Sharepoint vs. infoRouter

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to compare the functionality and capability of Microsoft SharePoint Server vs. infoRouter.

Microsoft quote some pretty impressive sales figures for Microsoft Office SharePoint, but the actual number of live implementations is considerably less – this may be because SharePoint is actually a development platform and not an application. Issues in the planning processes of SharePoint implementations and gaps within the requisite development skills of administrators, often causes projects to flounder - Buying-in specialist SharePoint skills can be expensive and without a clear project specification, SharePoint projects can quickly run over budget and ultimately get "canned". However, planned and resourced properly SharePoint can provide an excellent knowledge management solution and more.

infoRouter has a more limited functionality set, focusing on document management (search, archiving, lifecycle, version control), workflow and collaboration, but is a *true* application, which can be deployed quickly without specialist skills.

This document compares the two products (we hope fairly and constructively) with a view to helping users decide where each has strengths and weaknesses. To keep things simple, we've not compared every major feature (e.g. check-in/check-out, Searching, Subscription etc.), and simply focused on the areas of key difference. This document isn't meant to provide a detailed technical comparison of the two, merely a high level overview – with this in mind, we apologise for any technical errors, emissions or future changes to the functionality of either product which render this document technically inaccurate.

What is infoRouter?

infoRouter provides a collaborative document portal which connects information to employees, wherever their location in the world. As infoRouter is web application, users simply employ a standard web browser to gain access to their information, whether they are working from home, on the move or office based.

infoRouter can manage any type of electronic document or file in its native format. Whether you work in words, scanned documents, records, pictures, audio, video, images, forms, emails or Microsoft Office documents, infoRouter is an ideal way to manage your information.

infoRouter has the following core functionality:

- Search – full text, or meta-data
- View
- Publish
- Apply security
- Check-in and check-out
- Apply version control
- Add custom meta-data
- Subscribe to
- Kick off document workflows or tasks
- Maintain audit trails for compliance
- Set Document Retention, Archival & Disposition Rules
- Customize their own default portal
- API – allows rapid custom development and integration with 3rd party applications

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What is SharePoint?

Microsoft SharePoint is now one of Microsoft's fastest growing products, having registered over 100 million licenses – it's been around since 2001 and there are number of variants some of which are free, some of which are chargeable. Here's a brief history of SharePoint:

- Microsoft SharePoint Portal Server 2001
- Microsoft SharePoint Team Services (2002)
- Windows SharePoint Services 2.0 (free license) - Microsoft SharePoint Portal Server 2003 (commercial release)
- Windows SharePoint Services 3.0 (free license) - plus Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007 (commercial extension)[3]
- Microsoft SharePoint Foundation 2010 (free) - plus Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010 (commercial extension for Foundation), and SharePoint Enterprise 2010 (commercial extension for Server)
- Microsoft SharePoint Foundation 2013 (free) - plus Microsoft SharePoint Server 2013 (extension on top of Foundation)

The key point to consider is that SharePoint is a development platform, so a potential users needs be careful they choose the version with the feature set they need and budget for the necessary in-house training or professional services.

This whitepaper will focus on Microsoft SharePoint Server 2013, using the generic term SharePoint.

SharePoint provides a web portal which seamlessly connects users, teams, and knowledge so that people can take advantage of relevant information across business processes to help them work more effectively. By presenting information from various systems in one place through a single sign-on, workers can easily share information and collaborate on shared interests or projects.

MS SharePoint provides the following key features:

- Browser based customization of pages
- Document Repository / Libraries
- Message Board
- Ad-hoc data storage
- E-mail notifications
- Advanced Search Capability
- Announcements, contact list and event calendar
- Web content management
- Records management
- OneDrive for Business – store, sync and share documents across devices
- Social Enterprise Features - micro blogs, activity feeds, community sites, Following, Likes and Reputations
- App Store

Capabilities and Speed of Deployment

infoRouter is focused on document management and collaboration, whereas SharePoint has many more intranet and web content management capabilities (blogs, message boards, web page design, forms etc.).

If your focus is purely document management/collaboration, infoRouter has a rich function set out of the box and can be deployed in hours, whereas SharePoint requires specialist skills to setup and deploy.
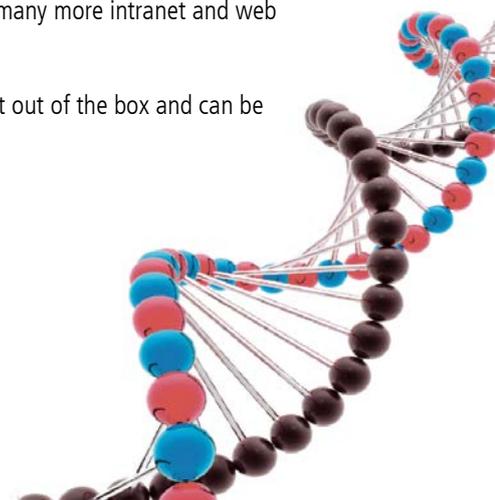
Skills Required

SharePoint - As a development platform, unless a SharePoint template does exactly what you need, you'll require specialist development skills which means training, or a budget for outside expertise.

infoRouter - As a specialist document management application, is quick to train system administrators (1/2 day) or departmental power users (2 hours).

