sectors.

Adopted by more than 200,000 companies globally, Microsoft SharePoint stands out as a leading content management platform that encourages and facilitates teamwork around the world.

Features of SharePoint document library

- **Centralized storage**: think of it as a single collection point for all your documents. No more searching in folders on different computers: everything is in one secure place, making teamwork easier. Upload files to SharePoint document library, to access them from anywhere
- **Globally accessible:** Opening the document from document library and working from anywhere. Easy to share the latest document with others with an online link.

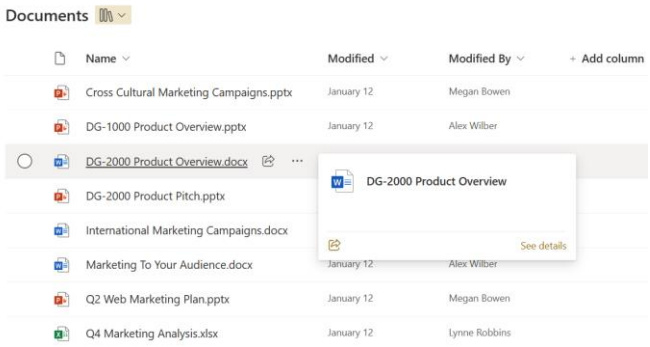


Fig. 1. Picture opening the documebt from document library taken from Microsoft SharePoint documentation

- **Check-out/check-in of documents**: have you ever accidentally modified the same document together with a colleague? It's frustrating, isn't it? Checking out the document prevents this from happening, allowing only one person to modify it at a time, keeping everything in order. Work with others on the same document, at the same time.

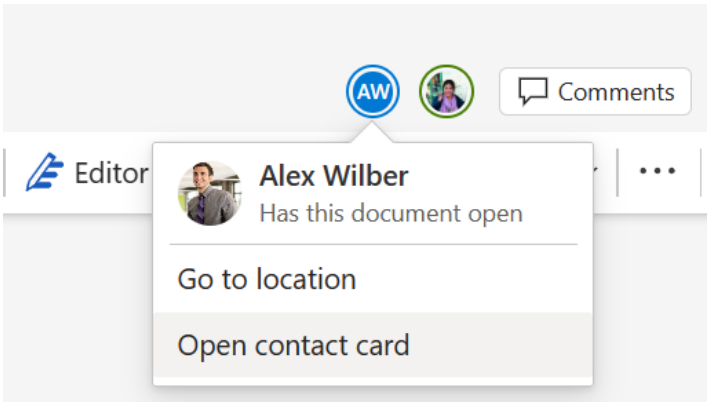


Fig. 2. Depicting multiple users working on the same document taken from Microsoft SharePoint documentation

- **Using metadata**: imagine finding exactly the document you need in a few seconds! Metadata allows you to categorize documents by author, department, or type. It's like adding labels to your files, making the search a lot smarter.
- **Document approval workflow**: SharePoint simplifies document approval processes. It can send documents for review and approval through automated workflows. It's like having an assistant who makes sure everything complies with the rules before the final green light.
- **Security trimming**: security trimming limits access to documents based on user permissions, ensuring data confidentiality. Additionally, administrators can configure security trimming settings to enforce access control. Permissions can be set at the library, folder, or individual file level.
- **Version control**: Keep Previous versions of the document while changes are being made to it.
- **Information Rights Management (IRM)**: Information Rights Management allows you to establish additional controls for super confidential documents. It's like a digital padlock: you can restrict copying, printing, or modifying the document.
- **Mobile accessibility**: just as it sounds: access and manage your files from anywhere using the SharePoint mobile app. Very useful for working on the move.
- **Synchronization with OneDrive**: Are you working on a project with someone who doesn't have access to SharePoint? No problem! Syncing with OneDrive allows you to work on documents offline and keeps everything in sync across devices.
- **Edit and upload in bulk**: the bulk editing and upload function speeds up the process of managing large document libraries in SharePoint. Administrators can efficiently carry out mass updates, metadata changes, and uploads using bulk operations, saving time and improving organizations' productivity.
- **User Friendly**: Easy to copy or move documents in the document library.
- **Alerting mechanism:** Users can set alerts to be notified when changes occur.

