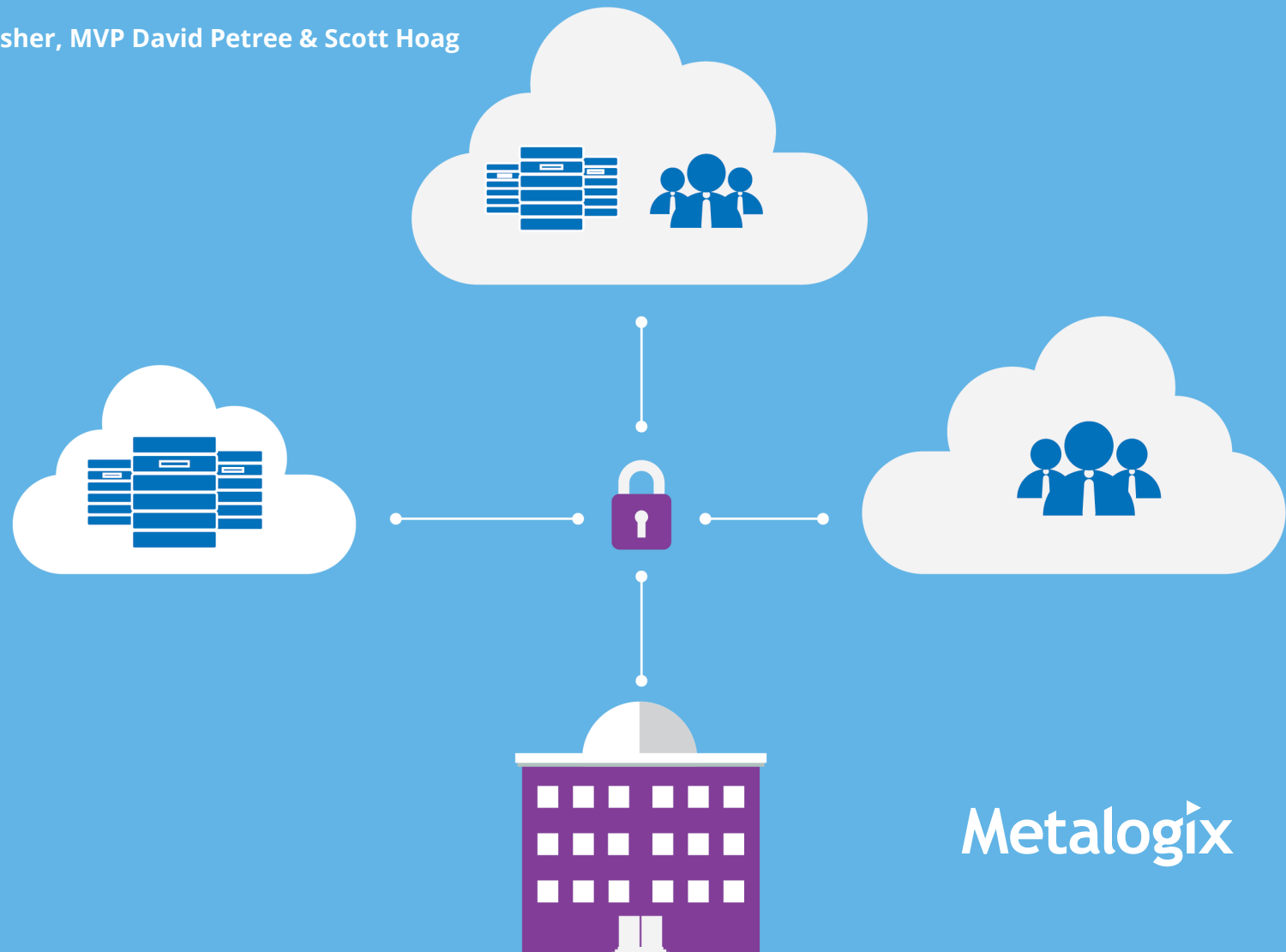


Debunking Hybrid SharePoint 2016 Myths

By Adam Levithan, MVP Dan Usher, MVP David Petree & Scott Hoag

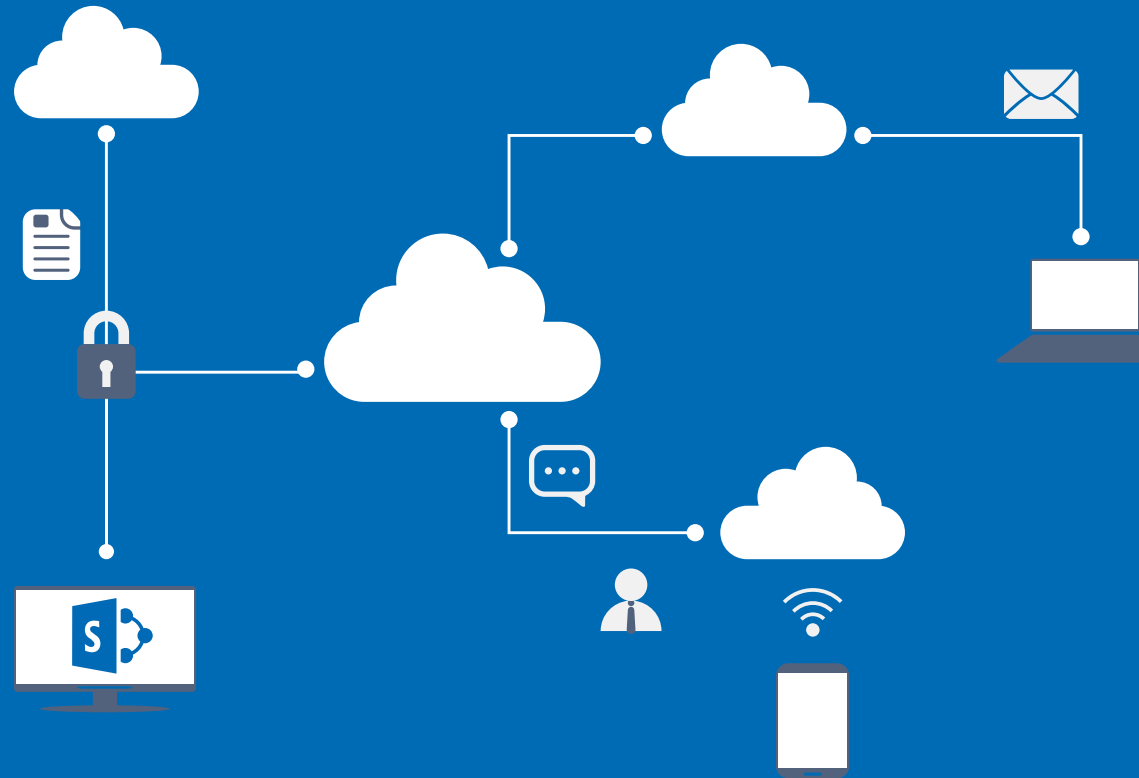


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There is a widespread perception that creating a hybrid on-premises and cloud environment using Microsoft SharePoint is complicated and costly. This is far from the truth – in reality, it is really no different than when you've been tasked to join two systems together in the past. This eBook argues that your worries about hybrid need to be debunked, and shows the numerous ways you can implement hybrid SharePoint 2016 and Office 365 environments for your organization.



Is hybrid really so complicated?

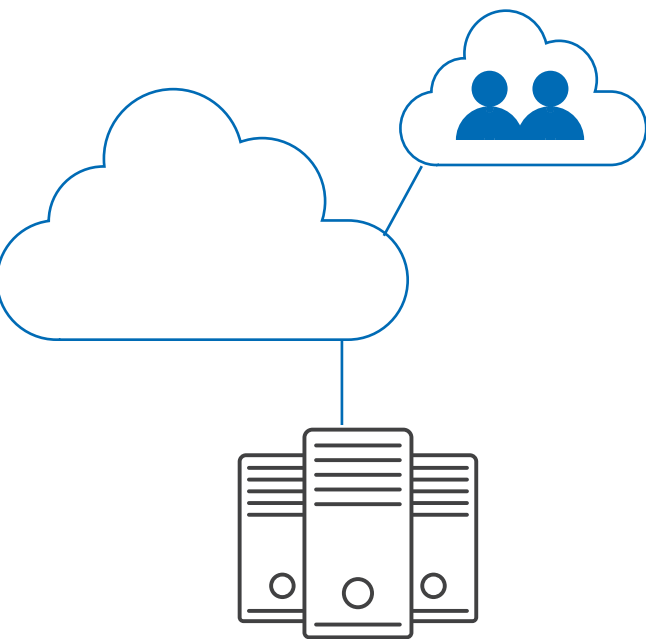
There is a widespread perception that creating a hybrid cloud environment is difficult, costly and complex. An article in the independent magazine ITProPortal in January 2016 summed up the perception as follows:

“The idea of orchestration [of various cloud services with on-prem services] sounds great, but puts a huge burden on the IT staff. They have to become experts in cloud platforms that don’t work the same way as the systems in their data center. Most IT people will tell you they’re too busy keeping things up and running to become an expert in a few different cloud platforms”.¹

IT professionals spend a lot of time trying to make systems work together seamlessly, so adding cloud integration to their environments is seen as an additional complication. Moving part of the business to the cloud will only mean more environments to manage, more things to go wrong, more security threats and more weak-points that might break down.

