



SharePoint Governance

By
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Geek and SharePoint MVP, Benjamin has been around the globe helping people reach their goals by simplifying SharePoint. As a Certified Trainer for well over 6 years, he has become very comfortable training and sharing his experiences. But first of all, Benjamin is just a Geek. In love with SharePoint since the beginning of the 2007 version up to now amidst the cool new features in SharePoint 2013.

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INTRODUCTION

The buzz word, SharePoint Governance, sure has become bigger than it actually has to be. It can almost be compared to the burden of carrying the ring in Lord of the Rings if it is assigned to you. When starting your SharePoint project, you keep hearing about how having **a SharePoint Governance Plan is crucial for success**, but no one tells you how to build it. Granted, Microsoft has released a lot more help on the matter than back with SharePoint 2007, but I think it's important to have a real world example and explanations rather than just templates. I decided to write this ebook to help you build this SharePoint Governance Plan without over complicating things.

REAL WORLD GOVERNANCE



REAL WORLD GOVERNANCE

What is a SharePoint Governance Plan and who writes it?

Let's get some definitions out of the way. If we want to build a Governance Plan, we first need to understand what it is exactly and what purpose it serves. When I start my document, after the title and main presentation page, the first thing you will see is a summary and the objectives of the plan I am writing. Essentially, the summary is the definition of a Governance Plan:

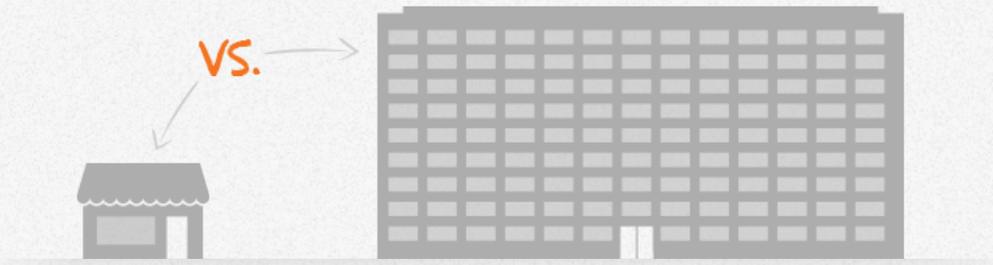
The SharePoint Governance Plan is a guidebook outlining the administration, maintenance, and support of X Corporation's SharePoint environments. It identifies lines of ownership for both business and technical teams, defining who is responsible for what areas of the system. Furthermore it establishes rules for appropriate usage of the SharePoint environments.

Recognize the text? It comes from Microsoft's sample Governance Plan but is a great way to start off ours as well.

But then, who should be in charge of writing this important document? The question I am often asked is "Should it be done by the Business or by IT?" and my answer is simple. It should be done by whomever is most knowledgeable on the SharePoint Platform and in most cases, that's IT.



SharePoint Governance will vary based on company maturity



Back in the days of SharePoint 2010, I had written an article on [SharePoint Governance](#) that can help you get a head start. The article stresses how important it is to build a plan, but that it doesn't have to be a complicated one for it to be successful.

We've established that a SharePoint Governance can be made out to be very complicated or as we saw in my article above, simple. The thing is, this will vary based on the company's maturity with SharePoint, and often its size. Larger enterprises will not have the same needs as a smaller or medium-sized company.

Therefore, you need to take this into consideration while you read this ebook, not everything will apply to you. The goal of this ebook is to help you get started with your SharePoint Project and setting up a Governance plan to help make it a success.

The famous « We want to Collaborate » at the beginning of the project



In an ideal world, you know exactly what SharePoint does and what you plan to do with it. Whether it is to build an Intranet with the Publishing Feature or Team Sites to facilitate collaboration with very specific goals. Unfortunately, it often isn't what we are facing when talking to either our customers or management.

Here is what I hear sometimes: « *We want to collaborate and we already have SharePoint licenses* » and with Office 365 this is becoming even more of a reality. The problem in this case is that, we do not even know how SharePoint is actually going to be used and it is therefore almost impossible to build a Plan that will Govern this platform.

You need to know what you plan to do with SharePoint.

Again, this ebook is meant to be as close to Real World as possible by sharing some of my experiences. And as you probably have already been thinking, it is hard to tell the person hiring you to go back and do his homework on SharePoint and know which specific business need they intend to solve with the platform. You should, of course insist on helping them figuring this out. After all, that's why you are in charge of this, but it is not always that simple.

What I recommend to those wanting to « collaborate » using SharePoint as a platform is to start with a Team Sites deployment. This should help them get familiarized with SharePoint and available features to perhaps eventually build more. However, when you do start this way, there is an even higher probability that they will keep coming back with « changes » as they realize what can be done. And this leads me to the purpose of this ebook, you will need a Governance Plan and with it, a Governance Committee.

***Note:** *When I say deploying Team Sites, it does not necessarily mean the Team Site Template*

In this ebook, I will assume the company wants to deploy « Team Sites » to « Collaborate ». Vague isn't it? Then again, I did say this would be Real World example. **grins**

Start a SharePoint Governance Plan by defining Roles and Responsibilities

Yes, before you even start building a Governance Committee, start by identifying Roles and Responsibilities for your SharePoint project. Identifying Roles and Responsibilities helps set boundaries and responsibilities to each and everyone in the SharePoint Project. In all honesty, it is a little political, but I guess that's how it works.

It's important to define these, even if you do not have anyone yet assigned to that role, here are some examples.

The Governance Committee: This is probably the most important role on the list. And it's not about it being difficult or harder to do, it's really about backing you and the SharePoint team from the inevitable politics that will be played in the future.

Let's take a break for a second and fast forward three months into the project after you or your superior presented the first pilot showcasing cool things that could be done. Without them really being ready of course. What's next? People in other business units start demanding features and asking for things not in the roadmap. Of course, initially you say no and explain that your team does not have the velocity right now to deliver what they need to and add these changes. The thing is, they then go to their superior, the VP of « enter a department name here » and suddenly you need to do it. Unfortunately, this becomes a routine until the SharePoint team is stuck in an endless cycle of never finishing or releasing anything. And SharePoint becomes disliked by the organization.

The Governance Committee is there to back you up and protect you against this. We don't ever actually say it's a purpose of the committee and of course it's not the only one, but it is an important reason to have it.

Because now, that person that wanted new features will see their superior or VP, which will be part of the Governance Committee that makes decisions on:

- Features in the Roadmap
- Evaluating the objectives
- Defining Rules and Processes
- Assigning roles and responsibilities
- Producing a report for the Management Committee

This Governance Committee meets only every quarter or every 6 months depending on the organization, to evaluate any requests for changes, new features, etc... That means that our friend will be told by his superior or VP the same thing we would have told him.

The first time you build the Governance Plan, there will not be a Governance Committee formed just yet, but the role and its' responsibilities will be defined within it. Perhaps even a few members might already be identified as well. But it all really comes together once you finish the first draft of this evolving document. They will meet, knowing the overall organization's direction for the next couple of months, which allows them to make better decisions on how SharePoint should be used and what should be done with it based on these priority.

It goes without saying that your Governance Committee should consist of higher management. But again, it will vary based on the organization. If you make a committee who's decisions can be overthrown by almost anyone in the organization then don't bother at all.

***Edited:** *The Committee isn't just made up of higher management. Essentially, you want someone to be able to present the Plan and the reasoning behind some of the propositions as well as being able to estimate the feasibility and effort required to do something. You will then need people with decision power, to make a decision on requests that have been made or changes needed since the last meeting.*

Other Roles and Responsibilities: There are obviously going to be many other roles and responsibilities to define in your SharePoint Governance Plan. The best thing to do is to create an easy to manage table with three columns.