Supported Databases

SharePoint requires a MS SQL database and the appropriate number of CALs (Client Access Licenses).

infoRouter can be installed on SQL, MySQL or Oracle. The MySQL option provides a robust and license free platform to deploy infoRouter on.

Performance and Scalability

SharePoint has a document size limit of 2GB, however the default is 250MB.
SharePoint has a recommended 200GB limit on the database size for most normal usage scenarios – this can be achieved quickly if a business is storing large CAD drawings, presentations, video, or image files. As SharePoint stores all information (file content, meta-data, site data etc.) in the SQL database, administrators must have the requisite database knowledge and training to maintain the health of the database.

infoRouter has a recommended 1GB upload file size but has no such limit on total file storage (held in the document warehouse), with installations in excess of 1 terabyte of data and over 15,000 users. As infoRouter only stores the meta-data and portal information in the database, the database is far smaller and doesn't require the same level of maintenance.

API

Both products have an API (Application Programming Interface) to allow custom developments. As infoRouter specialises in a more defined area (document collaboration), the API is more readily understood and utilised, with less specialist training required.

Restricted File Types

SharePoint restricts certain file types, these include; batch files, executables, MS Access files and Dynamic Link Libraries.

infoRouter has no such restriction on files types and can be used to replace any of the content previously stored on shared drives. infoRouter will store file types as diverse as emails to executables or engineering firmware updates.

Scanning and other data inputs

SharePoint does not have a scanning facility which allows users to scan and index paper documents.

infoRouter has the Scan Station which allows users to capture image files (TIF, PDF, JPG, GIF etc.), view them, index and finally commit to infoRouter libraries or workflows. This facility is basic but ideal for individual users.

Advanced scanning capabilities, such as zonal OCR or intelligent data extraction, can be added to both products through recognised 3rd party providers such as ABBYY and Kodak.

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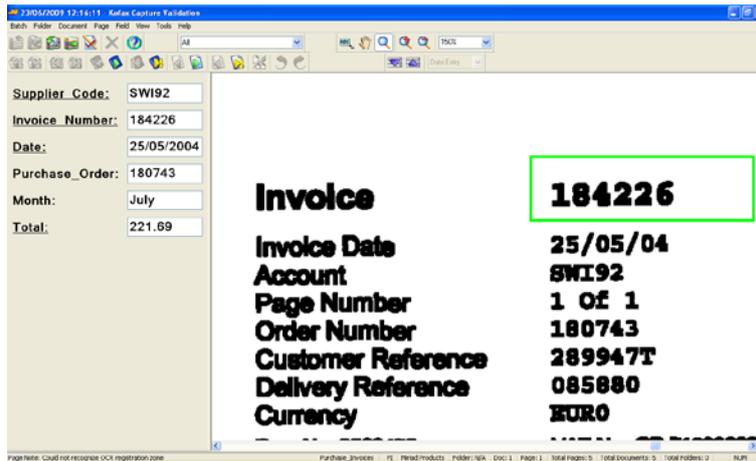
An Example of Zonal OCR

Batch loading documents from other applications into infoRouter can be achieved via the infoRouter Hot Folder Service – this allows documents and meta-data to be automatically uploaded into specific libraries and instigate workflows if required. To achieve this in SharePoint, API development would be required or the use of a 3rd Party product.