This might be true in some situations. However, for organizations whose primary working environment is based on SharePoint, going hybrid is, in fact, very straightforward. Microsoft is proactively encouraging organizations to consider a hybrid cloud environment, and SharePoint 2016 is particularly forthright in encouraging companies to go hybrid. Microsoft has focused on making it easy to create a hybrid environment which will suit your business and IT needs, and is open to a range of hybrid scenarios, which we’ll cover a few in this ebook.

What is 'hybrid'?



In its broadest sense, hybrid can be defined as “something that is formed by combining two or more things”². Traditionally hybrid refers to the cross breeding of plants or animals – such as donkeys and horses to create mules. In the context of IT, a hybrid environment is any environment where two different services are made to work together. TechTarget defines hybrid cloud like this:

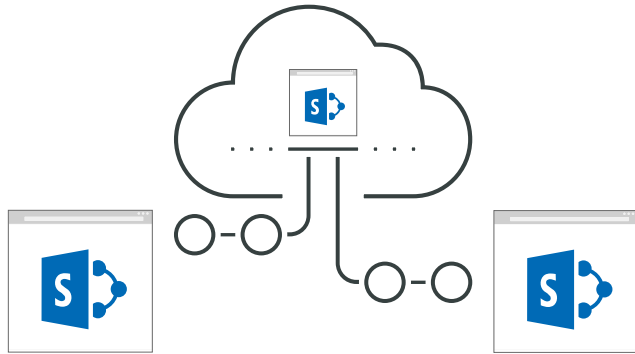
“Hybrid cloud is a cloud computing environment which uses a mix of on-premises, private cloud and third-party, public cloud services with orchestration between the two platforms. By allowing workloads to move between private and public clouds as computing needs and costs change, hybrid cloud gives businesses greater flexibility and more data deployment options.”³

In terms of building a hybrid cloud between SharePoint 2016 on-premises and the cloud, the process is actually much easier than many think.

Debunking three 'hard hybrid' myths

There are numerous reasons why companies perceive hybrid to be a complicated matter. However, these perceptions need to be countered with facts.

Most companies already have some form of hybrid IT in place – although this may not be directly between on-premises and a cloud environment. For example, if you have a SharePoint Intranet and want to display data from an external tool – such as an HR platform – in a SharePoint list, you would use Business Connectivity Services. In this way, most SharePoint managers will have created at least a handful of hybrid environments in the past. Hybrid cloud to on-premises is really no more complicated.



Myth 1: **“It’s hard to integrate tools and data”**

There is a commonly held belief that integrating on-premises tools and data with the cloud is difficult to do. This is not the case with SharePoint. Microsoft has made it very easy to create a streamlined connection between the two. David Petree, a Microsoft MVP who appeared in our recent webinar on hybrid cloud, described the way we can easily place different SharePoint sites in different environments:

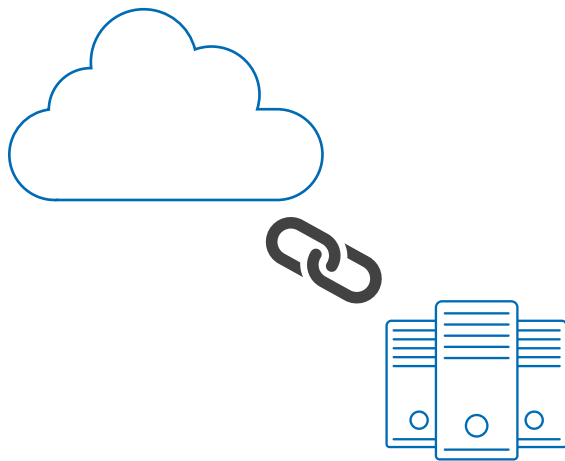
“So I think with the new SharePoint 2016 and hybrid, [and how that ties in with] compliance and all that stuff... my favorite thing is being able to split the sites between the two”.⁴



