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What's new in Office 365 Groups for April 2017

By the Office 365 team, on April 6, 2017 | 23 Shares

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With over 85-million monthly Office 365 users, there's no such thing as a typical customer. That's why we built Office to embrace the diverse needs of the modern workplace by giving teams their choice of tools. Even within a single organization, different teams often have different demands for the productivity tools they use every day. What's unique about Office 365 is the ability to deliver tools that meet these diverse needs—all on a single, manageable platform.

Supporting these teams is Office 365 Groups, a membership service leveraged by millions of users, which helps teams collaborate in their app of choice, including: Outlook, SharePoint, Skype for Business, Planner, Yammer, OneNote and Microsoft Teams. Office 365 Groups helps to structure, format and store information in a way that is accessible across different applications, but remains secure and easily manageable.

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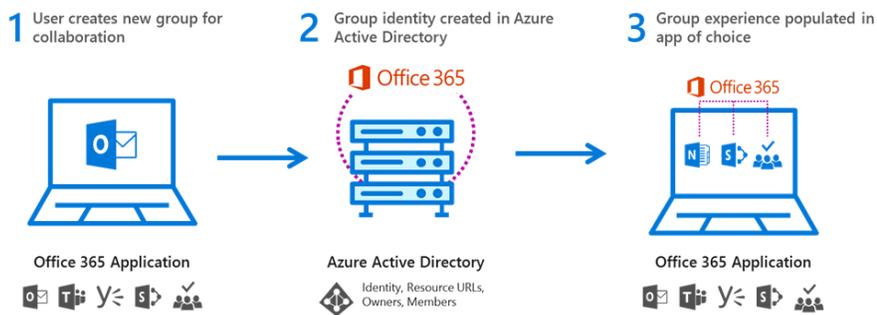
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Enhancements to help admins manage groups

A key benefit of Office 365 Groups is that any user in your organization can create a group and start collaborating with others in seconds. Self-service creation is great for users, but we know IT admins need to be able to easily manage groups, gain insight into their use, control their directories and ensure compliance of group data. Today, we are announcing new enhancements for administering Office 365 Groups to support these needs:

- Restore deleted groups—If you deleted an Office 365 group, it's now retained by default for a period of 30 days. Within that period, you can restore the group and its associated apps and data via a new PowerShell cmdlet.

- Retention policies—Manage group content produced by setting up retention policies to keep what you want and get rid of what you don't need. Admins can now create Office 365 Groups retention policies that apply to the group's shared inbox and files in one step using the Office 365 Security & Compliance Center.

- Label management—With labels, you can classify Office 365 Groups emails and documents across your organization for governance, and enforce retention rules based on that classification.

This adds to our broad set of group management tools recently rolled out to Office 365 customers:

- Guest access—Guest access in Office 365 Groups enables you and your team to collaborate with people from outside your

organization by granting them access to group conversations, files, calendar invitations and the group notebook.

- Upgrade Distribution Groups to Office 365 Groups—The Exchange Admin Center now offers an option to upgrade eligible Distribution Groups to Office 365 Groups with one click.

- Data classification*—You can create a customizable data classification system for Office 365 Groups, such as unclassified, corporate confidential or top secret.

- Usage guidelines*—You can define usage guidelines for Office 365 Groups—to educate your users about best practices that help keep their groups effective, and educate them on internal content policies.

- Azure AD Connect*— Enables group writeback to your Active Directory to support on-premises Exchange mailboxes. See "Configure Office 365 Groups with on-premises Exchange" for more information.

- Dynamic membership*—Admins can define groups with rule-based memberships using the Azure Management Portal or via PowerShell. Group membership is usually updated within minutes as users' properties change. This allows easy management of larger groups or the creation of groups that always reflect the organization's structure.

- Hidden membership—If you want group membership to be confidential (for example, if the members are students), you can hide the Office 365 group members from users who aren't members of the group.

- Creation policies—There may be some people in your organization that you don't want to be able to create new groups. There are several techniques for managing creation permissions in your directory.

- Office 365 Groups activity report—These reports includes group properties, messages received and group mailboxes storage over time. Note you can also leverage the SharePoint site usage report to track groups' file storage.

A look at upcoming features

Because Office 365 is a subscription service, we're able to continue improving the admin capabilities based on customer feedback.

Here's a look at some of the enhancements on our [Roadmap](#) for the next three months:

- **Expiry policy***—Soon, you will be able to set a policy that automatically deletes a group and all its associated apps after a specific period. The group owner(s) will receive an email notification prior to the expiration date, and they will be able to extend the expiration date if the group is still in use. Once the expiration date is reached, the group will be soft deleted for 30 days (and hence can be restored by an administrator if needed).

- **Azure AD naming policy***—Admins will be able to configure a policy for appending text to the beginning or end of a group's name and email address no matter where the group is created, such as Outlook, Planner, Power BI, etc. Admins will be able to configure a list of specific blocked words that can't be used in group names and rely on the native list of thousands of blocked words to keep their directories clean.

- **Default classification and classification description**—Will enable admins to set default Office 365 Groups classification at the tenant level using PowerShell cmdlets. In addition, admins will be able to provide a description for each of the defined classifications.

- **Classification is available when creating or modifying a group across apps**—Selecting a group classification will be available when creating or editing a group across the following Office 365 applications: Outlook, SharePoint, Planner, Yammer and StaffHub.

Learn more

See this recent [presentation](#) from Ignite Australia to learn more about Office 365 Groups, and join our [Ask Us Anything](#) session on the Microsoft Tech Community on April 13, 2017 at 9 a.m. PDT (UTC-7) to discuss these recent administration updates.

Get started with the [Office 365 Groups](#) online resources today.

—Christophe Fiessinger, [@cfiessinger](#), senior program manager for the Office 365 Groups team

*_[Azure Active Directory Premium](#) is required._

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