

Providing Enterprise-ready and Cost-effective Extranets with SharePoint





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Introduction

These days, extranet access for employees, partners, vendors, and clients is vital. Most organizations are already using SharePoint to facilitate internal collaboration, so using SharePoint for extranet collaboration as well seems like a “no-brainer.”

That’s because the same things that make SharePoint a great intranet platform also make it a great extranet platform. But there is a problem.

While SharePoint is built for collaboration and contains built-in collaboration tools, IT pros who attempt to implement SharePoint as an extranet quickly find out there are many hurdles to overcome.

In SharePoint, Microsoft gives us a robust, full-featured extranet platform, but it does not provide an easy way to: deploy an extranet; secure an extranet; manage an extranet; empower users to solve simple login issues or perform simple administrative actions for themselves; and facilitate simple user-friendly access.

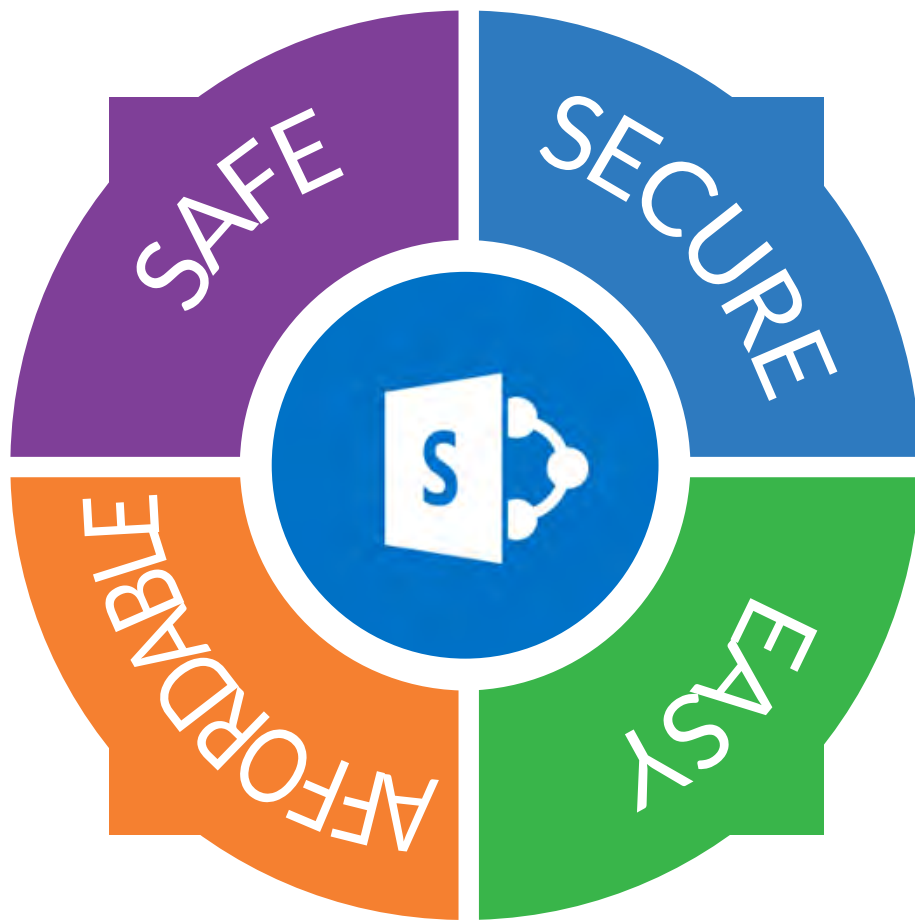
Out of the box, SharePoint does not come with an extranet management console or with extranet management features of any kind. And security questions such as “Where should we store the extranet accounts?” and “What type of access security should we employ?” are left unanswered.

In addition, out of the box SharePoint does not make it possible for users to do self-management. If they have a problem logging in, they have to call IT. Access to the SharePoint extranet can seem unfriendly and difficult – especially for inexperienced users – and unhelpful error messages can leave them stranded.

Hurdles

- 1 Deploy an extranet
- 2 Secure an extranet
- 3 Manage an extranet
- 4 Empower users to solve simple login issues or perform simple administrative actions for themselves
- 5 Facilitate simple user-friendly access

What's needed is a way to make SharePoint extranet collaboration safe, secure, easy, and affordable. This paper will discuss a robust solution that numerous organizations have chosen for their extranets.



Extranet Solutions Wish List

A SharePoint extranet collaboration solution should . . .