Myth 2: **“Ensuring documents are stored in the right place is going to be hard”**

When you create a SharePoint and Microsoft cloud hybrid, this myth just isn't true. To quote Scott Hoag, a Senior SharePoint Engineer and respected speaker who also contributed to our webinar, profile redirection between on-premises SharePoint and Office 365 is actually very easy:

“It's one of those things you can just turn on. There's no need for any additional infrastructure in place... for the most part it really is seamless and you get a lot of extra bang”.⁵



Myth 3: **“Linking the different environments is a headache”**

It's common to hear IT pros complain that linking online and on-premises will involve a lot of extra work. Once again, this just isn't true. Speaking on our hybrid cloud webinar, Dan Usher, MVP, explained that in most cases, SharePoint 2016 is set up to link work in the different environments automatically:

“This saves headaches for the end user and the IT pro”.⁶

Why go hybrid?

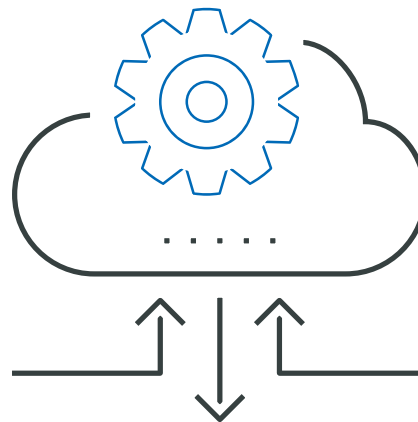
Setting up a hybrid environment is straightforward, and by implementing it you can have a significant positive impact on how your organization works:

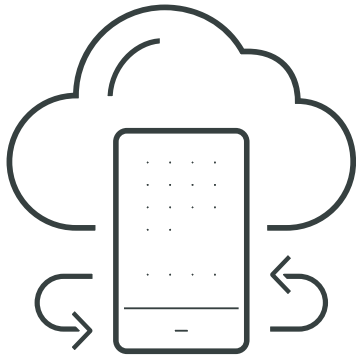
- Ensure access to data 100% of the time
- Set yourself up for the digital workplace
- Access almost unlimited storage space at drastically reduced costs
- Stay compliant with national regulations

A flexible approach

It is perfectly understandable that IT pros are cautious about moving to a hybrid cloud and on-premises environment. However, the fact is that Microsoft has worked hard to make it incredibly easy to link the two environments in whatever way suits your business.

In the following section we look at some of the common hybrid scenarios that a SharePoint and Microsoft cloud environment can facilitate.





The most common hybrid scenarios and how to implement them

Creating a hybrid SharePoint and Office 365 scenario is not a 'one size fits all' affair. Whatever the needs of your organization, some form of hybrid can be implemented. Choosing between these hybrid scenarios will depend on your company's IT strategy, needs and compliance situation. Importantly, creating a hybrid cloud with SharePoint is flexible too – you can opt in for more services later if you need, or even remove some.

1. The original Office 365 hybrid

In this scenario, you would use Exchange in the cloud for all email and SharePoint on-premises for document management and collaboration. This gives you the advantage of best-in-class services for both and the security of keeping files local.

In this case you would most likely use SharePoint on-premises to store your most sensitive documents – those which for regulatory reasons you don't want to store outside of the local firewall.

Main considerations of this approach:

This is by far the easiest approach to hybrid, because, all of your SharePoint governance stays exactly the same (unless your organization works under regulatory rules for email). What does change is your authentication methodology. You now need to decide on single sign-on (SSO) or same sign on. In the single sign-on situation you log in once, and in same sign-on you would need to log-in to a browser a second time (if accessing your e-mail there). These choice extend throughout each scenario and become less important as your organization becomes mobile and crosses many devices.

2. The Extranet scenario

In this scenario, you would create a hybrid between SharePoint Online and SharePoint on-premises. The on-premises iteration would be used as your company Intranet and fulfill all the functions that SharePoint has always been involved in. The online tool, by contrast, is used as an Extranet and offers a collaborative space for working on documents with suppliers and external colleagues.

Major considerations of this approach

This is an appealing option. In the past, creating an Extranet was a real headache, requiring you to set up security, governance and providing access to information via the corporate firewall. Again, the major work will depend on managing access and permissions and ensuring internal users understand the difference between the two environments. With Office 365 you do not need to be your partners' IT department because they are able to use a Microsoft Live account, or Office 365 if they have one, to authenticate and access the document being shared.