- Roles
- Responsibilities
- Names

Even if you do not yet know whom will be assigned to each role, it is still crucial for you to name the role and what its' responsibilities are. Here is an example:

Roles	Responsibilities	Name(s)
Governance Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign SharePoint roles and responsibilities in the organization • Evaluate objectives • Define rules and processes • Produce report for Management • Committee 	
Server Farm Administrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Server - SharePoint - SQL • Maintenance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Software • Hardware 	
Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Central Administration - Content Database - Service Application - Web Application - Site Collection - Backup and Restore Copy - Monitoring - Operating System 	

Roles	Responsibilities	Name(s)
Taxonomist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan and design information systems and company's taxonomy Propose types of content for management of information 	
Governance Compliance Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure compliance with governance 	
User Helpdesk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide first-level support to SharePoint users Open incidents for development team or operations team 	
Development Team Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Handle requests submitted by the company Act as Business Analyst for the analysis of the company's SharePoint requests Support developers and analysts Provide level-3 support 	
Developer / Analyst	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide solution estimate Design, develop and maintain SharePoint platform requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Web Part Site template Company brand image Functionality Custom application Other Provide level-3 support 	
Site Designer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage the design of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sites and Sub-sites List and libraries Pages Web Part CSS JavaScript Interface Provide support Train and assist site owners Work within governance guidelines and best practices 	
Site Owner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and manage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub-sites List and libraries Security 	
Trainer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create training plans Implement all appropriate training 	

Remember, this is just an example and depending on your organization the roles may be different.

But do not try to create roles based on who you have in the team! A common mistake is to create the roles for our existing SharePoint team, instead of creating the roles the organization needs for SharePoint.

Remember, even if you do not have someone for Training does not mean there should not be a « Trainer » role in your Governance Plan. It may simply not be assigned to someone yet or the same two or three members will be assigned to multiple roles, until someone else fills the spot.

Demystifying the SharePoint Governance Plan

I hope this introduction helps you start building your own, but also helps understand what and why we are actually doing. The templates you will find on the internet are great, but if you do not understand them then it they might not be so useful. My goal is to show you that you can make your own Governance Plan without it being difficult. Here's an overlook of this ebook:

- Logical Architecture
- Site Request
- Site Templates
- Site Management and Control
- Site Templates definition
- Site Retention and Deletion policies
- User Agreement
- Security Management
- General Guidelines
- Social Policies
- Multilingual Policies
- Support Model
- Working Environments
- Object Naming Conventions
- Backup Schedule
- Communication and Training Plan

As you can see we still have a lot to cover, but hopefully once it is done it will no longer feel like you are carrying the burden that is...SharePoint Governance.

LOGICAL ARCHITECTURE



INTRANET

WIKI

BLOG

LOGICAL ARCHITECTURE

In a SharePoint Governance Plan, it's easy to get carried away and build a 500 pages document that no one will ever look at. Don't worry, most of us went through this already in the past. That's why I decided to write this Sharepoint Governance ebook, to show you that it can be achieved and that it does not necessarily need to be complicated.

Remember one thing though, it does not have to be a Word or PDF document. In fact, due to the nature of this ever evolving document... In some cases, it makes even more sense to build it as a Wiki. The goal of a Governance Plan is to be accessible and most of all, read. Therefore, always choose the medium in which it is most likely to be consumed.

What is a logical architecture? And why do we need one for SharePoint?



The same reason you build a physical architecture of your servers before actually rolling out your infrastructure, you'll need one for the logical objects that make up your SharePoint. One of the main reasons we build a SharePoint Governance Plan, is to set policies and rules on how to use and interact with the SharePoint Platform. And as we build this, it'll be a lot easier to assign these policies to things in SharePoint we have already « logically » grouped.

In my own words, the logical architecture is where I group things that will share settings, configurations and policies in my SharePoint at a high level.

You need to know where you're going with SharePoint. We can expect things to change in the future, so it's important not to drill down into details in this architecture too much. For example, I usually stay at the Web Application level and sometimes go as far as defining some Site Collections in it as well when mapping it out.

Organize your architecture to help future Governance rules



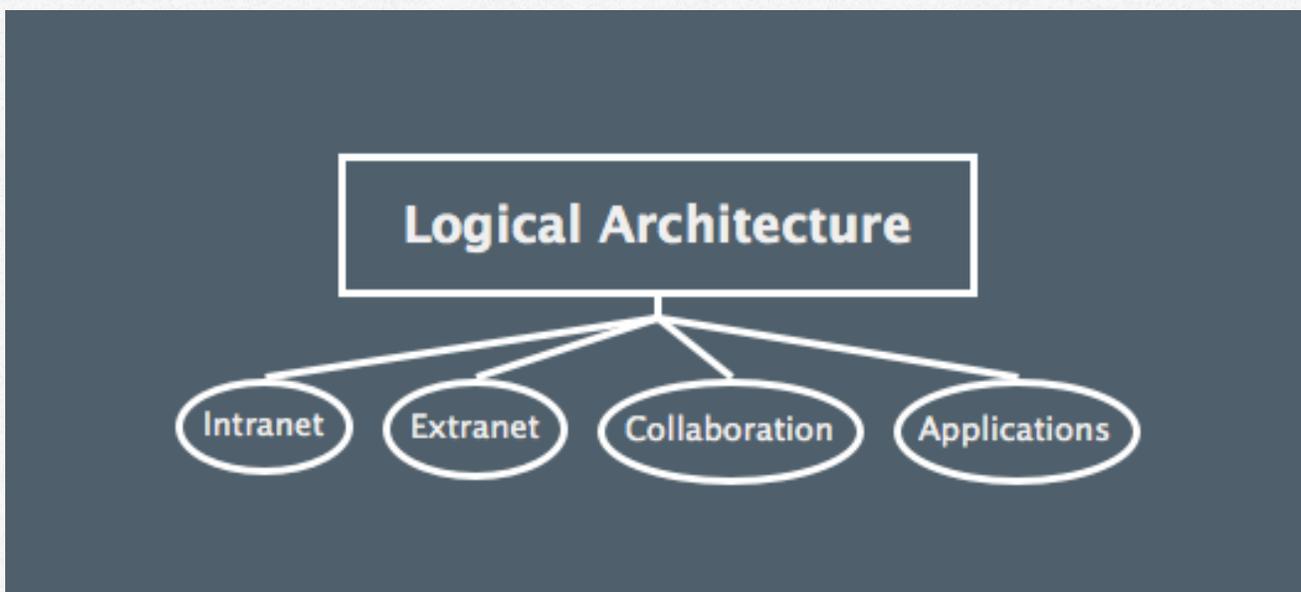
As mentioned, we're here to build a SharePoint Governance Plan that will actually be useful, but most importantly...read. Our ultimate goal, is to help people like our Power Users situate themselves and know what they can or cannot do in our SharePoint Platform. For example, if they know they need a site to manage a community for a charity at the office. Then the Governance Plan would help them know exactly in which Web Application this would go as well as possibly which Site Collection, depending on the scenario. Once in this « logically organized location » a set of policies, rules and settings would apply. On the other hand, it would also help us know what to give this person based on the needs. We then look to see in which tower does the user's needs fit best. This will become clearer as we continue building our Logical Architecture as well as our entire Governance Plan.