Be Reliable

PROBLEM: Centerline Capital Group used Epok Edition for Microsoft for its extranet. In one six-month period “Epok went down at least a dozen times,” creating “nightmares” for Centerline that resulted in a flood of angry external users who were unable to collaborate or access information from anywhere to a few hours to a couple of days.

Make collaboration easy but secure

PROBLEM: MSNBC could not easily and securely collaborate with external partners. The company also was concerned about security issues, such as exposing more internal data than intended without having much control over it. A security breach could compromise intellectual property and other confidential MSNBC information.

Balance the need for granting site access with confidentiality

PROBLEM: An historic flood in Sarpy County, Nebraska, required a greater need for collaborative efforts during the emergency, especially when it came to sharing time-sensitive information with other agencies and granting site-access permission to individuals who had responsibility for updating the Incident Action Plan.

Save Time and Money

PROBLEM: When MARS CIO Bill Davidson saw Microsoft’s instructions for making forms-based authentication for SharePoint, he realized it was going to be a big job that would take away valuable time and resources from the IT Department.



Get IT out of the document-management and account-creation process

PROBLEM: La-Z-Boy has numerous business partners, vendors, and licensees, and sharing information with organizations outside the company had become a major issue. Because SharePoint out of the box only allows administrators to create user accounts and assign security roles, the IT Department was faced with making business decisions about what information to make accessible to outside parties in critical areas such as intellectual property.

ExCM for SharePoint

PremierPoint Solutions' [Extranet Collaboration Manager \(ExCM\) for SharePoint Server and Foundation](#) is a SharePoint add-in that provides the easy extranet collaboration and simplified extranet administration that SharePoint is missing in the out-of-the-box product. ExCM improves collaboration with individuals outside an organization by providing partners, customers, and suppliers with access to important information while still maintaining security. All of its features are accessible from within SharePoint itself, so there is no proprietary interface or separate program to learn. ExCM makes SharePoint extranet collaboration secure, easy, and affordable.

Product Overview

From its award-winning 2007 release, ExCM has established itself as the industry leader in powerful, effective SharePoint extranet deployment and management. It features enhanced functionality and powerful new capabilities – all accessed from within SharePoint itself. This comprehensive SharePoint extranet toolkit includes the following features:

- The flexibility to empower delegated users to perform routine administrative tasks like sending invitations, adding accounts, unlocking accounts, managing passwords, granting access, removing access, and more. Bottlenecks and wait times are eliminated.
- New extranet users can register for site access themselves or you can send them invitations – approval of registrations can be automated. IT “busywork” is reduced.
- New security features: Administrators can define security policies to govern site access and activity – at the site collection level, at the site level, or based on email domain. You can make your extranet as secure as you want.
- Total SharePoint integration: Extranet management from within SharePoint itself eliminates learning obstacles and facilitates enthusiastic adoption.
- With PremierPoint Solutions' [remote extranet installation service package](#), its SharePoint extranet experts can have an extranet up and running quickly, securely, and affordably in just a few hours. Companies can start collaborating with their business partners right away.



Product Details:

ExCM Offers These Advantages

Transparent SharePoint Integration

- ✓ ExCM integrates right into the SharePoint interface
- ✓ All ExCM features are accessed from within SharePoint itself
- ✓ No separate program to learn