Every update to the document library has been designed to improve control and user experience, and this is the direction taken by Microsoft.

II. TYPES OF LIBRARIES IN SHAREPOINT

The traditional SharePoint intranet, characterized by a classic user experience, offered two basic libraries: an image library and a library of wiki pages. However, document libraries have evolved gradually thanks to their expanding utilities, offering a wide range of functionality. The modern classification of SharePoint document libraries is explained in the following section, highlighting their business applications.

- **Document library**: mainly, a document library is the most basic format for organizing documents of all types on a SharePoint site. It is a default library that is created every time you create a new site in SharePoint. It gives users the ability to organize documents using keywords and access the metadata associated with the particular document.

- **Site asset library:** the site's asset library helps store and manage audio-video files, images, CSS and JS files for organizational use. It contains specific logos and images approved by the company for branding or intranet personalization. Views focused on thumbnails, overlapping callouts, digital asset content types, and automatic metadata extraction are some of the additional features offered by a site asset library.
- **Site page library:** classified under the heading 'Page Library', it stores all pages created as part of a SharePoint site. More specifically, it does not allow users to upload content, but rather stores content generated by the system (pages). For example, pages created in the project section of the website are automatically stored in the site's page library.
- **Style library:** a style library stores all the XSL files, CSS files, and images used in designing controls and layouts on a page. It is a default library that is created every time a new site is created in SharePoint.
- **Image library:** this version of the document library was explicitly created to store images. By default, it presents a thumbnail view to justify the purpose of this library. You can create folders and add links and images to this library. However, adding or creating files other than images is restricted here.
- **Wiki page library:** wiki pages help users to easily store, manage, and share content. A wiki page library in SharePoint looks like a collection of editable web pages (sites) for organizing the overall content pages of the intranet. It allows users the flexibility to create, modify, or remove pages or content.

III. SHAREPOINT VERSUS OTHER COLLABORATIVE TOOLS

SharePoint versus other collaboration tools represents a crucial decision for businesses aiming to enhance teamwork, streamline communication, and improve document management. SharePoint, a Microsoft product, offers a comprehensive platform integrated with the Microsoft 365 suite, emphasizing seamless collaboration within a familiar ecosystem. In contrast, other collaboration tools, such as Slack, Google Workspace, and Confluence, bring their unique strengths to the table. This comparison explores how SharePoint distinguishes itself in terms of integration, customization, and a holistic collaboration environment. Understanding the differences helps businesses make informed choices to foster efficient collaboration and productivity tailored to their needs.

SharePoint is considered the best collaboration platform due to its seamless integration with the Microsoft ecosystem, offering unparalleled document management, workflow automation, and security features. As a cornerstone of Microsoft 365, SharePoint Development ensures collaborative collaboration with tools like Word, Excel, and Teams. Its vast document libraries, version control, and Power Automate for automation contribute to efficient teamwork. SharePoint's granular security measures and tight integration with business processes make it an ideal choice for organizations deeply entrenched in the Microsoft ecosystem, providing a unified and comprehensive platform for seamless collaboration and productivity.

A. Document Management

1) SharePoint: Comprehensive document libraries and version control.
2) Teams: Focuses on real-time communication but integrates with SharePoint Development.
3) Slack: Limited document management features.
4) Google Workspace: Strong collaboration on Google Docs but less structured document management.

B. Communication

1) SharePoint: Collaboration but lacks real-time messaging features.
2) Teams: Centralized hub for real-time communication and collaboration.
3) Slack: Emphasizes real-time messaging and channels.
4) Google Workspace: Collaboration with Google Meet for video conferencing.