Think of our logical architecture as the creation of « groups », « silos » or « towers ». Here at the office we have called them towers since I can remember, so that's what I'll use. We will create these towers to organize what we know will be managed similarly in our SharePoint. Here are some common examples:

- Intranet
- My Site
- Extranet
- Internet
- Collaboration
- Project
- Applications
- Search

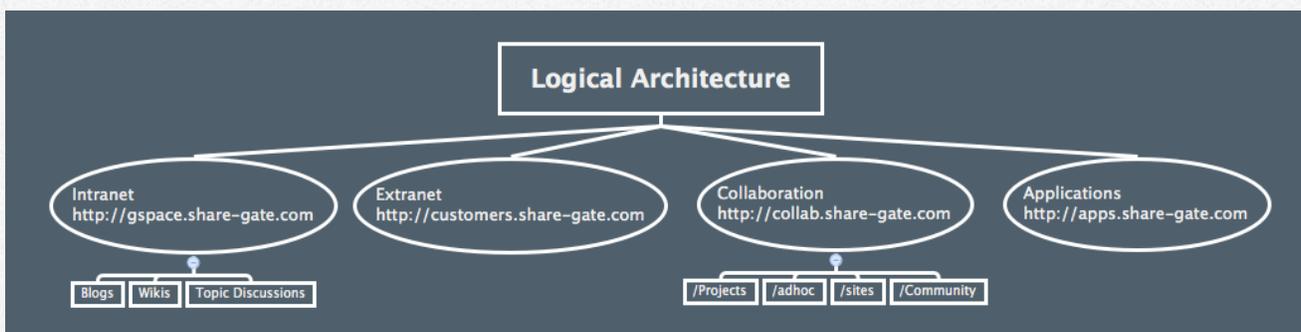
Depending on what you are trying to accomplish with SharePoint, some of these may or may not be needed. You could even have some very different ones there. Most of them are self explanatory, I will need a Tower for everything « Intranet » or everything « Collaboration » and put my Web Application(s) within these towers. In many cases, I like to create one for what I call « Applications », which represents any sites that will need custom development in it.

I think you get the idea, if I think I will need to configure a different set of rules, policies and settings for something, I look to see if it can fit with another and put it in a « Tower ». Otherwise, I create a new Tower. Don't confuse a Logical Architecture with an Information Architecture either, this is not where we will be identifying Content Types and navigation for our sites. It just makes it a lot easier later on as we build this SharePoint Governance Plan. Here is what it can look like when we begin:



As we continue our Governance Plan, we will define things like « Site Templates », « Retention Policies », « Site Management » and many other things. I usually keep coming back to my logical architecture to update my towers with some of these things we will define. For example, if we later on decide that we will have 6 different Site Templates and that two of them will be for Collaboration and will come with 100GB Site Quotas; I will take these two and put them in the appropriate « Tower ». This way, when I am closer to the finished SharePoint Governance Plan, I can quickly gander at the Logical Architecture and know what in entails.

Over time, you will see your logical architecture grow into something a little more detailed:



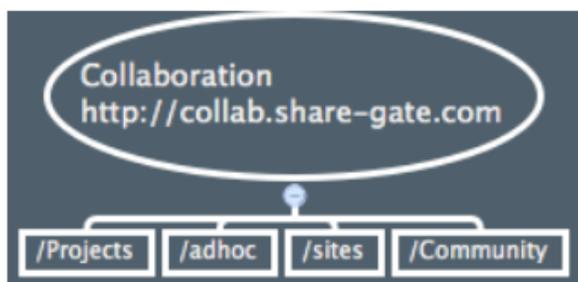
It's a great way to get a quick overview of your logical architecture and how things relate to each other as well as what paths you are using. Anyone opening or viewing the Governance Plan will see right away what your SharePoint looks like. In my actual plan, I tend to expand each « Tower » and write a summary for it. The diagram is very useful of course, but we still need a little more information than that. I find it very useful for my users to be able to « select » one of the towers and get a summary of the rest of the Governance Plan, but applied for this particular tower. Say my Power User or Administrator looks into the Collaboration Tower, the diagram will show him a quick overview and the summary will quickly tell him the policies, rules and settings that automatically apply to this.

Tower Example - Collaboration

Summary

- Collaboration Sites will be used to support content creation in different business units or teams as well as to help them collaborate with each other and share content for the organization.
- In SharePoint 2013, collaboration will be helped by using tools like Lists, Libraries, Wikis, Tagging, Basic Workflows and User Profile information.
- These collaboration sites should be the starting point for content creation and will then be published to where it needs to be
- Depending on the type of collaboration sites different life cycles and policies will apply

Hierarchy



Life Cycle

- **Template 1 (Projects):** As long as the project is still going on
- **Template 2 (Collab/Sites):** Defined with owner when site is created
- **Template 3 (AdHoc):** 2 Months
- **Template 4 (Community):** As long as that community lives

Building your SharePoint Logical Architecture for Governance

VISIO IS YOUR FRIEND



Personally, my favorite tool to build this is [Visio](#), nothing beats Visio when it comes to Technical diagrams in my opinion. However, there are other tools out there like XMind and Mind Manager to help you build it. What's important is that you can easily create and manage these « Towers » we've built to organize our SharePoint's logical architecture.

And take it one step at a time, there is no need for you to overthink or put too much details into the logical architecture on day one. Things will change as you build this Governance Plan and even after that, I guarantee it. You might split Collaboration into Ad-Hoc and Project alongside one called Community. But thankfully, you'll have a [SharePoint Governance Committee](#) to make sure you don't build all of them at once. I won't lie though, you do need to know SharePoint to be able to successfully complete this step of the Governance Plan. It would be almost impossible to properly split objects into « Towers » if you do not know the impact it will have in the future. You need to know what a Web Application is and what kind of settings can be applied at what level in SharePoint.

SITE REQUEST FORMS



SITE REQUEST FORMS

Designing Site Requests in your SharePoint Governance Plan

Probably my favorite part of building the SharePoint Governance Plan, designing how Site Requests will be handled. It simply touches the geek in me, which is why I love it so much. This process, though simple to the user must be well thought out prior by us, building this plan. Remember, we're on a quest to **Build a SharePoint Governance Plan**, but without the headaches and complexity we are often told to include.

And I can never stress this enough, a SharePoint Governance Plan does not need to be a Word or PDF document. It can just as easily be an Enterprise Wiki built as you move along with the project linking the pages together. In my experience, it is often been a waste of time to try and build it all secretly and come out months later with a 300 pages document.

Why do we need to manage SharePoint Site Requests through our Governance?

Let's pretend your SharePoint is ready to go live, you have a few Site Templates available depending on what your colleagues plan to do with SharePoint. We'll cover Site Templates in the next part, but for now just bare with me. Your Site Templates may include different Retention Rules and/or policies as well as back up and many other options that will vary. Obviously, these people asking for a SharePoint Site don't know about your templates nor do they know the difference between Site Collections, Sites and Pages. What they do know and what they will ask is what they plan to use it for and that it's called a SharePoint Site or a Team Site. Remember, just because they call it a Team Site doesn't mean they should receive a Team Site Template. Communication and a good understanding of the needs behind the request is what's important here.

Our goal is to deliver them the right type of SharePoint Site based on their needs.

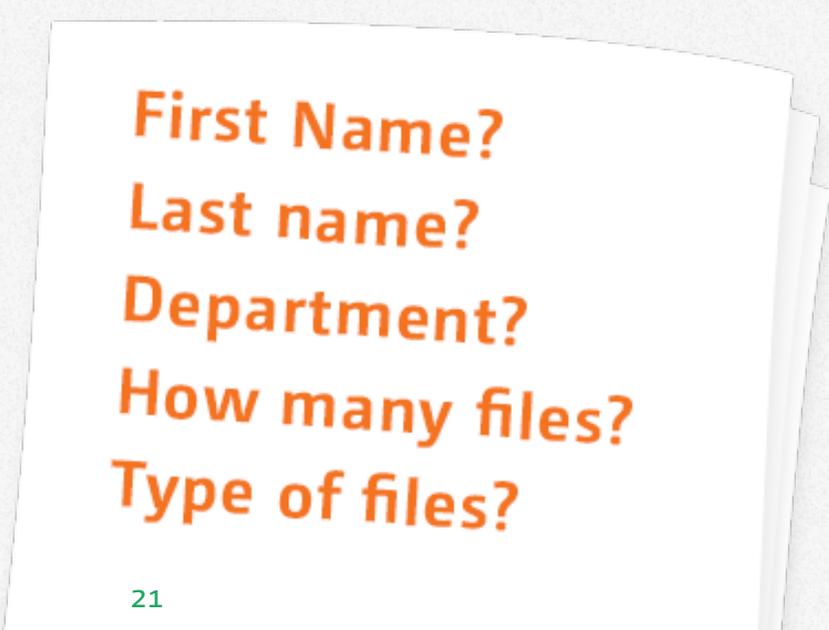
In the governance plan, we don't actually write the thinking that goes behind all of it or how do we choose which site to give to whom. Remember, we can keep the governance plan simple, but still provide useful information to those seeking it. You, the team as well as Power Users need to know that there is a Site Request and what to expect in terms of flow. Usually this part of my Governance Plan will simply mention how requests are initiated (form or email), who it has to go through and who will make the decision. In some cases I'll include what the user will need to do to accept what has been chosen for him, like accepting a User Agreement for example. In this ebook, I'll try to go over the details of the Site Requests and how to build it, but remember that in the SharePoint Governance Plan we simply put a summary of the process or flow of the site requests.