Increased Extranet Security

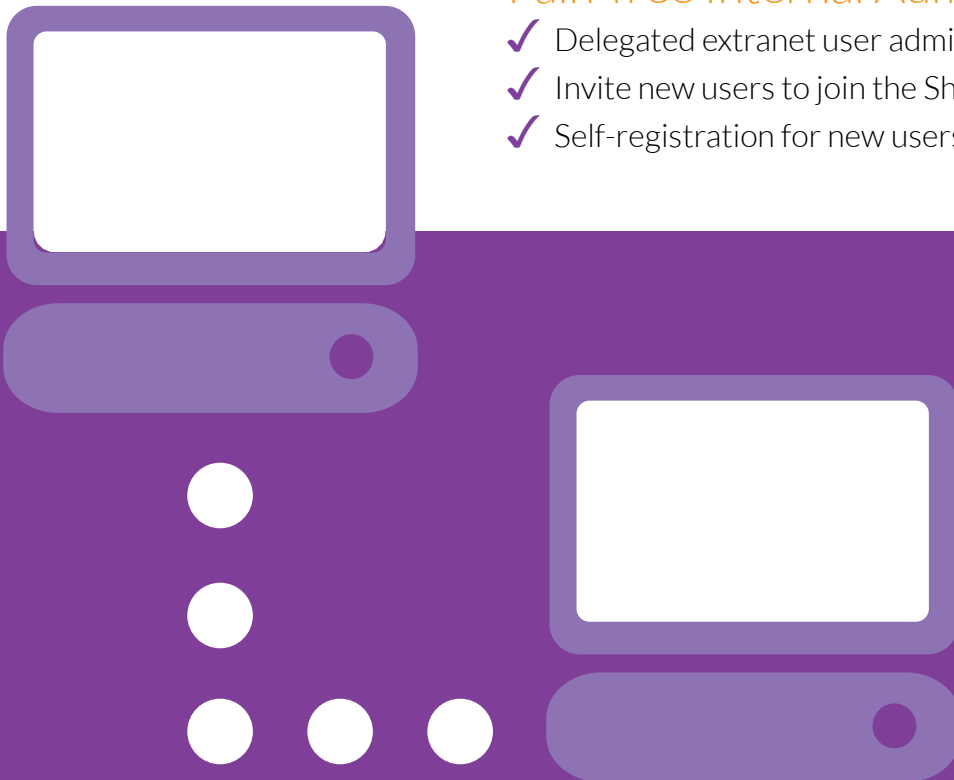
- ✓ Extranet user accounts are stored in a SQL database
- ✓ Active Directory is not exposed to the outside world
- ✓ Extranet user auditing
- ✓ Account verification and approval processes
- ✓ Account auto-expiration after inactivity or lack of password update

Better Service for Extranet Users

- ✓ Forms-based authentication with incorporated site design
- ✓ Self-service features, including password reset, update profile, etc.

Pain-free Internal Administration

- ✓ Delegated extranet user administration; frees up IT resources
- ✓ Invite new users to join the SharePoint extranet
- ✓ Self-registration for new users; custom registration pages



How you expose your SharePoint server to the Internet depends on how your network is configured

In its basic form, you need to ensure that your WFE—and specifically the Web app hosting ExCM—are exposed to the Internet. Generally speaking, this would consist of a firewall rule allowing Internet traffic through. PremierPoint Solutions

provisioning and governance product that fully integrates, enabling companies to automatically provision their extranet sites with the settings they want.

If you have an extranet or another system containing your users, **PremierPoint Solutions** can provide you with a PowerShell script to complete your initial load of users.

has many customers who prefer to stand up a separate SharePoint environment (or stand-alone server depending on potential load) in their DMZ dedicated to their extranet. Another option is to use Windows Azure to host a VM that is a dedicated host for your extranet. PremierPoint Solutions' consulting services can help get your extranet successfully installed either on-premise or on a cloud-hosted VM.

You would need to get your current users loaded into a CSV file for the import as you will not be able to import profile properties. This is provided as is, without support to help get started.

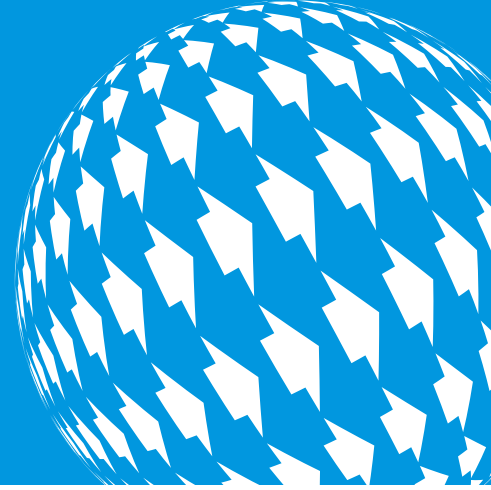
PremierPoint Solutions is not only the industry leader in SharePoint extranets, but it also has the only extranet product with a companion site

[Site Provisioning and Governance Assistant \(SPGA\)](#), when paired with ExCM, automates the site-creation process so that site after site is created and configured uniformly and automatically, according to pre-determined settings. Uniformity, governance, and company standards are strictly enforced, enabling administrators to simply “set it and forget it.”

Users then request the type of site they need, and the site is approved, created, and provisioned for them automatically. SPGA saves a tremendous amount of time over manual provisioning sites, and it ensures all your standards and governance requirements are met every time.

ExCM can set a user's password to expire by following this [step-by-step process](#).

How ExCM Solves Real-World Problems



ExCM is reliable

Centerline Capital Group

New York City-based [Centerline Capital Group](#), a subsidiary of Centerline Holding Company (OTC: CLNH), provides real estate financial and asset management services. The company employs nearly 200 people in seven offices nationwide, and it has a 10 to one ratio of external to internal users, with thousands of partners and vendors. At any given time, there are many deals in the works through Centerline's 5,000 SharePoint site collections and 100 sub sites. About 80% of the firm's sites have external users that require reliable means of collaborating.

