

Changes to SharePoint Online Public Website Feature in Office 365 SKUs

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Overview

Starting January 2015, Microsoft is making changes to the SharePoint Online Public Website feature. Customers who currently use this feature will continue to have access to the feature for a minimum of two years following the changeover date of March 9th, 2015. New customers who subscribe to Office 365 after the changeover date will not have access to this feature. Moving forward, Office 365 customers will have access to 3rd party offerings that will enable them to have a public website that provides a more complete online solution and presence.

Why is Microsoft making this change?

As part of the evolution of the Office 365 service, we periodically evaluate the capabilities of the service to ensure we are delivering the utmost value to customers. After careful consideration, we concluded that when it comes to public websites, Office 365 customers would be better served by 3rd party providers for which public websites are a core competency. Therefore, we've made the difficult decision to discontinue the SharePoint Online Public Website feature so that we can focus our efforts and investments on delivering capabilities in Office 365 that will bring greater value to our customers.

What does this mean for existing customers of Office 365 plans?

The SharePoint Online Public Websites feature is currently used primarily by a small percentage of our Office 365 customers for their own external-facing websites. Office 365 customers who currently use the SharePoint Online Public Website feature will continue to have access to the feature for a minimum of two years following the changeover date of March 9th, 2015. Moving forward, customers will have the option to subscribe to 3rd party solutions for public website functionality. Customers will need to plan to move to a 3rd party solution within the next two years.

How will this change be communicated to Office 365 customers?

All Office 365 administrators who have provisioned SharePoint Online will receive a notification in the Office 365 Message Center. This message will point to a Knowledge Base article detailing the change.

What does this mean for new customers of Office 365 plans?

As of the changeover date of March 9th, 2015, Microsoft will no longer be offering the SharePoint Online Public Website feature to new customers. New customers who subscribe to Office 365 after the changeover date will not have access to

this feature. Moving forward, Office 365 customers will have the option to subscribe to industry-leading solutions via links from Office 365¹.

Overview of 3rd party offerings

What is the 3rd party solution offering?

Office 365 customers will have access to tools and services provided directly from leading partners in the public website industry for building and managing an online presence. These offerings will be available to all Office 365 customers² but are designed specifically to improve the experience for small and medium sized businesses who need either a basic online presence or a complete web experience.

Who will be providing the 3rd party offerings?

Specific partner availability may vary over time and by market. For more information, see the following Microsoft website: [Website hosting partners for Office 365](#)

How does the new 3rd party solution offering compare to existing SharePoint Online Public Sites?

The existing SharePoint Online Public Website feature was designed for customers who needed only a basic online presence. These new solutions will provide more robust tools and solutions needed for delivering, supporting and managing a more complete online presence.

Will there be other options available in the future?

As part of the evolution of the Office 365 service, we will continue to evaluate the capabilities of the service and other 3rd party options to ensure we are delivering the utmost value to our customers.

Where can I learn more about these 3rd party solutions, their experience and capabilities?

Additional information regarding the 3rd party solutions will be available directly from the providing partner. Links will be provided in the Office 365 experience and will direct Office 365 customers to external websites where they will see the special offers for Office 365 customers. These websites are managed by the partner and will provide details regarding their solution, the experience and capabilities.

What discounts or incentives are provided with these offerings for Office 365 customers?

The specific offer details will vary by partner and market. Customers will see the offer details when they follow the links provided in Office 365.

Will I get these discounts even with my trial tenant?