Collect the right information from your SharePoint Site Requests

What are the questions you should ask? Again, this is not part of the Governance Plan itself, but is part of the Governance process. We need to make sure that the rules and policies are enforced, but this can easily be done by providing the right type of information to those that need it. When your colleagues will ask for a new SharePoint Site, what will you ask them?

Important: Remember that they will call everything a SharePoint Site or Team Site, those are the buzz words they learned, but it does not mean that's what they need.

So what should you ask? Well, I don't have the answer, but I can help you by giving you the ones I often ask and help you figure out what to ask in your environment. It's important to see that the questions should and are different in every SharePoint environment. Someone in a military context may need to ask if any documents containing technical data for example will be uploaded. Questions like these will vary based on the context and help us understand the need to provide them with the best solution possible.



First Name?
Last name?
Department?
How many files?
Type of files?

Depending on the type of Sites you have available, you will want to direct your questions to help you identify which will be the best fit. Start by looking at what makes your Site Templates different. Again, I don't mean SharePoint Site Templates, I mean your business Site Templates. Technically, they can all be SharePoint Team Sites, but each with different Content Types and Retention policies for example.

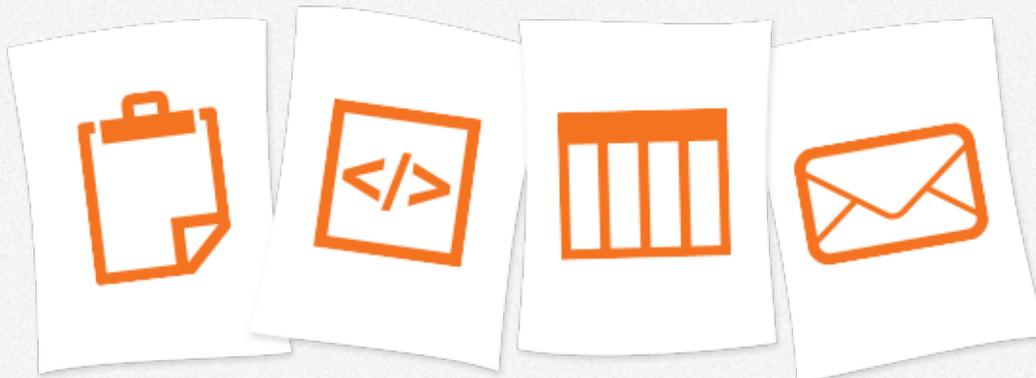
Some questions may be as simple as:

- Name
- Email
- Phone
- Department
- Manager
- Site Name
- Desired Date
- Desired Administrator
- While other questions may help you better understand the actual requirements:
- What will the site be used for?
 - Collaboration
 - Project
 - Community
 - Publications
- How long will you need it for?
- What type of documents will you be working on?
- Have you done the provided SharePoint Training?

Based on your previously built [Logical Architecture in the SharePoint Governance Plan](#) as well as the different Site Templates identified and their policies, you will be able to ask the right questions.

As much as possible, we want to be able to know exactly what kind of site to give them based on this form without any back and forth. Of course, in some cases, all they need is an extra library with views or a page. It's important to understand what they are trying to do, that's why human interaction in this process is often inevitable.

Ways to build your SharePoint Site Requests for the Governance Plan



And this is where the geek inside of me thrives, how do we build this SharePoint Site Request form. My only advice, don't go crazy with the geek inside of you. It's tempting to spend months building a solution, but it might not be what you need. There is only one important thing here, and that is understanding what the requestor actually needs to be able to deliver it. I'll cover a few different ways you can build this form, but only choose the one that fits your needs.

Email

This may sound silly, but a simple email to the right person that can approve can still be the right way to do it based on the organization. Outlook supports forms and you can easily build what you need. The obvious benefit is the time it will take to build this solution, little to no effort is required. You might even have the questions on a page that asks to send the answers via email and you are good to go. The drawbacks however are in the lack of automation and management of incoming requests. They are nothing but emails after all.

InfoPath and PDF Forms

An easier way to make sure the requestor answer the right questions properly, is using forms. You can build your own, either by using InfoPath or PDF. Do note however that **InfoPath has it's days numbered**. The advantage here is in offering a well designed and easy to fill out form and still controlling how the information is sent. An email would be free form and require you to analyze each individual emails to understand the need. Whereas a form can quickly collect the information and provide a good overview. Forms can be filled out either on the web or sent by email.

SharePoint Lists

The obvious choice in many ways. A SharePoint list or document library could be exactly what we need to store and manage SharePoint Site Requests. You can easily create columns as well as a design the form in which they will be displayed to collect information. You can then easily add a Content Approval Workflow or build your own to make manage these requests. If you have the expertise, you can go as far as automate Site Creation based on what is inside of this list and even build custom solutions driven from its content. And this does not have to be all done at the same time, it can be added later on in the project, which makes this option one of my favorites.

Custom Development (Solutions, Apps, etc.)

Though this can be included in many ways to our previous choice, SharePoint Lists, I added it because given the resources you could build your own mechanism with anything. For one of our customers, we've gone as far as creating a Tenant App in Office 365 that would do just that.

The screenshot shows the Office 365 interface for a SharePoint site. The top navigation bar includes 'Office 365', 'Outlook', 'Calendar', 'People', 'Yammer', 'SkyDrive', 'Sites', and 'Admin'. The main content area is titled 'Test Sun Media' and contains two tables.

SITE CREATION REQUESTS

Title	Relative Url	Edit Url	Max users	Due Date	Manager	Leader	Author	Created	Modified	Create
Finance	finance		100	01-02-2014	Louis-Philippe Vallée	Sébastien Leduc	Dev Dynamite	30-01-2014	30-01-2014	

CURRENT SITES

Title	Relative Url	Site	Item	Days until expiration	Days since last update	Resources	Storage	Subsites	Delete	Message
555555555555				76				0		The site is in the recycling bin. You can recover it, but we miss the infos.
aeroplan	aeroplan			0	4	0%	2%	2	X	The site exist, but there is no info on it. You can create the basic info.
App catalog	apps			0	1	0%	7%	1	X	The site exist, but there is no info on it. You can create the basic info.
asdfgjj				77				0		The site is in the recycling bin. You can recover it, but we miss the infos.
Carl	Carl			0	0	0%	8%	44	X	The site exist, but there is no info on it. You can create the basic info.
Nathan Unger	Carl2			0	1	0%	2%	1	X	The site exist, but there is no info on it. You can create the basic info.
Test 222	dynamite			0	5	0%	0%	1	X	The site exist, but there is no info on it. You can create the basic info.
Finance	dynamite-finance			0	4	0%	0%	1	X	The site exist, but there is no info on it. You can create the basic info.
Site de Nathalie	dynamite-nathalie			0	5	0%	0%	1	X	The site exist, but there is no info on it. You can create the basic info.
	dynamite-test1			88				0		The site is in the recycling bin. You can recover it, but we miss the infos.

It all comes down to what makes the most sense given the requirements.