Centerline used Epok Edition for Microsoft for its extranet, and in one six-month period "Epok went down at least a dozen times," creating "nightmares" that resulted in a flood of angry external users who were unable to collaborate or access information from anywhere to a few hours to a couple of days, according to Jason Smith, the company's Vice President of Information Technology.

"We work with some very large partners, such as Bank of America and Verizon, and it made a bad impression on them when there were access issues," Smith said.

It was not the technology but rather the tool the company was using that was creating problems. Once Centerline made the switch to ExCM, stability and reliability were quickly restored.

"When we stopped having issues with external users having access, we started closing deals," Smith noted, adding that one deal the company landed while using ExCM was worth \$130 million.

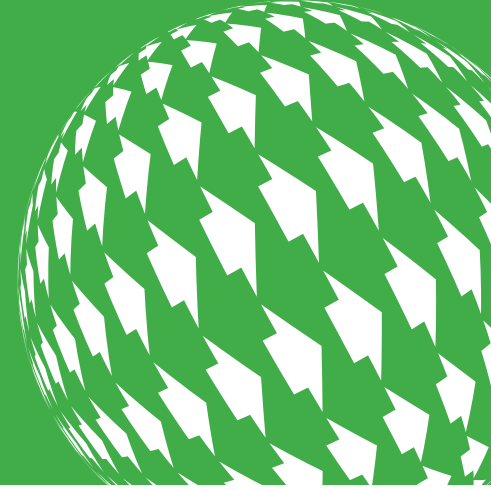
"Before ExCM it felt like we were in a reactive mode; now, we're proactive," Smith said. "It's made a big, big difference...there's no comparison to anything else I've seen on the market. It's a Mercedes Benz." [Read the full case study.](#)

Centerline Capital Group

SOLUTION:

"Before ExCM
it felt like we were
in a **reactive** mode;
now, we're
proactive."

How ExCM Solves Real-World Problems



ExCM saves time and money

The Mars Agency

[The MARS Agency](#) is a leading national retail consumer marketing agency that specializes in providing insights, innovation and integrated solutions to create stimulating shopping experiences that deepen consumers' commitment to its clients' brands and the retailer's banner.

MARS had a business need for a forms-based authentication product to enhance logon security and to avoid having to create separate Active Directory accounts for business partners.

When MARS CIO Bill Davidson saw Microsoft's instructions for enabling forms-based authentication for SharePoint, he realized it was going to be a big job that would take away valuable time and resources from the IT Department.

As the missing piece for building a client extranet, he used the analogy of a do-it-yourselfer constructing a fence. "What Microsoft gives you are pieces of wood, not fence sections; ExCM unfolds the fence in your back yard at the push of a button."

He acknowledges that companies with a development team can do the work themselves, but says it's cheaper to buy ExCM and he is "absolutely positive" they will have a better result with it.

"It doesn't make sense to do this yourself," Davidson said. "ExCM is the right tool – it's a mandatory install. If you are going to build a SharePoint extranet, you have to put this product on it." [Read the full case study.](#)

The Mars Agency

SOLUTION:

"What Microsoft gives you are pieces of wood, not fence sections;

ExCM unfolds the fence in your back yard at the **push of a button.**"

How ExCM Solves Real-World Problems



ExCM makes collaboration easy but secure

MSNBC

[MSNBC](#) could not easily and securely collaborate with external partners. Justin Smith, Infrastructure Manager for MSNBC, also was concerned about security issues, such as exposing more internal data than intended without having much control over it. A security breach could compromise intellectual property and other confidential MSNBC information.

Smith tried the Extranet Collaboration Toolkit for SharePoint (ECTS), but found it to be cumbersome and not flexible enough for MSNBC's needs. Furthermore, Smith didn't realize his IT team needed to write custom code to make Structured Query Language (SQL) work with ETCS – until after trying it as a solution.

"ECTS was not a full solution, and our guys were fed up with it," he said.

ExCM has improved MSNBC's ability to collaborate with partners and share data without duplicating efforts. It also allows users to share information and data that normally is available only on the company's intranet, without exposing the intranet sites. Department managers can manage the users for the partners they support, and users can reset their own passwords.

"ExCM has straight-forward configuration, solid interface, and great support," Smith said. "It is full featured, easy to use, and does everything we need it to do."