C. Integration

1) SharePoint: Deep integration with Microsoft 365.
2) Teams: Integrates with Microsoft 365 and various third-party apps.
3) Slack: Offers a wide range of third-party integrations.
4) Google Workspace: Seamless integration between Google applications.

D. Organizational need

1) SharePoint: Organizations embedded in the Microsoft ecosystem.
2) Teams: Teams requiring centralized communication and collaboration.
3) Slack: Teams emphasizing real-time messaging and collaboration.
4) Google Workspace: Businesses relying on cloud-based collaboration tools.

IV. SECURITY AND COMPLIANCE WITH SHAREPOINT

It is simple and the cost-effective to track auditing changes made to the content, configuration, and permissions of SharePoint Server and SharePoint Online.

A. Features

- Insight into changes - Get increased visibility into the who, what, where and when audit questions, including before and after values for changes made.
- Read access auditing - Ensure sensitive data is accessed only by those with the required authorization through detailed read access auditing.
- Real time alerts - Decrease the time it takes for you to spot and react to potentially damaging changes in SharePoint Server and SharePoint Online.
- Pre-defined reporting - pre-defined reports for common security and compliance concerns, including PCI, HIPAA, GDPR, CCPA, SOX and more.
- Classify sensitive data - Locate and classify sensitive data according to the sensitivity of the content and its relation to compliance requirements.
- Analyze permission changes - Determine who has access to which files and folders and track permission changes to help spot excessive permissions and at-risk data.

B. Use cases

- **See when data is shared externally** - Effortlessly track external data sharing in SharePoint Online and SharePoint Server, ensuring full visibility and control over sensitive information leaving your organization. Lepide can enables real-time alerts, comprehensive reports, and deep insights to proactively mitigate risks associated with data exposure.

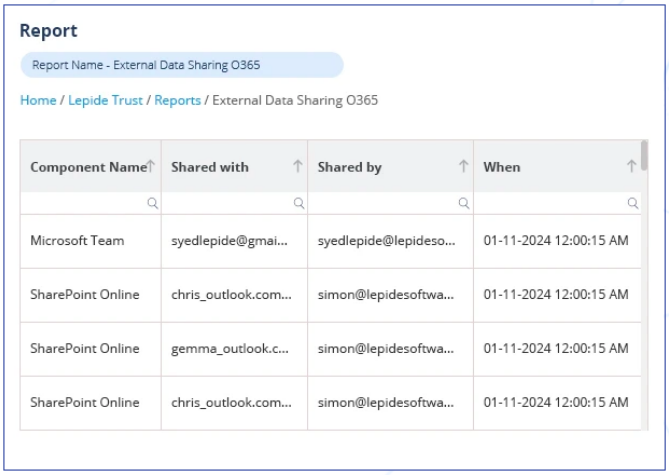


Fig. 3. Report to see when data was shared externally from Lepide site

- **Audit SharePoint data access -** Monitor every file and folder accessed in SharePoint, both on-premises and online. Lepide captures detailed information about user activities, including read, write, modify, and delete operations. Gain complete visibility into data access patterns and swiftly detect any suspicious or unauthorized activity.

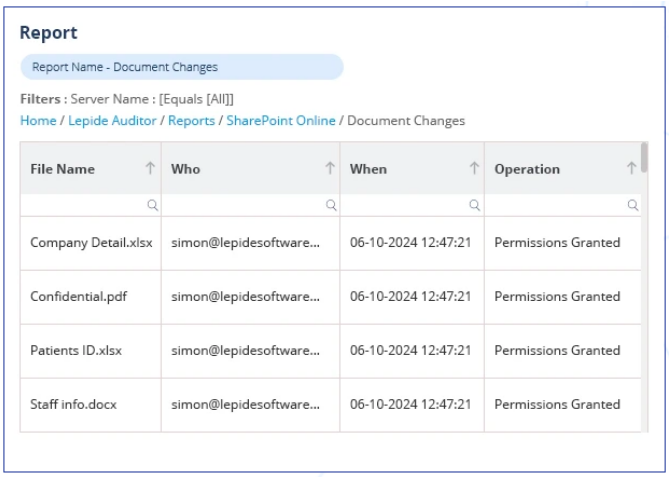


Fig. 4. Report to see when data was accessed from Lepide site

- **Keep track of permission changes** - Maintain a granular record of SharePoint permission changes. Lepide tracks modifications to user permissions, group memberships, and access levels, ensuring you can identify and remediate any unauthorized or inadvertent modifications promptly. Enhance your organization's security posture with accurate and up-to-date permission auditing.

