

Dear subscriber,

Welcome to this month's update on Office 365 and Microsoft 365 from the team at CompanyNet.

We're introducing a new section in this email, where our CEO, Andy, [shares his thoughts](#) on the changing landscape of Microsoft 365 and the digital workplace.

You can find the [first Insight piece](#) below, plus updates from our subject matter experts on a [new look for Yammer](#), and a look at the [options for migrating your data](#) into Office 365.

As ever, if you think a colleague would be interested in receiving these updates, please point them to our subscription page at: <https://www.company-net.com/roundup/>

Best wishes,

Stuart McLaughlin

Technical Architect

Insight

Adapting to the online workplace

Andy Hamilton, CEO, CompanyNet



Under normal circumstances, Microsoft's annual Ignite and Inspire conferences would have brought together more than 40,000 people from around the world to a convention centre in the US.

In past years, I would have been one of them. However, normal circumstances are in short supply this year, so both conferences were held online.

Benefits of meeting remotely

For the Ignite conference, the carbon footprint of 25,000 people travelling to Orlando - not to mention a venue with its air conditioning turned up to 11 - must have been immense. In one sense, COVID-19 has forced Microsoft's hand towards becoming more environmentally responsible and meeting their target of negative carbon emissions by 2030.

What's more, having the entirety of Microsoft Ignite available on-demand in your home office is undeniably useful. There were a whopping 812 sessions this year, and my team at CompanyNet is currently working through them to identify the key messages, in preparation for our next email – an 'Ignite Special' round-up.

Towards a three-dimensional online experience

However, for all its advantages, the online experience is still not quite on par with the real thing. That's as true for a 5-person video call as it is for a 25,000-person conference. Despite Microsoft Teams making rapid progress in bringing the digital workplace to life, remote working still feels more two-dimensional; we are missing the three-dimensional contact for sure.

The challenge for Microsoft and others now is how to make the online experience every bit as good as real life. They are responding to this with a

focus on digital wellbeing – a stand-out theme at this year's Ignite event. For example, Microsoft Teams is already gaining features to help reduce the isolation and stress of not being together in the room.

Together Mode, which replaces the standard video wall with a 'virtual auditorium', certainly has some way to go before it replicates the comfortable rapport of a face-to-face meeting. The upcoming integration of mindfulness and meditation tools with Microsoft Teams, while easy to mock, is a more audacious attempt to fix the drawbacks of working from home.

Digital wellbeing

Putting wellbeing on a near-equal emphasis with productivity recognises that our working lives have fundamentally changed in the last six months. It is more than just a change of location: the flatness of online interactions and the isolation of home working is affecting business relationships and staff health in a way that has caught up with and now probably outpaced the capabilities of the technology.

There is clearly much left to achieve, and we will all continue to watch what Microsoft does with interest.

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The long-awaited new user experience for Yammer is rolling out worldwide right now.

It's the same Yammer functionality you already know and love, but with a fresh coat of paint to bring it up to a modern standard.

New Yammer, new features

It brings a couple of changes that bring it into line with the 'best practice' role that Yammer should have in your organisation:

- It's cleaner and slicker, with praise, announcements, polls, and Q&A posts all looking visually distinct.
- Posts can be pinned, and there's also a new AI-based discovery feed which should help with engagement.

- Groups have been renamed to Communities, and are now pinnable by each user.

A few more improvements are in the pipeline. Microsoft plan to introduce Facebook-style 'reactions' soon, too – such as 'love' and 'sad'.

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Migration

New options for O365 migration

Stuart McLaughlin, Technical Architect, CompanyNet



For companies who are adopting Microsoft Office 365, one of the typical activities is to migrate their 'on premise' data from local file stores to the cloud.

Office 365 provides a large volume of storage as part of the subscription. This is currently 1TB (as a minimum) for SharePoint Online in addition to licensed user's OneDrive allocation.

Reducing the cost of ownership by removing file share infrastructure or additional cloud storage subscriptions is a key benefit. Other benefits can be realised however, whether improving collaboration and secure sharing with third parties, or using the security and compliance features for information management and oversight.

Big improvements in Office 365 migration capabilities

We've covered cloud data migration previously, but what has changed recently are the options for achieving this within Office 365.

Third party software vendors have always provided solutions for data migration to Office 365. We have successfully used ShareGate's Desktop migration tool for many customer migrations over the years, and there are other options which will work as well.

Microsoft solutions have previously been less effective – the SharePoint Migration Tool (SPMT) has always been free but was fiddly to configure and required a lot of manual monitoring to confirm success.

This strategy has changed, with Microsoft investing heavily in migration product development and acquisition in the last 12 months to provide migration capabilities for Office 365 customers without requiring additional license costs.

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