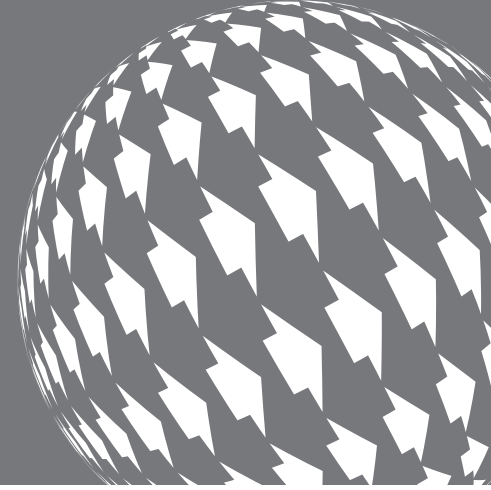
"We needed an out-of-the-box solution that works and that's what we got with ExCM. Our team was like, wow, this is so good and so easy." [Read the full case study.](#)

MSNBC

SOLUTION:

"Our team was like, wow, this is so good and so easy."

How ExCM Solves Real-World Problems



ExCM balances the need for granting site access with confidentiality

Sarpy County Emergency Management

Sarpy County, Nebraska, and the surrounding areas experienced historic flooding of the Missouri River, resulting in immediate evacuations of about 50 Sarpy County residents with the potential for several hundred more. [Sarpy County Emergency Management](#) needed to plan for the worst-case scenario. It also needed a way to quickly share information with entities helping manage the emergency.

ExCM empowered Sarpy County Emergency Manager Lynn Marshall to work directly with people who had ownership in the Incident Action Plan without a time lag and without creating extra work for the county's Information Systems team.

"ExCM has proven to be a tool we are going to continue to expand on...we're finding more and more uses for

Prior to using Extranet Collaboration Manager (ExCM) for SharePoint Server and SharePoint Foundation, Sarpy County Emergency Management utilized its own file-serving system, sharing documents by email or by printing hard copies. The old system created challenges when it came to balancing the need to maintain confidentiality with granting site access to people who only had to work on one particular aspect of the plan.

Sarpy County had used ExCM for a project, but now it would play an even greater role in collaborative efforts during the emergency, especially when it came to sharing time-sensitive information with other agencies and granting site-access permission to individuals who had responsibility for updating the Incident Action Plan.

Sarpy County Emergency Management

SOLUTION:

"We've just touched on the tip of what I think it [ExCM] can do for us."

it. With additional training from our Information Services, I would be able to actualize this product and use it in a lot of ways we can't begin to think of at this time," Marshall says.

"We've just touched on the tip of what I think it [ExCM] can do for us." [Read the full case study.](#)

How ExCM Solves Real-World Problems



ExCM gets IT out of the document-management/account-creation process

La-Z-Boy

[La-Z-Boy](#) is one of the world's leading residential furniture producers. La-Z-Boy has numerous business partners, vendors, and licensees, and sharing information with organizations outside the company became a major issue. Because SharePoint out of the box only allows administrators to create user accounts and assign security roles, the IT Department was faced with making business decisions about what information to make accessible to outside parties in critical areas such as intellectual property.

ExCM enabled La-Z-Boy to shift the burden from IT to line-of-business employees with expertise in specific areas who know what is appropriate to share with external parties, and let them manage the account-creation process.

"ExCM puts the power into the business and gets it out of IT," said Shawn Snowdy, Senior Systems Engineer for La-Z-Boy. As a result, "IT doesn't become the document police," he states, adding, "Everyone likes it; the response is, 'Wow, we can do that!'"

[Read the full case study.](#)

La-Z-Boy

SOLUTION:

"ExCM puts
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Conclusion

In addition to the customers referenced in this white paper, the following are among the numerous organizations that have chosen ExCM for their extranets.



ExCM provides them with all the tools necessary to deliver a robust, full-featured SharePoint extranet solution. Collaboration takes place with controlled, real-time access to content your clients and partners need 24/7. ExCM packs all this into one affordable package, with pricing based on the number of front-end servers.

For more information about ExCM click [here](#).

To request a live demonstration of ExCM, email SoftwareSales@PremierPointSolutions.com

About



[PremierPoint Solutions](http://premierpointsolutions.com) (formerly SharePoint Solutions) is a Microsoft Certified Partner and a nationwide leader in expert-led, in-person and online public classes on SharePoint products and technologies. The company's software division professionally develops high-quality commercial add-ons for SharePoint, including ExCM. Many of the company's courses and services are also applicable to Office 365.

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