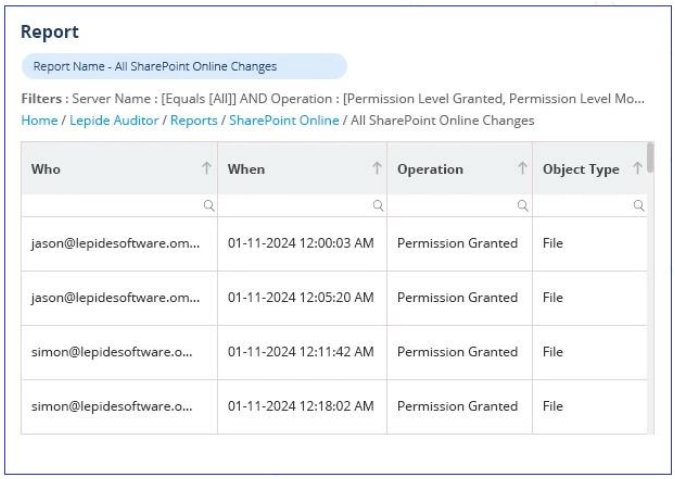


Fig. 5. Report to track permission changes from Lepide site

- **Spot users with excessive permission** - Pinpoint users with excessive access privileges within your SharePoint environment. Lepide identifies users with unnecessary or elevated permissions, helping you proactively reduce the risk of data breaches, unauthorized data manipulation, and insider threats. Strengthen security and maintain a least privilege model effortlessly.

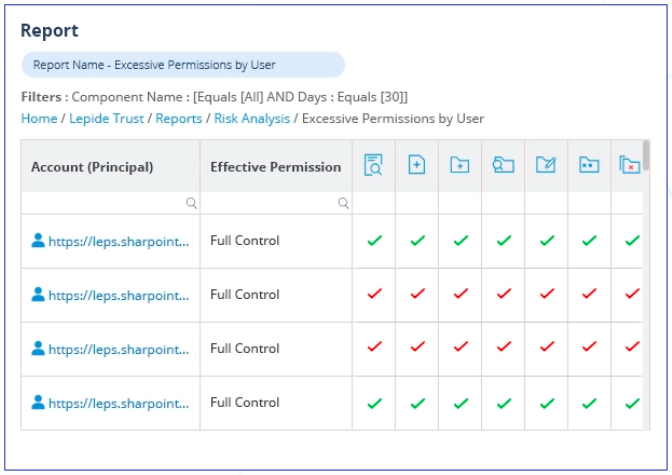


Fig. 6. Report to spot excessive permissions from Lepide site

- **Audit SharePoint configuration changes** - Stay informed about any changes made to your SharePoint configurations. Lepide audits modifications to site settings, list and library settings, web part configurations, and more. Detect and respond to configuration alterations promptly, ensuring the integrity, compliance, and optimal performance of your SharePoint environment.