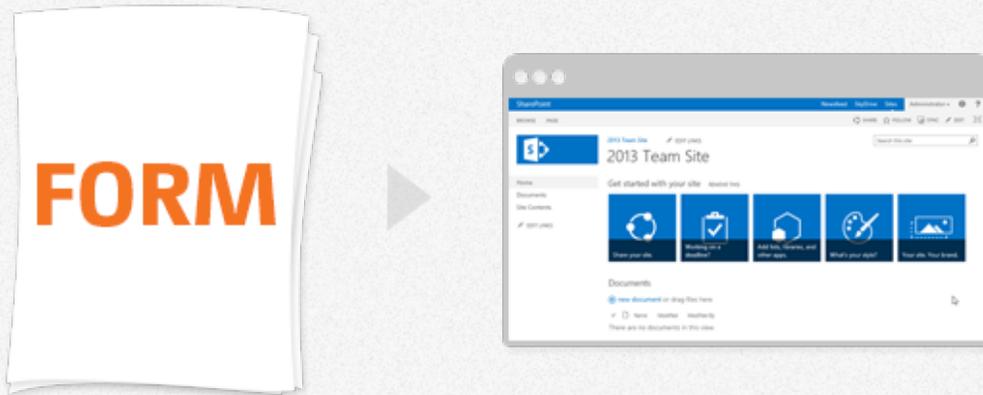
Plan the approval process for the SharePoint Site Requests



Once you have the questions that will help you understand the requestors need for a new SharePoint Site as well as the form itself to submit the request, you'll need to configure who and how to approve them. In other words, once your colleagues take the time to fill out the form and explain why they think they need a new SharePoint Site, how will you address these? Though, technically we will need to continue our SharePoint Governance Plan and identify our different Site Templates and what they will offer, this is where a decision is made and a site is either given or not.

This approval process for a SharePoint Site Request can either be manual, with someone actually reading and understanding the forms submitted or automatically. Though in many cases, our wish is to automate this process completely, I find it hard not to have someone go through each to better understand the need and see if a Site is actually what they need. Too many times have I seen SharePoint Sites get created when I simple List or Document Library with the proper configurations would have done the job. Who will be in charge of reviewing these requests and making the final decisions?

In the SharePoint Governance Plan, delivering Site Requests



After all, we are trying to build a SharePoint Governance Plan here. The Site Request forms and the process around that is a part of the project by itself and is very important to do, but is not and should not be in the Governance Plan. My SharePoint Governance Plan always includes a small section for the Site Requests, where it clearly identifies every part of the overall process. For example, I will usually say that when a user needs a new site inside of SharePoint, a request must be submitted to « insert where this will be initiated » by « insert method to fill out the request ». Then, « insert person identified in roles and responsibilities to review the request » will do a brief analysis of the request to see whether or not a site should be created. Once approved, the correct site template will be « manually or automatically » created and available to the requestor once a User Agreement has been read and approved.

This about sums up what it looks like in my SharePoint Governance Plan. Keeping it simple so that anyone looking for guidelines will be able to understand the process without going into details of how the Site Request is made. However, it doesn't make it any less important to properly plan what questions will be asked and how to deliver this Site Request Form.

SITE TEMPLATE DEFINITIONS



**TEAM
SITE**

**COMMUNITY
SITE**

**PROJECT
SITE**

SITE TEMPLATE DEFINITIONS

Site Template Definitions in the SharePoint Governance Plan

Don't get confused with the actual built-in SharePoint Site Templates, it's not what we're talking about here. When we **build a SharePoint Governance Plan**, we need to clearly identify what kind of sites can be requested and what their definitions are. By that, I mean their intended purpose as well as what they come with in terms of features and policies. Don't expect to see « Team Site » « Blank Site » « Publishing Site », we are making this governance plan for the business and to help them by providing guidelines on how to use this enormous platform.

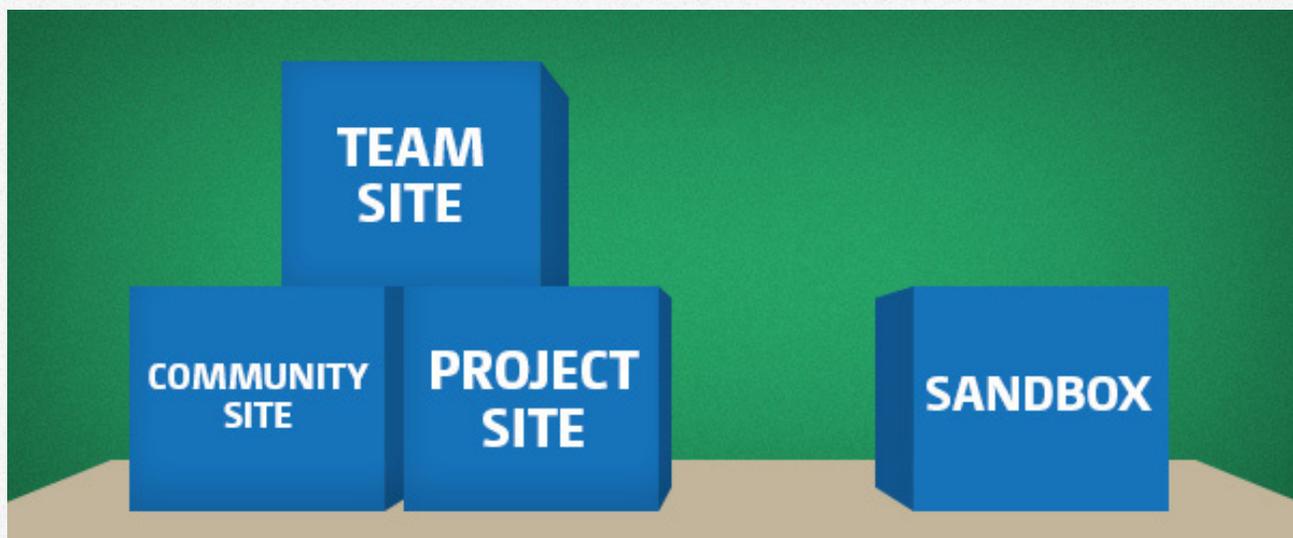
Understand why you are using SharePoint for your business

Remember, we are not building this SharePoint Governance Plan for ourselves nor are we doing it strictly for IT. SharePoint is there to help the business and that's what the Governance Plan is there for, to help the business use the platform. If we plan to make different business site templates available for our users, we first need to know what they would need it for. My experience shows that it's best to start with one or two and let it grow with time, for you to see how people are using SharePoint or what they need from it.

Notice I said « business site template »? A common mistake, made especially by us geeks, is to instantly think of SharePoint site templates. But fact is, it doesn't matter. Since the Governance Plan is to help guide the business to better utilize SharePoint in some way, it's important not to confuse our business users with SharePoint terms.

So before you go any further, make sure you know what you plan to do with SharePoint. I am serious, it may sound like a ridiculous question, but more often than none I meet customers that do not have a clear vision of what they are doing with SharePoint. Usually it's the ones that have the license through some other Microsoft offering. « No, I know what we want and that's to collaborate » is not a valid answer. Try to explain it to me, if you can explain to me what you want to do with SharePoint and how that's going to help your business, than move on to listing the business site templates you will need. You can always start with discoversharepoint.com.

Start by listing the business site templates in your Governance Plan



The SharePoint Governance Plan will have a lot more information than just the Title and Description of your site templates. However, for now that's what we should start with to get us in the right direction. Depending on your business need, list the site templates you plan to work with in your SharePoint.

An example of site templates in a governance plan could be:

Team site

A site for members to collaborate on documents and help the members produce content amongst themselves.

Community site

A site meant to produce content or publications for the entire company instead of just the members like a team site does.

Project site

A site for members to collaborate for specific long-term projects.

Ad hoc project site

A site for members to quickly create and collaborate on usually short-term projects.

Sandbox

A site meant for users to test any kind of actions before applying them in their own production site.