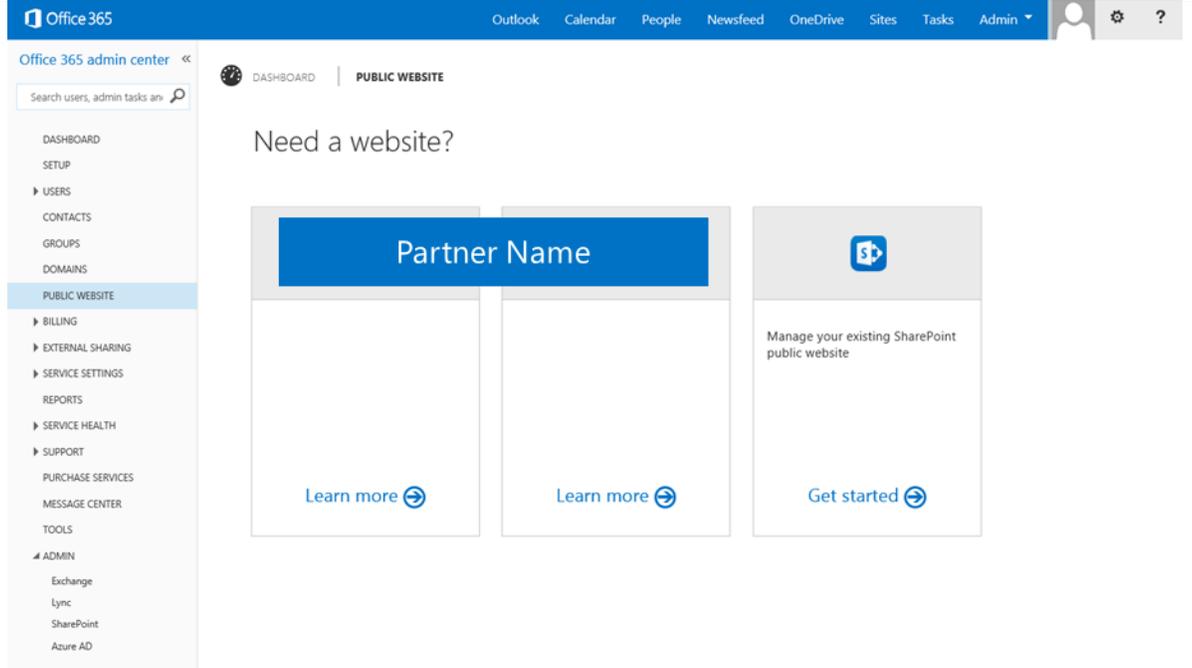
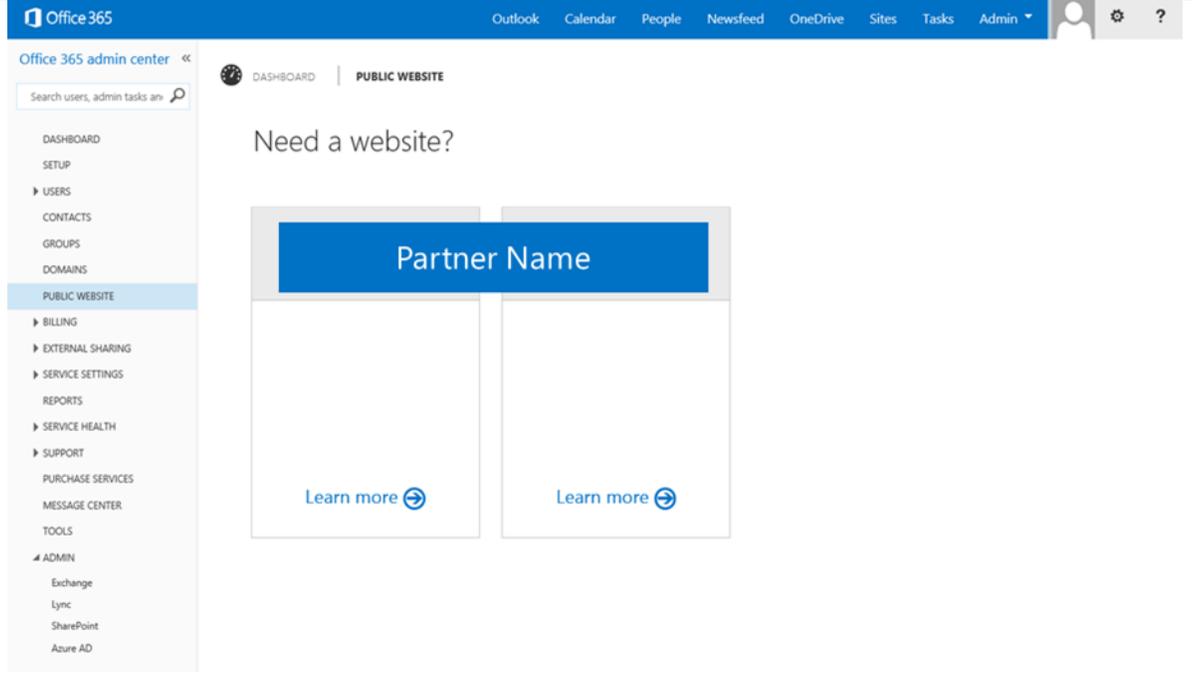
Specific offers and discounts are available to all Office 365 customers, including those using a trial subscription. Offer terms and details will vary by partner and market.