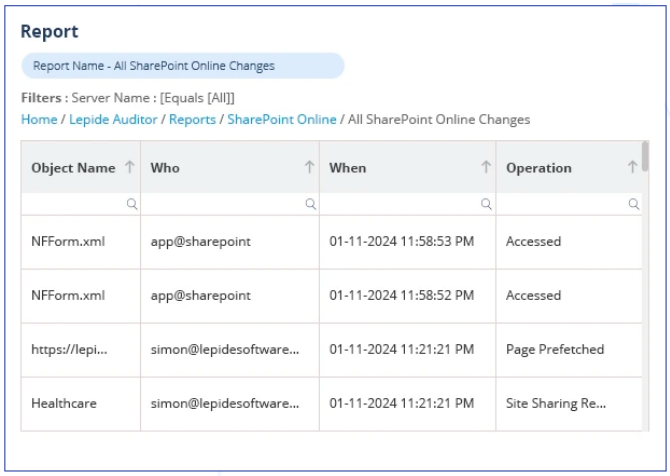


Fig. 7. Report for configuration changes check from Lepide site

- **Display all SharePoint user profile changes** - Keep a detailed log of changes made to SharePoint user profiles. Lepide captures modifications to user attributes, such as display names, email addresses, job titles, and more. Maintain a comprehensive record of profile changes to meet compliance requirements and swiftly respond to any unauthorized alterations.

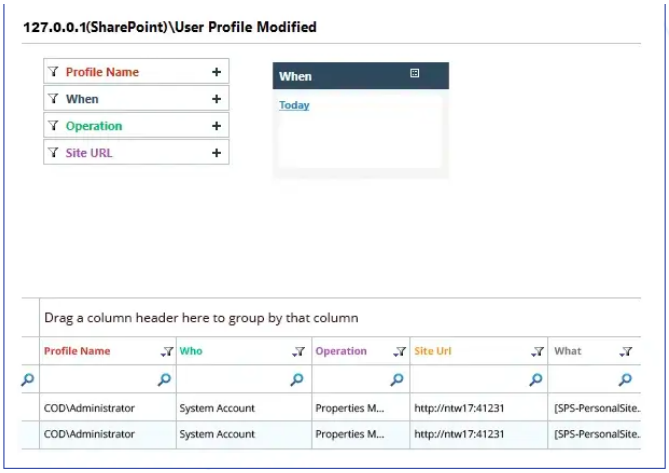


Fig. 8. Report to display SharePoint user profile changes from Lepide site

- **Deliver improved insight when needed** - Lepide offers robust reporting capabilities, providing you with comprehensive insights into SharePoint auditing data. Generate pre-defined reports or create custom reports to address specific compliance mandates and security concerns. Access real-time information, visualize trends, and make informed decisions to enhance your organization's data security posture.

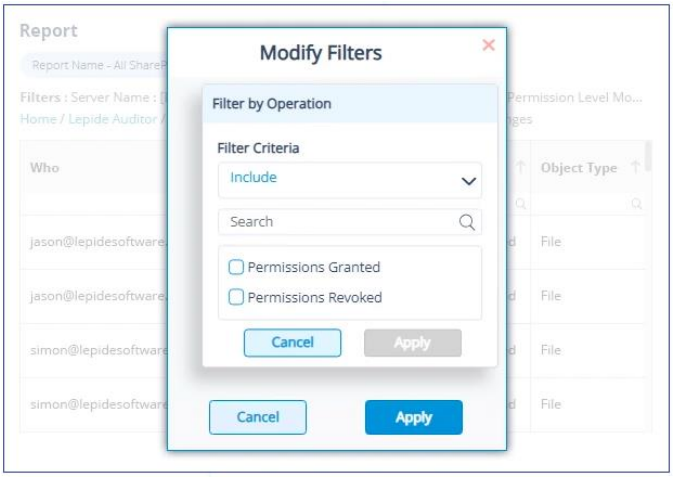


Fig. 9. Report depicting other configurations that can be used for improved insights from Lepide site

- **Audit and report on stale data** - Complete visibility over data within SharePoint Online helps you pinpoint obsolete or neglected files and directories to streamline storage, fortify data governance, and uphold regulatory compliance. Empower your SharePoint ecosystem with actionable insights for seamless data oversight and fortified security measures.