Application

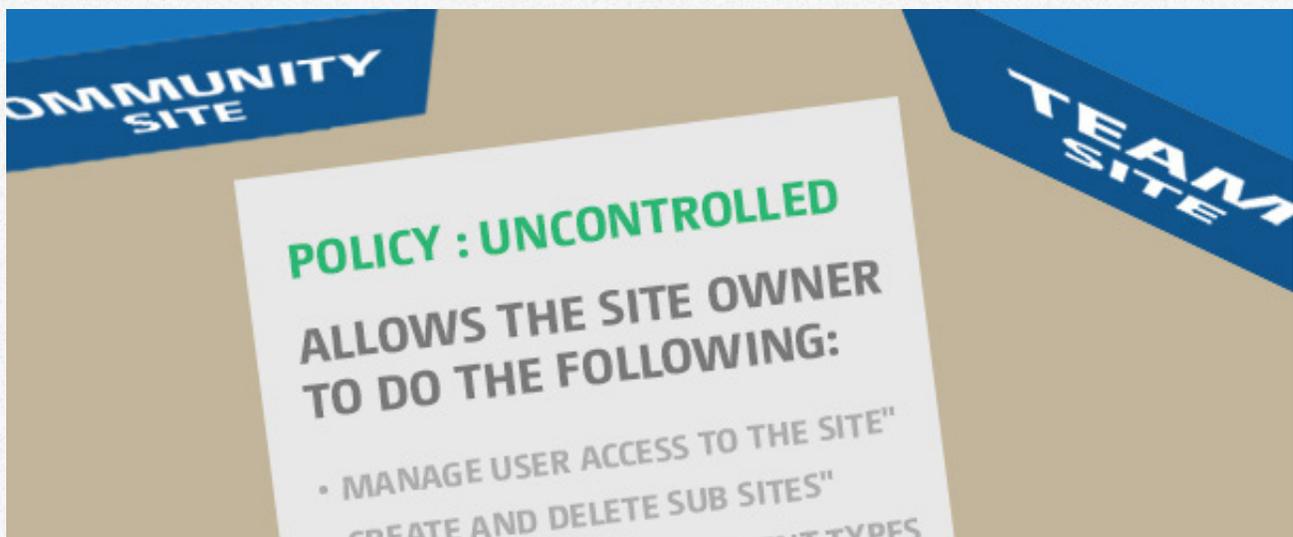
A site tailored to a specific business process that usually requires custom development.

I cannot stress this enough, **it's not because they are called Team Sites or Community Sites that they refer to the SharePoint Templates.** These are simply what they planned to be named in our business, that's what the Governance Plan is here for, to help us set these guidelines.

As an example, the Team site, Community site and the Sandbox site could all be using exactly the same SharePoint template with differences only in permissions for each of them. At this point, the SharePoint Site Template we plan to use is irrelevant and in most cases, I barely even mention that in my SharePoint Governance Plan.

***Note:** Something I don't mention enough in this SharePoint Governance ebook is that each step should be done by specific people. Remember when we **identified the Roles and Responsibilities?**

Governance Plan should include site management policies



This step should and most likely will be different for everyone. In a SharePoint Governance Plan, we usually have a section that details the available site management policies. What exactly do I mean? For me, these are the named policies I can refer to, that details out what can or cannot be done in the site to manage it. An example could simply be defining if the owner can create his/her own lists and libraries. Depending on your organization's culture and level of SharePoint maturity, you may only need one or two policies. From experience, try to keep the number of policies as low as possible. I know it will be difficult, especially when business users will come asking for exceptions or the right to create those lists and libraries. It's inevitable, but that's why the Governance Plan and the Committee exists. One is there to set the rules and the other to make sure it is enforced.

When starting out my new Governance Plan, I'll usually have only two Site Management Policies defined. And I begin with the one that controls as little as possible, the uncontrolled policy. There, I describe what is allowed as well as not allowed in a site that uses this site management policy. The beauty of this is that the policy is not linked directly to your template, yet. In the future, you can have users choose a site template and offer a site management policy to go with it.

Here is an example of my **uncontrolled** site management policy:

Allows the site owner to do the following:

- Manage user access to the site
- Create and delete sub sites
- Create and delete content types and site columns
- Create, manage and delete lists and libraries
- Create and delete Site Collection
- Site Owner is responsible for content published

The following cannot be done by the site owner:

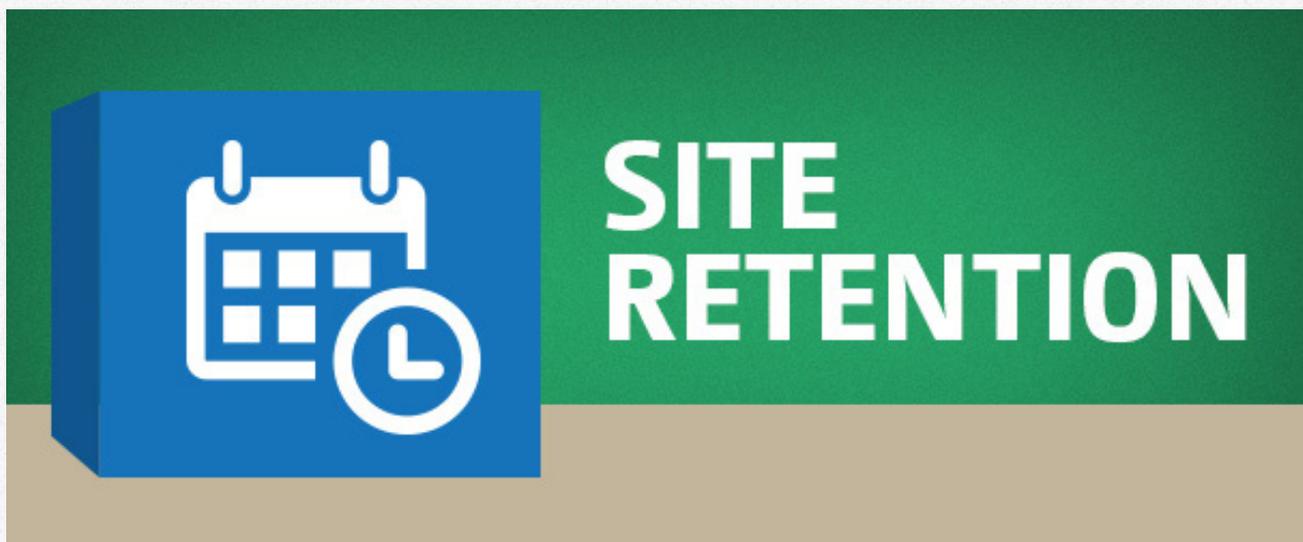
- Delete the Site Collection
- Activate or Deactivate Site Collections Features
- Change the Master Page
- Create and delete new Permission Levels
- Change the Search Schema

Obviously these will change based on what you are trying to accomplish with SharePoint and is why I asked you to start by understanding what you plan to do with SharePoint, what is it for. You can do a similar activity for the **controlled** site management policy. Depending on your organization you may need others, but I encourage you to keep it to as few as possible.

My Controlled site management policy will usually be very restrictive and managed by a special well trained and experienced team. But this can be changed and should always be defined in the Governance Plan.

At this point in the governance plan, I'll also add some roles and responsibilities if they are tied to or changed depending on the site management policy. For example, I'll add **Information Architecture, Content Creation and Security Management** as part of roles in which their responsibility may change based on the site management policy. Content Creation responsibility might be for the Site Owner in an uncontrolled site, but to another group or person in a controlled site.

SharePoint Site Retention and Deletion in the Governance Plan



Set expectations from the very beginning, make sure the business users of SharePoint know exactly what happens to their site in the future. Here, I usually define the different possibilities by giving them self explanatory names not unlike what we just did in the Site Management Policies. Of course, at this point it's important to understand what can be done by SharePoint before you start setting rules that cannot easily be upheld. Don't get me wrong you can use [free tools for Governance](#) to find all Sites that haven't been modified for 60 days or been created 3 years ago, but start with simple things you can do and manage.

Start by naming and describing these Site Retention and Deletion policies, but keep it simple. Remember it all comes together at the end and needs to be easily consumed by a business user going through the site request himself. The technology aspect of this does not need to be included in the Governance Plan.