Document Genetics have developed a "shrink wrap" set of scanning and data capture solutions for infoRouter, reducing the cost of deployment.
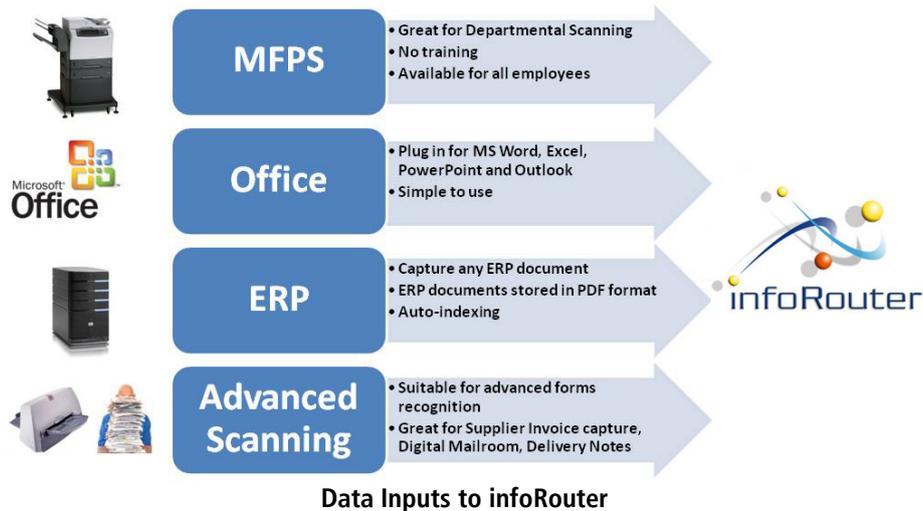
**Data Inputs to infoRouter**

Workflow

infoRouter provides simple workflow routing of documents which can easily be configured by users or admin staff. However, there is no workflow API to design complex workflows.

SharePoint has pre-built workflow templates, which are often a good starting point to design more advanced workflow processes. However, to develop custom workflows administrators need SharePoint Designer or .Net development skills. In addition, 3rd party workflow products are also available which integrate with SharePoint.

Browser support and System Requirements

SharePoint runs best when used with MS Internet Explorer and requires MS Exchange for email integration.

infoRouter works with most HTML5 compliant browsers (Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, MS Internet Explorer etc.) and can integrate with any SMTP capable email server to provide email notifications.
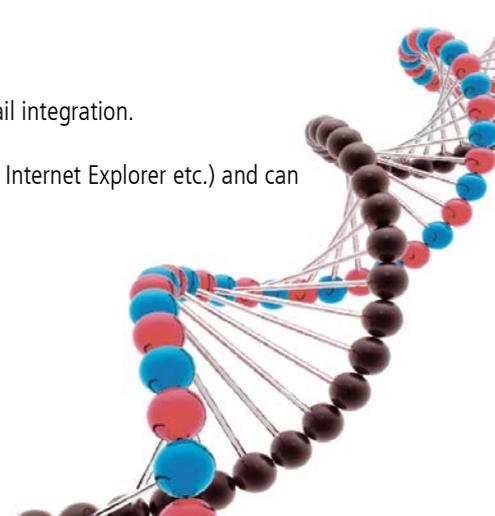
Licensing

infoRouter has a simple licensing model, with a base system which includes the server and 10 client licenses – extra users are added as required. Assuming the MySQL database is deployed there is no further database license cost. The infoRouter client license also includes the Scan Station (FOC) and Hot Folders Service. infoRouter provides an unlimited number of anonymous users, but these users are restricted to viewing documents in the public library.

As SharePoint runs on a SQL database and the appropriate number of CALs (Client Access Licenses) must be purchased. It's fair to say, SharePoint licensing can be confusing, so here's an official statement from Microsoft:

"Microsoft licenses SharePoint Server 2013 under the Server/Client Access License (CAL) licensing model. The Server/CAL licensing model requires both a server license for each copy of the server software a customer installs and uses and CALs for the users (or devices) that access that software. CAL requirements vary based on user status, and CALs are generally required for internal users to access all SharePoint Server software. An exception to this is internal user access to Internet websites (public-facing websites such as e-commerce sites).In this case, the SharePoint CAL requirement is waived. In contrast to the general requirement for CALs for internal user access, CALs are not required for external users to access SharePoint Server. In other words, the server license provides access rights for external users. The same criteria can be used for determining when CALs are required for SharePoint base CALs and Enterprise CALs; however, SharePoint Enterprise CALs are required only if functionality corresponding to the SharePoint Enterprise CAL is accessed" (Volume Licensing Brief – Licensing Microsoft SharePoint Server 2013. https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/Licensing/learn-more/brief-sharepoint-server-2013.aspx).

Conclusion

We hope this whitepaper has succeeded in comparing SharePoint and infoRouter and given a good account of the strengths and weaknesses of both.

To conclude, if your requirement is focused around document management and collaboration, then infoRouter provides an excellent solution. It's cost effective, fast to implement with little or no specialist skills required.

If however, your requirement is for document management coupled with more advanced intranet and social networking applications, and you have the skills and budget, then SharePoint is an excellent platform on which to build a solution.

Contact Document Genetics

Document Genetics is an established UK based company providing a comprehensive range of business automation software. We focus on improving document automation, workflow and collaboration within our client organisations, and our range of innovative solutions and specialist services help to save time and money by processing documents and data more efficiently. If you'd like to discuss your supplier invoice application with Document Genetics, we'll be delighted to help.

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