Will these solutions be integrated within the Office 365 experience?

Links will be made available within the Office 365 experience for accessing the 3rd party solutions. These links will direct Office 365 customers to external managed websites and processes for accessing, managing and setting up a public website. This experience is designed and managed by the providing partner and is separate from the Office 365 experience. Two in-product screen shots are provided below to showcase the Office 365 experience and level of integration for tenants with and without the SharePoint Online Public Website feature.

¹ Our Syndication partners may choose to offer different packages to their customers.

² Feature availability varies by SKU and Office 365 service type.

<p>Tenants with the SharePoint Online Public Website Feature</p>	
<p>New Tenants without the SharePoint Online Public Website Feature</p>	

Will Microsoft provide training content or documentation for these new offerings?

No. Content and documentation regarding these new offerings will be owned and managed by the 3rd party solution providers. However, Microsoft is committed to ensuring a seamless and complete experience for Office 365 customers and will continue to monitor and address any gaps as needed.

When will the links to these solutions be available in my tenant?

General availability will start in January 2015 and will follow a rolling release process. Therefore, specific availability and timing will vary by market and geography.

What countries and languages will be available at launch?

At launch, most of the Office 365 customer base and underlying markets will be supported. For more information, see the following Microsoft website: [Website hosting partners for Office 365](#)

Who do I contact for support related to the 3rd party solutions?

Support is provided by the 3rd party solution provider and can be accessed following the partner's existing support contact information. Please review your selected partner's support page for contact details.

Implications for new customers

Will the price for the impacted Office 365 offers be reduced?

No. This change is aligned with our commitment to delivering a superior productivity experience in Office 365 and will not impact the pricing of Office 365. The 3rd party solutions will be offered with discounted rates for Office 365 customers, where available.

Can I use other Website hosting service providers or do I have to use the 3rd party solution provider that Microsoft provides links for?

Customers can use any website hosting service and are not limited to the 3rd party solutions provided in Office 365. The 3rd party solutions available via Office 365 will be offered with discounted rates for Office 365 customers, where available.

Implications for existing customers

What do the new 3rd party offerings mean for customers who already have SharePoint Online Public Websites?

Office 365 customers who currently use the SharePoint Online Public Website feature will continue to have access to the feature for a minimum of two years following the changeover date of March 9th, 2015. Moving forward, customers will need to plan to move to one of the 3rd party solutions offered or a different solution of their choice.

How does a customer make their SharePoint Online Public Website available?

Customers who want to activate their SharePoint Online Public Website or would prefer to maintain access to the feature for two years following the changeover date must meet the following criteria. The customer has a SharePoint Online Subscription and the customer has signed up and logged into the services as the admin user.

What is our guidance to customers who already have SharePoint Online Public Websites?

Customers can continue to use and develop their existing sites for a minimum of two years following the changeover date of March 9th, 2015. But during that timeframe, existing customers will also need to plan to move to one of the 3rd party solutions offered or a different solution of their choice³.

When will the existing SharePoint Online Public Websites be retired?

Microsoft will support SharePoint Online Public Websites for customers who already have them for a minimum of two years following the changeover date of March 9th, 2015. Following our policy about significant service changes, we provide at least one year of notice before we make any significant changes to the Office 365 service.

I am using existing SharePoint Online Public Websites. How do I switch to one of the new 3rd party solutions?

Microsoft will provide guidance to assist with content and data migration to the new 3rd party solutions. This will be made available following the changeover date.

Will customers or end users lose any content while making the transition?

³ Our Syndication partners may choose to offer different packages to their customers.

All content and data migration is currently a manual process to be completed by the customer. To avoid disruption and data loss, customers should back-up all content and data from the SharePoint Online Public Website before switching to any new solution or service. This will minimize potential disruptions and business impacts.

Will existing customers see price changes after these changes?

This change is aligned with our commitment to delivering a superior productivity experience in Office 365 and will not impact the pricing of Office 365. The 3rd party solutions will be offered with discounted rates.

I have a subscription to Office 365 but have not activated SharePoint Online yet. Will I still have access to SharePoint Online Public Websites after this change?

No. In order to be considered an existing user of the SharePoint Online Public Website feature and maintain access for two years following the changeover date of March 9th, 2015, **you will need to activate your SharePoint Online subscription** by the changeover date.