3. The seamless scenario (the 'ideal' SharePoint 2016 model)

In this scenario, SharePoint bridges cloud and on-premises completely transparently to end users. It requires you to use the standard design in SharePoint 2016 (which looks identical to Office 365's design) and is so closely integrated, most users won't know whether they're using the on-premises version of SharePoint or if they're currently in the cloud. You will have hybrid team sites, a hybrid app launcher, hybrid search and more.

If, for instance, the user logs into SharePoint 2016, they will be greeted by the standard SharePoint page design. However, when they open the SharePoint 2016 on-premises app launcher, they'll also have direct access to Office 365 apps and go straight to these without noticing any difference in user experience.

Major considerations of this approach

This is an appealing approach. It creates a completely seamless experience for users and avoids the mental confusion of having to skip between different environments. This option does depend on OneDrive for Business to store the user's personal files in the cloud while also making them accessible on-premises. Microsoft assures that OneDrive for Business will keep on improving, but it is still catching up to other file sync and share services.

4. The compliance-conscious scenario

In this scenario, SharePoint helps you comply with local and international laws and standards while making it easy to search for content over both environments. This approach allows you to index data and define in which environment it is held, while also creating a seamless search where end users will not notice the difference in their results.

Major considerations of this approach

At present, this approach will only be available for users of SharePoint 2016. While Microsoft is working hard to synchronize searches between Office 365 and SharePoint 2013, it is currently a complicated process which usually involves showing users separate search results from the cloud and the on-premises server. As the name also implies, Microsoft is working hard to make Office 365 completely compliant with many international laws and standards (for instance, it is regularly opening cloud data centers in new territories so it meets requirements to store data within national boundaries), many firms are keen to keep some data securely in local servers.

Your choices

Regardless of the scenario you choose, creating a hybrid environment is not particularly complicated. Perhaps the greatest challenge is in deciding which parts of SharePoint on-premises and the cloud's functionality you want to make interact. Basing your choice on your business strategy will make it easier to inform your decisions.



Migration: The Next Step

Now that I've debunked the myths of the hybrid dilemma, you should feel more confident in making the right choices for taking your organization to SharePoint 2016. Once you've made the decision to migrate, you should read The SharePoint Server 2016 Migration Planning Guide, an eBook that I wrote with co-expert, Dr. Steve Marsh.

Designed for decision makers, the free eBook helps IT teams increase the success of their migration by identifying key questions, roadblock issues, test planning and best practices.

Download The Ebook

The hybrid dilemma is not a dilemma at all

Choosing a hybrid, on-premises and cloud working environment has often been portrayed as a complicated option. 'Pure' on-premises or cloud environments are often perceived as preferable because they are used in the way the product creators had originally intended them to be used.

However, this isn't really true, as this eBook has shown. Creating a hybrid environment is in fact straightforward and, in the case of SharePoint 2016, is effectively encouraged by Microsoft.

Whether you decide to migrate to a new version of SharePoint on-premises, opt for Office 365 or create a hybrid solution perfectly tailored to your company, Metalogix provides key migration and content management tools to provide you full control – whatever environment you choose. Contact us today to learn more.

About Metalogix

Metalogix is the premier provider of unified management software to migrate, manage and secure content across enterprise collaboration platforms in the cloud and on-premises.

Over 20,000 clients trust Metalogix to optimize the availability, performance, and security of their content across the collaboration lifecycle.

The Metalogix logo, featuring the word "Metalogix" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The dot over the 'i' is a small triangle pointing to the right.

US. +1 202.609.9100

www.Metalogix.com

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Citations

¹ Phillips, Barry. 2016. Does anyone really want hybrid cloud? Available online: <http://www.itproportal.com/2016/01/28/does-anyone-really-want-hybrid-cloud/#ixzz458V2HpDI>

² Merriam Webster Dictionary. 2016. Hybrid. Available online: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hybrid>

³ Tech Target. 2016. Hybrid Cloud. Available online: <http://searchcloudcomputing.techtarget.com/definition/hybrid-cloud>

⁴ Metalogix. 2016. Special Round Table Event: What the SharePoint 2016 Release Means to IT Pros. Available online: <http://www.metalogix.com/Promotions/Content-Matrix/Recordings/160324-mvp-expert-roundtable-event-sharepoint-2016>

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid