



White Paper

Key Considerations for using Search in SharePoint Online

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Switching to SharePoint Online? Here's what you need to know about using SharePoint Online's Search features.

You may recall, in our last white paper of the series we covered SharePoint's Web Content Management features. Now, let's look at a few noteworthy improvements of SharePoint Online's Search capability.



Yes, SharePoint Online will help you create, manage, store, deploy and search your content, but will it cover everything you're accustomed to and meet your growing needs? We're happy to share some information here that will help you make an

informed decision to go with SharePoint Online or start your search for other options. Read ahead for more facts and features.

Overall Search improvements introduced in SharePoint Online:

- Search user interface improvements
- Relevance improvements
- Discovering structure and entities in unstructured content
- More flexible search schema
- Search health reports
- New search architecture
- Changes in crawling

Here we'll discuss some SharePoint Online features that relate to its Search functionality specifically. We'll explain SharePoint Online's out-of-the-box features. We'll also share what features it is lacking and some "work-arounds" to fill in the gaps to meet your company's needs.

Continuous Crawl

(Limited availability in SharePoint Online)

In SharePoint 2010, we had Full crawl and Incremental Crawl, both resulted in a less than up-to-date search index. To

overcome this limitation, SharePoint Server 2013 introduced a new way of crawling the content, Continuous Crawl. Continuous



Crawl eliminates the need to schedule incremental crawls and automatically starts crawls as necessary to keep the search index fresh. Continuous Crawl improves user experience because it brings in results much faster, boosting productivity. One

snag for Continuous Crawl is a crawl can only be used for content hosted on SharePoint sites. This means it can cause a strain on system resources depending on how often content is changed within those sites.

Event-based Relevancy

(Available in SharePoint Online)

The search system in SharePoint determines the relevance of search results in a few different ways. For example, relevant



results are based on how content is connected, how often an item appears in search results and which search results people click most often. The analytics component of SharePoint tracks, analyzes

and reports this information and uses it to continuously improve relevance, or SEO.

Graphical Refiners

(Available in SharePoint Online)



The new graphical search refiners in SharePoint can offer a more visual way of filtering search results. For example, a date-based refiner set to sort by "Modified Date" can be very easy to use if the

returned dates are shown as a graphic, or a picture, instead of just text.

Result Sources

(Limited availability in SharePoint Online)

Users can create a result source to some degree in SharePoint Online to specify a location where search results will come from



and to specify the protocol for getting those results. Result sources replace scopes and federated locations. It lets you create your own result sources, or use the predefined result sources. After you create a result source, you can configure Search Web Parts and query-rule actions to customize and use it.

Search Connector Framework

(Not available in SharePoint Online)

Because this feature does not come out-of-the box in SharePoint Online, there are some default connectors preinstalled in SharePoint Server 2013, which you can use as a work-around to crawl and index content. To create crawling content that requires a non-default connector, SharePoint allows users to purchase and plug in third-party connectors.



As you can see, there are still ways to accomplish the purpose of several missing features by integrating SharePoint Online with SharePoint 2013. We encourage you to weigh the options and requirements for switching to SharePoint Online carefully, so you can make the best decision for your company goals and initiatives.



About the Authors

Aseem Pandit, Practice Manager and Solutions Architect at AgreeYa Solutions: Aseem has over 15 years of experience in the software world and is passionate about helping organizations design and build solutions to address their business needs. He has worked with numerous customers across the globe, and has experience with multiple technologies and frameworks around Open Source, J2EE, Oracle and Microsoft, most recently focusing on Microsoft technologies with SharePoint, BI and BPM. Aseem loves to talk about technology and is always eager to learn more and share his knowledge with others.

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