Partner Guidance

What do these announcements mean for my existing Office 365 sales process?

This change will impact the messaging and value proposition you communicate to existing and potential customers about setting up and managing an online presence in Office 365 using the SharePoint Online Public Website feature. You'll need to update messaging to highlight the ability to integrate with 3rd party website solutions.

How does this work with my existing partner incentives and payments?

There is no impact to existing partner incentives and payments.

Is Microsoft notifying customers directly?

As with any change that significantly impacts the Office 365 environment, this change (the availability of a new functionality and the potential impact to existing customers) will be communicated by using the Office 365 Message Center. The Message Center was designed to inform Office 365 admins about new features and actions they need to take to keep their Office 365 service running smoothly. This in-product notification will be augmented by traditional communication channels to ensure customers and partners are aware of the change.

Where can I find assets to help me learn about the new 3rd party offerings and how to sell them?

This change will be integrated over time into existing and new sales and marketing assets provided by Microsoft. These assets can be found in traditional partner support and sales enablement sites, including Ready-to-Go and other Microsoft Partner Support sites.

I was working on a proposal for a customer that depended on SharePoint Online Public Websites. What should I do now?

While SharePoint Online Public Websites will no longer be applicable for your proposal, similar configuration, customization and maintenance opportunities exist with the other providers. We recommend evaluating these solutions as part of your proposal for the customers and helping the customer with additional configuration, customization and maintenance of the solution they create with the 3rd party website provider.

Partner FAQ

Why is there so little lead time between the announcement and the retiring of the service for new customers?

Existing customers who have invested in a public site should not see any short-term impact from this announcement, as we will support existing Public Websites for a minimum of two years. Now that we have made the decision to retire the SharePoint Online Public Website feature, we want to ensure that new customers who want this capability invest in one of the new richer solutions rather than building a public site on the Office 365 service.

This change removes a key feature from SharePoint, especially for small businesses who are looking for a one-stop-shop experience. Is Microsoft lowering the price for the various offers accordingly?

No. We periodically evaluate the prices of Office 365 plans, but do not usually adjust the price down when we remove a capability nor up when we add features, which happens much more frequently. The partnerships established with leading web hosting providers are designed to provide a superior experience and maximum value to existing and new Office 365 customers. Additionally, these industry leading partners will be providing discounted rates to Office 365 customers.

With the introduction of OneDrive for Business and the removal of the Public Site capability, is there enough value left in SharePoint to attract SMB customers?

SharePoint remains a robust and valuable service for customers of all sizes and types. It continues to provide a flexible platform for collaboration, document storage, team sites, and much more. The change to the SharePoint Online Public Website feature, the introduction of OneDrive for Business, and our continued innovation related to Office 365 follows our commitment to delivering a world class productivity experience, optimizing for the customer, and responding to market opportunities. And, of course, most customers who use SharePoint online are also taking advantage of one or more additional Office 365 services.

This will cause migration efforts for existing customers. Is Microsoft compensating for these efforts?

No, Microsoft is not planning to compensate customer for migration related expenses. It is important to note that existing Office 365 customers who currently use the SharePoint Online Public Website feature will continue to have access to the feature for a minimum of two years following the change and a transition decision by a customer may provide a valuable opportunity for partners to aid their customer base with migration support.

What migration options are available to these 3rd party offerings?

Microsoft is not currently providing migration solutions for Office 365 customers who use the SharePoint Online Public Website feature. However, guidance will be provided to aid in content and data migration to the new 3rd party solutions. The guidance will be available following the changeover date.

Will this change cause customers to abandon Office 365?

We certainly don't expect so. Customers use Office 365 for a wide variety of business needs, and typically use many different aspects of the service, including Exchange, Yammer, SharePoint, Lync, and, of course, Office itself. Relatively few of our customers use the Public Website capability today, and for those customers who do, we are offering 2 years of continued service with no need for changes. Even within the SharePoint component of Office 365, customers draw value from many capabilities beyond public websites, such as collaboration, content management, and team sites. While we never like removing a capability, ultimately this change allows us to prioritize and accelerate other features we want to bring to Office 365.

Does this change to the SharePoint Online Public Website feature also mean Microsoft will be deprecating Website Content Management capabilities in future SharePoint Server releases and updates?

No. There is currently no planned changes to the Website Content Management capabilities in SharePoint Server.