

> SearchEnterpriseDesktop **Microsoft plays up new Office collaboration tools to boost Windows 8**

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By [Diana Hwang](#)

Microsoft hopes that collaboration tools built into Office 2013 will give enterprise customers reason to also adopt Windows 8, but many businesses already use Web-based office collaboration tools.

The company's drive to encourage enterprise customers to buy the Windows 8 operating system and use collaboration tools in Office, including SharePoint, Skype, Lync and Yammer, was evident during a recent Technology Roadmap event in Boston for IT decision makers.

Microsoft demonstrated how [Windows 8 touch capabilities](#) work with collaboration tools in [Office 2013](#) by taking an Excel pivot table and easily modifying it to conduct data analytics in a visual manner using finger-based movements.

Last week, Microsoft also announced that its [Lync mobile client](#) was available for the Windows Phone and iOS devices.

Whether Microsoft's unified story around collaboration tools will succeed in getting more enterprises to [adopt Windows 8 in a roundabout manner](#) remains to be seen, especially since some end users access their documents and data through any Web browser.

"The tools and office of the future are increasingly made available to our employees through a browser," said Benjamin Doyle, vice president of sales enablement and analytics at Enterasys Networks Inc. in Salem, N.H. "The benefit we get, as an organization, of a new OS is ... less impactful and important to our business. We are trying to be OS- and device-agnostic."

Instead of [SharePoint](#), Enterasys uses a cloud-based collaboration program called Smartsheet.

"Smartsheet is our ninth most used application [in the company]. It's our official project management and collaboration [tool]," he said. The company chose Smartsheet over SharePoint because it was a cost-effective option that was easy to deploy, he said.

"Smartsheet requires almost no IT oversight and administration, which makes it very attractive," Doyle added.

In addition, Enterasys already uses Salesforce.com's Chatter, a competitor to Microsoft's Yammer, an enterprise-level social networking application. "We have high usage [of Chatter] from [every] part of the company, including our CEO," he said.

Previously, Microsoft has said it would provide Yammer Enterprise with Office 365 Enterprise and Yammer Enterprise with SharePoint Online. Yammer Enterprise is available as a standalone product for \$3 per user, per month or through some Office 365 plans. There is a free version of Yammer known as Yammer Basic.

Microsoft demonstrated a Twitter-like customer relationship management chat during the Technology Roadmap event.

Meanwhile, a number of third-party companies provide end users with the capabilities to collaborate and use Office via the cloud on iOS and Android mobile devices -- which means [they don't need](#) Windows 8. One is CloudOn, which plans to deliver a mobile Web browser-based offering that will be accessed from the PC and any non-iOS or Android devices, said Milind Gadekar, CEO of Palo Alto, Calif.-based CloudOn.

Even if Microsoft's collaboration tools don't affect adoption of its next-generation OS, many customers will move to it -- eventually.

"I'm not worried about large enterprises. ... They will roll over to Windows 8 years from now," said Alexei Miller, executive vice president at custom software developer DataArt in New York. "What's more interesting is the stuff that will happen [for] small- to medium-sized enterprises with a lot of features present in Windows 8, [such as] the cloud and hardware integration that I hope more people will find useful."

DataArt uses collaboration tools such as SharePoint and a free non-Microsoft task-based organizer called Trello.

For [Windows 8 to move into the enterprise](#), demand needs to come from the end users, according to Richard Edwards, principal analyst at Ovum, a market research company based in the U.K.

The company just released a new report, dubbed Enterprise 2020, revealing how enterprise collaboration will be the driving force behind innovation and productivity.

Factors such as bring your own device policies, cloud computing, social media and tools to manage it all offer the enterprise the ability to create a productive environment.