Microsoft Azure - Starter Kits for Partners

Introduction to Starter Kits

SharePoint in Azure Scenario

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# Overview

In this document, we will cover the recommendations and guidance for hosting a SharePoint farm in Microsoft Azure. We introduce the concept of a “Starter Kit”, essentially demonstrate how to leverage this concept of a packaged offering to accelerate the Partner sales and deployment cycle.

# The SharePoint Problem

In most cases as far as SharePoint capabilities goes we recommend Office 365. SharePoint Online is a product Microsoft provides as a SAAS (Software as a Service) delivering the powerful features of SharePoint without the overhead of managing the infrastructure on your own and still include flexible management options to retain the control customers need in their organization. However, a SharePoint Server farm hosted in Azure can be a good option for specific number of scenarios such as:

* Disaster Recovery of on-premises SharePoint farms to Azure
* Internet-facing sites that use features and scale not available in Office 365
* SharePoint Business Intelligence features not available in Office 365
* Development and Test Environments
* App farms to support Office 365 or on-premises environments

Discussing in depth all these scenarios is beyond the scope of this document but we will address the architecture that is common for hosting a SharePoint farm in Azure that should serve as a base for these more advanced scenarios.

# The Proposed Solution

Whichever scenario fits best your needs Microsoft Azure Infrastructure Services can quickly deploy a farm of SharePoint to which you can build and configure your solution scenario. Provisioning Virtual Machines in minutes gives, you access to a sandbox and a lab. Most development, test and lab environments are project-based and do not need to be up and running 24x7. When you are done, simply turn your virtual machines off. **You pay for what you use and no more**.

## Are you considering a Disaster Recovery site for your SharePoint Environment?

A Disaster Recovery environment can be expensive to build and hard to maintain on-premises. You can use Azure instead of investing resources in creating and maintaining your secondary datacenter in a different region. The number of resources depends on the disaster recovery environment you choose (Cold, Warm or Hot standby) but Azure is easier to maintain and you can easily scale out your recovery SharePoint farm to meet load requirements. In a Warm standby for example, your farm is built, virtual machines are provisioned, running and updated. Recovery would include attaching content databases, provisioning service applications and crawling content but the farm could be a smaller version of the production farm and then scaled out to serve the full user base.

## Are you considering Internet-facing sites that use features and scale not available in Office 365?

By using Microsoft Azure to host Internet sites based on SharePoint Server 2013 you can focus on developing a great site and improve your internet presence and customer or partner experience rather than focusing on building infrastructure. You can take advantage of Azure elasticity, size the farm according to fluctuating demand and pay only the resources you need. You can also take advantage of other Azure services such as Azure AD to store your customer and external accounts. Finally, you can also use functionality that is not available in Office 365 such as deep reporting or web analytics.

## Do you need to use SharePoint Business Intelligence features that are not available in Office 365?

Office 365 offers plenty of Business Intelligence capabilities that your organization can use to gather data and turn it into meaningful information that you can use to make better business decisions. Excel 2013, SharePoint Online and Power BI together offer a full range of capabilities to view, explore, analyze and share data. Some new functionality such as Q&A and Power BI are only available in the cloud but you still may consider using and taking advantage of Business Intelligence features that are present SharePoint Server 2013. With Azure Virtual Machines you can deploy an entire farm of SharePoint including multiple servers that will run PowerPivot for SharePoint 2013 and Reporting Services in SharePoint mode and Analysis Services Server in SharePoint mode.

## Do you have server boxes under your developers’ desks where they create build environments and mimic production servers or have App farms that support your Office 365 or on-premises environments?

Let Microsoft Azure Virtual Machines handle that for you - quickly. The server box under the desk does not need to run 24x7, be maintained all year long and refreshed every three years. Get access to pre-built SharePoint Trial and many other Microsoft workload images in the gallery, pick from the open source community VM Depot or bring VHDs images of your own that replicates your production environment. Use scripts to deploy a copy of your farm environment in Azure every time you need it and bring them down when you are done. Most SharePoint development projects have multiple stages of development, testing and cyclic updates and hosting SharePoint in Azure is a good option for these scenarios. In the same way if you are planning to have App farms to support your cloud or on-premises environment, consider using not only using Azure to build and test but also host those apps instead of buying new hardware.

# Partner Needs

Partners want to make profitable businesses by deploying and selling Microsoft Azure.

They also want to sell and deploy Azure with SharePoint Scenarios, but do not have the experience or understanding to say what is possible or know possible ways to sell the value of it or set it up.

At the same time, Partners and Customers have expressed a need to have more capacity that is flexible in their businesses for running VMs for various purposes. They want to spend less time managing hardware and IT and more time selling and deploying.

# Introduction to Starter Kits

This concept is a set of deliverables, packaged as an offering that are named as a starter kit. Starter kits are designed to show a partner a specific scenario in Azure that could be possible for them to build and equip them in the technical sales cycle. Each kit will include:

1. A Description of the partner benefit for using and participating in the kit.
2. An assessment questionnaire and guidance that Partners could use with a customer.
3. An Architecture Topology presentation for a recommended way to implement the specified scenario.
4. A cost estimator (based on retail pricing) for implementing the recommended scenario on Azure.
5. A Statement of Work template for implementing the recommended scenario that a partner could use.
6. Hands on Labs a Partner can self-study to build technical skill implementing the recommended scenario.

# Starter Kits - Partner Benefits

1. Reduce time in creating a proposal for a customer through a sale and deployment template
2. Reduce the learning curve cost by focusing on a proven scenario
3. Help assess and determine the technical requirements for deploying SharePoint in Azure
4. Sell, estimate cost and deploy working solutions to your customer.
5. Get tools and templates to use when discussing a SharePoint deployment with your customers.
6. Receive a recommended set of topology diagrams for implementing a SharePoint scenario on Azure.
7. Receive guidance for self-study for learning the recommended SharePoint scenario at a technology level.