



Integrating Sharepoint 2013 Online with Responsive Drupal Presentation Layer Using Office 365 App Model

SUMMARY

A unique aspect of this project is O365 App Model approach to integrate SharePoint 2013 Online and Drupal using SAML 2 Authentication along with Okta Identity Management. The integration module includes a document reference field that allows O365 documents to be associated with Drupal entities. The module authenticates against a SharePoint 2013 REST endpoint to fetch document metadata which is stored along with the document references that permit direct download of files that "live" in SharePoint 2013.

APPROACH FOR DRUPAL - SHAREPOINT INTEGRATION:

There are multiple ways one can integrate Sharepoint with Drupal. But the approach which we use for an Enterprise implementation is very important. How does one securely create a bidirectional presentation layer in Drupal which ensures that all the granular access controls are still validated.

In this session we will discuss the different approaches that can be used to connect your Sharepoint 2013 with Drupal; the unique opportunities available; and challenges posed. Primary focus would be on creating highly secure SAML 2 compliant SSO; and integrating with Identity Management providers via OKTA.

Common Approach (Not fully secure)

It is common approach to use some Sharepoint Administrator account login credentials to communicate with sharepoint (using REST calls) from Drupal. But it is not secure to store the Sharepoint Administrator credentials at the Drupal End.

SAML Based SSO (Secure Approach)

A secure way for communicating with Sharepoint would be to **not** store usernames and passwords. This can be achieved by using a single sign-on using an Identity Provider like OKTA. Using this approach the user will be redirected to OKTA where he enters his login credentials and will be automatically signed in to OKTA and sharepoint. While this approach works for a browser based workflow, the challenge is how do we connect to Sharepoint to pull, push data using code without using usernames and passwords. The solutions are -

Azure AD Authentication Library

In case of Office 365 + Azure AD environments, we can use ADAL (Active Directory Authentication Library) to securely connect with Office 365 Sharepoint. But most of the enterprise companies are not yet comfortable with moving their Active Directories to the cloud.

Sharepoint APP

We can connect to sharepoint securely using Sharepoint APP Model. This approach is something similar to Facebook, Twitter apps. We need to deploy an app on sharepoint, which will provide secure authentication to Drupal. A Token is provided by the app after authentication which can be used in the subsequent REST calls. We are storing the token in the SESSION to improve the performance. The token is re-generated only upon expiration of the token

DESCRIPTION

CASE STUDY - PROJECT GOAL:

Redesign current Intranet and deploy a social collaborative space that is representative of the dynamic work culture.

The Social Intranet project was intended to deliver the following benefits:

1. Increased collaboration and employee engagement through the development of a strong people centric organizational brand.
2. Targeted and more effective communication by capturing and enhancing a knowledge sharing culture.
3. Increased productivity through improved content organization and search functionality, enabling staff to locate information quickly and easily.

OPPORTUNITY AND CHALLENGES:

The existing intranet portal was built on sharepoint 2010 On-Premise and was being ported to Sharepoint Online 2013 parallelly during this project.

The major challenges that employees had with their portal were

1. Inconsistency in the layout of various sites making it difficult to navigate.
2. Ineffective search.
3. Lack of social layer and interactions in intranet.
4. Too many legacy apps which lived in their own silos.
5. Dashboard could not be personalised.

We carried out a detailed survey to prioritize the features that employees wanted in their new intranet portal.

Based on the feedback following conclusion were arrived at -

Sharepoint is best suited for

1. Knowledge Management
2. Support

Drupal along with External Applications is best suited for

1. Personalization
2. Social Interactions and collaboration
3. Employee Rewards and Recognitions
4. Employee Engagement and Feedback

A balancing act of cleaning up the existing sharepoint intranet and building a new social/personalization layer in Drupal was required. Drupal would serve as the unified front end with a social layer, sharepoint would serve as the backend for knowledge management.

TECHNICAL CHALLENGES:

1. Identity Management and Drupal SSO via OKTA SAML 2.0 Authentication.
2. O365(SPO 2013) Integration,
3. Legacy Application Integrations (Citrix NetScaler Integrations)
4. Granular Access Controls in the Drupal presentation layer using O365 App Model