Microsoft 365 Groups Tips to Boost Collaboration with Shared Services

The Groups feature in Microsoft 365 streamlines collaboration, facilitating teamwork across the company. Understanding some basic concepts will allow organizations get the most out of this powerful solution. Start with these essential Microsoft 365 Groups tips.

Advantages of Microsoft Groups

First, a quick Microsoft 365 Groups primer. You will not find Groups on a list of Microsoft 365 apps, and it does not replace Microsoft Teams. Instead, think of Groups as a membership service built on Azure Active Directory (AAD). In fact, anyone who has created a SharePoint site collection or a new group in Outlook has created a Microsoft 365 group.

However, instead of just providing a shared document library or a distribution list, a group gives its members instant access to a host of shared services. This includes a shared Outlook inbox and calendar, a SharePoint document library, a OneNote notebook, a planner and more.

From an administrative perspective, Groups simplifies the creation and maintenance of these shared workspaces. For instance, instead of managing access for each individual user, the group owner defines access for the group. That access then automatically applies to every group member. And group creation triggers provisioning of all necessary Microsoft 365 tools.

Choose the Right Place to Create and Manage a Group

Users can create groups in a variety of places. For example, administrators can create and manage groups directly in AAD, as well as through Exchange Online or PowerShell. On the other hand, general users can create groups in Teams, Outlook, SharePoint and so forth. The team experience will vary somewhat, depending on where the group originates.

For instance, a group created in Outlook centers around the shared inbox and calendar. On the other hand, a group created in Yammer highlights the users' newsfeed. Workgroups will find it useful to create Microsoft 365 groups using the workgroup's main mode of communication.

Prevent Group Sprawl with Expiration Policies

Because a Microsoft 365 tenant can hold up to 500,000 groups, organizations need to manage the lifecycle of those groups mindfully. As group owners move on to other employment or projects end, a group may no longer prove necessary. Without proper management, groups can get out of control. Expiration policies provide a handy solution to group sprawl.

Administrators can define an expiration policy that deletes inactive groups automatically after a certain period of time. As the expiration date draws near, the group owners will receive a notification to renew. Any group not renewed will be deleted, although an admin or group owner can restore a deleted group within 30 days.

Use Naming Policies

Microsoft also provides the ability to define naming policies. When implemented, naming policies help to ensure that anyone can identify the purpose and origination of the group at a glance. They also allow

administrators to block specific words. The naming convention applies to the group name, as well as its alias and associated email address.

For example, a corporation might want each group name to include the geographical region and department name. Azure will determine this information from the Azure attributes of the group creator. Easy to remember group names will help users discover existing groups rather than creating unnecessary duplicates.

The naming policy can also include a list of blocked words, ensuring that nobody but an administrator can use those words in a group name. This might include names of executives, for example.

Automatically Populate Groups with Dynamic Group Membership

In addition to manual group creation, AAD supports dynamic group membership. This consists of a series of rules that automatically add or remove group members based on user attributes such as department or title. When the attributes of a user account change, the system checks the dynamic group rules to determine if any of them apply.

- If the attributes of a new user match all the rules for the group, the system automatically adds the user to that group.
- If a user's attributes change so that they match all the rules, the system adds the user to the group.
- If the attributes of a group member change so that they no longer match all the rules for the group, the system automatically removes them from the group.

Implementing Microsoft 365 Groups Tips

Creating policies and automating group membership through dynamic groups takes a significant load off administrators and team leaders. At the same time, configuring these powerful features of Groups can prove complex. The Microsoft 365 experts at Messaging Architects can assist organizations in understanding Microsoft Groups and managing groups through assessments and group life-cycle management.