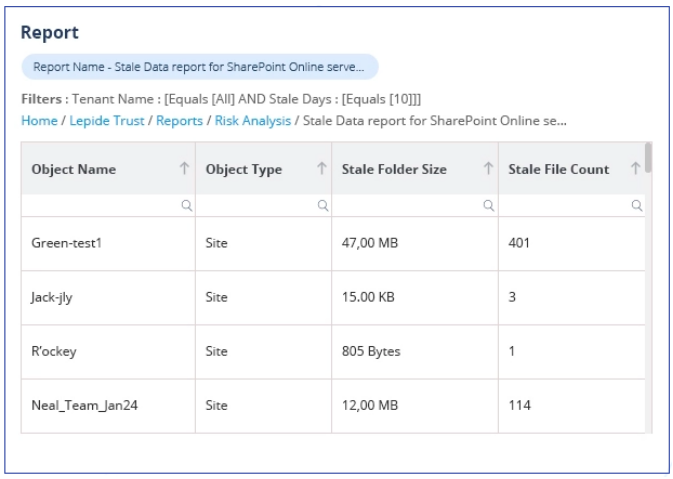


Fig. 10. Report to display SharePoint stale data from Lepide site

V. SHAREPOINT IN EDUCATION

SharePoint has site templates for schools and universities, available via the Microsoft Look Book. The templates bring together news, events, highlighted content, quick links and more. Below are few use cases:

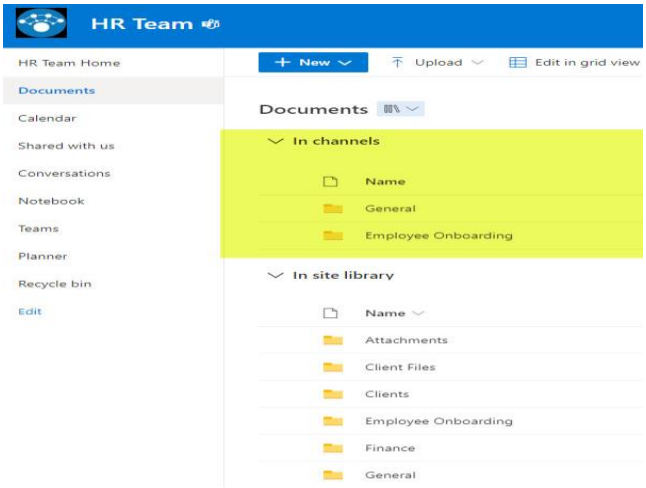
- School home page: a central, institution-wide landing experience for students and staff with the latest school happenings and important resources.
- Staff home page: a dashboard for staff members with time-saving links, documents, and calls-to-action. This template is designed to be used with a Staff team or a Professional Learning Community (PLC) team in Microsoft Teams for Education.

- Class home page: a dashboard for a class with resources, updates, and learning content. This template is designed to be used with a Class team in Microsoft Teams for Education.

VI. SHAREPOINT BACKBONE OF MICROSOFT TEAMS

The primary use of SharePoint often happens in the background when one uses the Microsoft Teams application. When the Teams app became available in 2017, it allowed for persistent chat and video conferencing. However, behind the scenes, Teams is powered by SharePoint. Every time you create a Team in Teams, it creates a new SharePoint site to store documents you store in Teams channels. Every time you create a Private Channel or a Shared Channel, it also creates a new SharePoint site.

Those SharePoint Sites are created with extra hard work to support the activities in Teams. SharePoint sites are where of course, all the "Teams" files and folders are stored; SharePoint sites are where all the Teams recordings are stored. SharePoint site also contains a OneNote Notebook used in Teams for meeting minutes, as well as any lists.



Conclusion: **SharePoint has evolved into a powerful collaboration and document management platform, enabling organizations to streamline workflows, enhance communication, and improve productivity. Its integration with Microsoft 365, security features, and customization options make it a versatile tool for businesses of all sizes. As SharePoint continues to incorporate AI-driven capabilities, automation, and improved user experiences, it remains a key player in digital workplace transformation.**

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