Here is an example:

90 Days Delete: Sites created with this retention rule will be deleted 90 days after their creation.

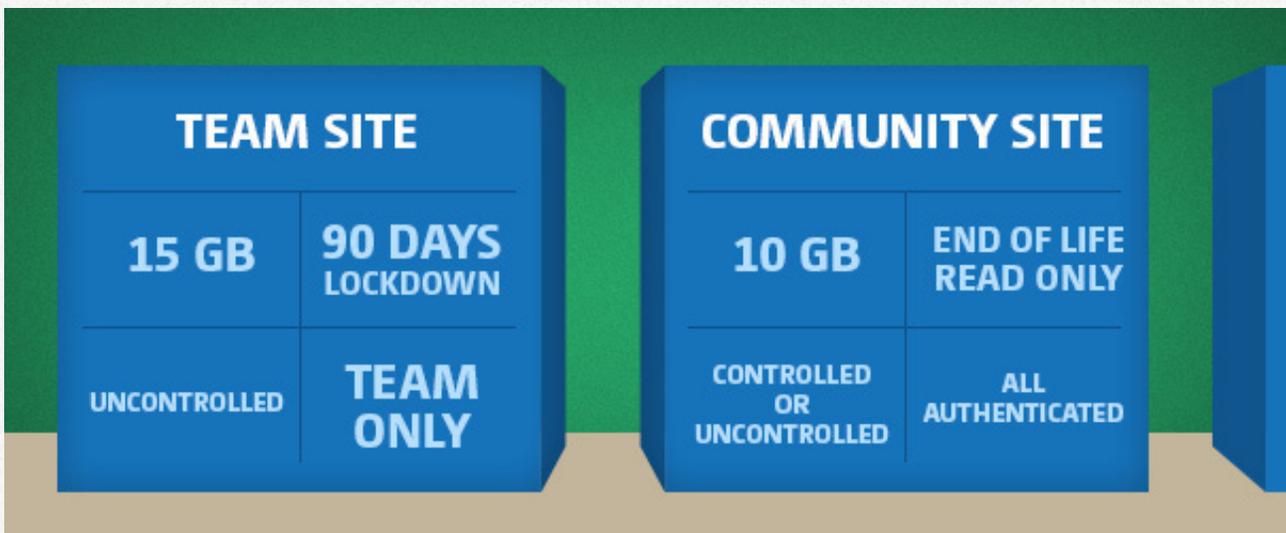
End of Life Read Only: Specially targeted to Project Sites, site will be placed in read only once the project is finished.

90 Days Lockdown: Site will be locked down after 90 days of no activity on the site.

Administrators will manually go through the locked down sites and delete. Of course, you can create as many rules that fit your organization. The Governance Plan serves as a guideline, but also as a reference or go to document to find all of this information quickly and easily.

Remember that your Governance Plan can be a Wiki, thus allowing visitors to quickly jump through hyperlinks and find all this information. It also allows you to create it in phases and not all at once.

Putting it all together as SharePoint Site Template Definitions in your Governance



To be able to get to where we are now, we've made sure we understand the need for SharePoint and what we plan to do with it, listed the site templates, defined site management policies and even retention rules. We can now create our Site Template Definitions and serve it to our business users in a format that can easily be read and understood.

For now, you should be able to create an easy to read table with all the information, one that fits your organization of course. Once you have this, you'll be able to decide whether the information is sufficient or if you'll need more.

Site Template	Quota	Retention	Site Management Policy	Permissions
Team	15GB	90 days lockdown	Uncontrolled	Team Only
Community	10GB	End of Life Read Only	Uncontrolled or Controlled	All Authenticated
Sandbox	5GB	30 days delete	Uncontrolled	Team Only
Project	20GB	End of Life Read Only	Uncontrolled or Controlled	Project Members
Ad hoc project	15GB	End of Life Read Only	Uncontrolled	Project Members
Application	40GB	N/A	Controlled	Application Members

You may start to realize why it's also important to have someone who knows how SharePoint works to build a Governance Plan. Setting these guidelines can be easy enough on paper, but how will they be technically created to fit the need is another story. A shameless plug, but I will because it's free right now, is the [Sharegate Governance tool](#). You can easily make sure Sites, Lists and Libraries or Documents respect some of your policies.

I'll leave you with this, remember the SharePoint Governance Plan is not a documentation of how you want people to use your platform. It's a set of guidelines, that will help them understand how to use this platform in the best way possible to ensure the organization benefits from it in the end. Because it's such a vast platform, it's important to help them understand what they get or what to get depending on the need. At this point in time, you have a way to show them the different Sites they will be able to request as well as what they will get with it. This small change can already have tremendous impact on the adoption and success of your implementation.

If you can visualize your Site Request form with fields asking the business user or whomever what site he wants. Then for that person to quickly jump with a hyperlink to the Governance Wiki that shows this table for him and understand what it is and what it comes with, but most importantly what can or cannot be done for each.

USER TRAINING & AGREEMENT



USER TRAINING AND AGREEMENT

User Training and Agreement in the SharePoint Governance Plan

Perhaps it's my five years working as a Certified Trainer in a learning centre, but I believe training users to use a platform like SharePoint is vital to its success. You don't necessarily have to describe the SharePoint training in your Governance Plan, but it needs to be considered as you write this Governance for SharePoint. That and having a user agreement ready and defined when site owners receive a new SharePoint site.

It's crucial to understand the **SharePoint Governance Plan** is a set of guidelines to help the business properly use the platform. I am not saying you should write up a courseware inside this document, simply consider training as part of those guidelines. Will Site Owners need to have followed a specific training to receive support? Perhaps to receive a Site? Or a different training to receive Site Owner level 2 with Lists and Library management? These are the guidelines that need to be set and defined to help them leverage the platform adequately.

Adding Training as part of your SharePoint Governance Plan



The purpose of this ebook isn't to convince you that training is important for your business. I am assuming you already know the tremendous value it brings, especially when working with a platform like SharePoint. No, I want to focus on what to write in the Governance Plan to help users and the organization know what they need before working with SharePoint, as a Governance Plan should.

You'll need to divide it into a few sections and of course this may vary based on the organization and its plans to use SharePoint.

- The training « programs » available
- Roles that will require a program
- Tools available for the training

Training programs



There are a multitude of ways to deliver good, quality training for SharePoint to your audience. Ideally, there is an easy way for them to get tailored in-class training. It must be the trainer in me, but I still find it's the best way to learn. To dedicate your time to the training and be there with someone teaching from experiences learned. Lately, what's been getting popular is the use of video to deliver SharePoint or any type of training in an organization. I have actually participated in authoring and delivering a video training for an organization where we simply could not send every single employee to receive SharePoint training. We focused on creating short three to five minutes videos tailored to a particular subject and make them easily consumable by the viewer. The feedback we received was incredible, we've even gone ahead and created a separate video training program for the Site Owners.

Identify roles that will need training programs

This will need to be well defined as it is, in my opinion, a very important factor in the success of your SharePoint deployment. As mentioned earlier, it's too easy to create chaos with SharePoint. You need to have people, trained people, that know how to use the platform based on the actual needs of the business. A good way to get started is to list some of the major [roles identified in our first part of building a SharePoint Governance Plan](#).

- Site Designer
- Advanced Site Owner
- Site Owner
- End User

Those are roles that I often see when implementing SharePoint as a collaboration platform, but they may vary based on your needs. Identify them and clearly assign a training program or « certification » if you like. I am a big fan of reward or « gamification » in the workplace and this can easily be applied in this context. This can be badges earned on their profile picture, certification they can add to their names, there is a whole lot to explore with this. What's important, is that there is tailored training to the right people.

Tools available for SharePoint Training

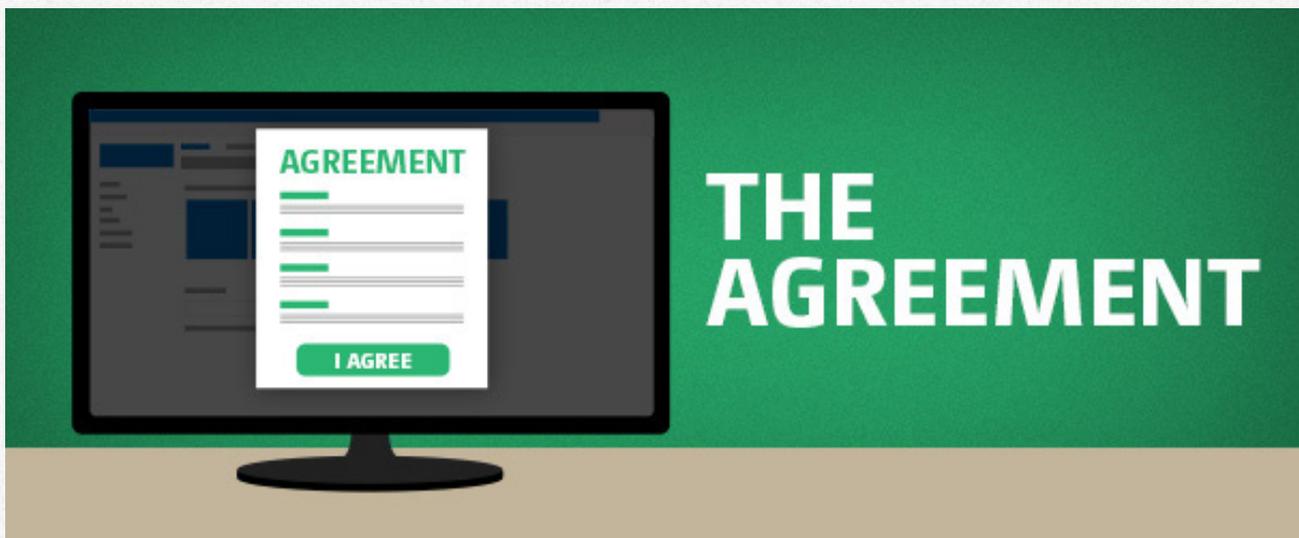


The trick is not to go crazy here. We tend to do too much, when in most cases a simple solution will suffice. What I mean by tools for SharePoint Training is simply, what is available to those training, to practice what they learn. Remember when we built the [Site Definitions in our SharePoint Governance Plan](#)?

One of them was called « Sandbox » and this is what I usually give to those that want to test, exercise or practice on something before doing it in a production SharePoint site. The site policies you had defined for this sandbox site are important, you don't want them to start using it for their production content. Do you have to do this? No. But whatever you choose, **it needs to be in the SharePoint Governance Plan.**

It's easy to say all this in a few paragraphs in an ebook, I understand that. Training is an art of its own and should be well thought out and well executed. If you don't have the expertise internally, then I strongly recommend looking to hire someone who does. Whether it's to build video capsules or provide in-class training, training is a vital piece of your SharePoint project. My focus here is mainly on building a set of guidelines, a SharePoint Governance Plan, to help the SharePoint users know what kind of training they should receive based on their roles as well as how it will be delivered. It should also include the tools available to practice even if it's just a site template defined with a set of rules and most importantly, a site deletion policy.

Governance should include the Site User Agreement



Every day, when you download and install a new application you are usually presented with a document that requires you to « agree » before continuing to the application and be able to use it. Don't worry, I am not asking you to get the lawyers involved today and write a 50 page EULA. Personally, I think this is the most under-utilized option to increase SharePoint adoption and enforce your Governance.

In my past projects, we've done a user agreement as a one pager document that acts as a summary of all the rules and policies we defined in the governance plan for that specific site. Not only does it help remind the user receiving the site what he has « ordered » so to speak, but it also « backs you up » if they ask for something out of the scope defined in the agreement later on. For example, if you have set storage space for that particular site template at 25GB then the user will have seen and agreed to it when receiving the site.

My version of the user agreement really is more like the governance plan in a summary view where the audience is the site owner. Of course, there isn't any part about the logical architecture or any other information irrelevant to the site owner. Remember, I talked about doing your **SharePoint Governance in form of a Wiki** instead of a large Word document. This will make it even easier when building a user agreement as most of it will be links to those Wiki Pages that you can easily keep up to date.

« Name of site » user agreement

You must read and accept these terms before administering this SharePoint site.

MANAGEMENT POLICY: Uncontrolled

As a site owner you can:

- Create and delete sub sites
- Create and delete content types and site columns
- Create, manage and delete lists and libraries
- Create and delete Site Collection
- Site Owner is responsible for content published

[\(link to Uncontrolled policy definition in Governance Plan Wiki\)](#)

STORAGE

- Site quota allowed: 15GB
- Notification of quota excess limit at 85% of allowed storage

[\(link to storage policy definition in Governance Plan Wiki\)](#)

SITE RETENTION

- Site will be lock downed after 90 days of inactivity, no content can be added or edited
- SharePoint Administrators will contact you before deleting after 90 days of inactivity

[\(link to site retention policy definition in Governance Plan Wiki\)](#)

Accept

****This is an example and not a real user agreement****

There are a number of other things to include in the user agreement, ideally as we mentioned everything related to that site and for that site owner. This can be information on quota, retention, security, training required, support or anything else relevant to the site owner.

As for the SharePoint Governance Plan, it should include a copy or template of the User Agreement. But the real question is, how will you implement it? We've established that it can be a summary of the governance with the specific rules and policies for the particular site the owner is receiving. But how will he receive it and how does he sign it? Will it be easily accessible afterwards? This is entirely up to you, the need in the business and of course the technical competency to implement it. Ideally, it will be included as part of the Site Request we've built previously in the Governance Plan. Once the user has requested his or her site and it has been approved. Another way is for it to be part of a form the future site owner has to read and accept to receive the right permissions in the site or for the site to be created. This is entirely up to you, but be sure to have it close by and at the reach of the site owner if he needs to look at it again.

What does our SharePoint Governance look like?

Whether you went ahead and created a Wiki or have written a formal Word document, that isn't the question. Both will work just fine in serving the purpose of governance by setting accessible guidelines for your SharePoint platform. What I mean is, what does **building a real world SharePoint Governance Plan** look like now?

The process, in the organization and especially with people will take time. That's why we started by identifying the different roles and responsibilities we could at the very beginning. We then moved on to creating a logical architecture to identify what we will need and how to organize it. Of course doing that, we quickly saw we would need to create clear site template definitions we would use with their rules and policies. That will definitely take some time, but will eventually lead us to the site request process. How will those « Site Owners » we identified request the right site template for their need? Well, we had a proper training program identified for that specific role and once this person received the site, he or she had to accept a user agreement, which essentially summarized the Governance Plan for the site being delivered. It's a start and mind you there is still a lot to identify, the support model for example or how should social features be used internally. But, by now you should be able to get the SharePoint Governance started. Remember to keep it simple and useful for the business, no one wants to read a 500 pages document.

LINKS

REAL WORLD GOVERNANCE

Governance and Information Architecture for your SharePoint migration

<http://bit.ly/1j3KUiG>

LOGICAL ARCHITECTURE

Visio Professional 2013 - Create professional diagrams

<http://bit.ly/Rs01wn>

SharePoint Governance Committee

<http://bit.ly/1jBfh4L>

SITE REQUEST FORMS

Logical Architecture in the SharePoint Governance Plan

<http://bit.ly/1g8ISxR>

Update on InfoPath and SharePoint Forms

<http://bit.ly/1kMjvEG>

SITE TEMPLATE DEFINITIONS

www.discoversharepoint.com

<http://bit.ly/1noUIsX>

Identified the Roles and Responsibilities

<http://bit.ly/1jBfh4L>

Free tools for Governance

<http://bit.ly/1o7mfSc>

LINKS

USER TRAINING AND AGREEMENT

Roles identified in our first part of building a SharePoint Governance Plan

<http://bit.ly/1jBfh4L>

Site Definitions in our SharePoint Governance Plan

<http://bit.ly/1o7mJIb>

Building a real world SharePoint Governance Plan

<http://bit.ly/1jBfh4L>



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