

Choosing the Right Site Template

SharePoint Server 2013 Enterprise Edition offers 18 site templates out of the box. Making a decision on which one to use for your site isn't exactly straight forward. However, by asking a set of yes/no questions you can quickly walk through the key criteria for picking the right site template for you.

First, there are four templates that don't even make the decision tree. They're so specialized and designed for administrators that you'll probably never create them. They are:

- Developer – This template is used by developers who are creating solutions with Visual Studio for SharePoint.
- My Site Host – This is used by IT administrators who are setting up profiles on SharePoint.
- Community Portal – Used by IT administrators to create a place where users can find community sites on SharePoint.
- Product Catalog – A starting point for creating a product catalog on SharePoint for Internet publishing.

The decision tree has three basic sections. First, you get a set of screening questions to handle special use cases, second there's a less-common section that handle less-common use cases, and finally the last block of questions handle the most common use cases. They're handled by first eliminating the odd and less common templates then making the decision among the core templates that you're likely to use most often.

In the screening group there are three key questions and site templates:

- Journal or Blog – If the primary purpose of the site is a blog – or a running journal of information, then the blog template may be the best choice. It's specifically designed for this purpose.
- Business Intelligence – If you're building a site for reporting on information and helping the business to make better decisions then the business intelligence center is the way to go.
- Flowchart Library – If you are going to be creating a library for process flows in your organization using Visio, the Visio Process Repository may be the answer.

In the less common -- but still important -- category there are two key questions: Is the site for formal document management or will its primary purpose be for search?

The first question in this group is whether the site will be for formal document management – that doesn't mean simple version control of documents, but rather a large scale document management or knowledge management initiative with or without regulatory compliance needs.

If you're doing formal document management, the next question is whether the site will be an official repository for records. In this case, the right answer is the record center template which is setup to handle records management. If not, you need to consider if you're creating the site to manage

eDiscovery requests. eDiscovery are electronic discovery requests that are caused by legal cases or regulatory requests. You'll know if you need to create an eDiscovery center for compliance events. If not, you'll probably want to start with the standard Document Center template.

The second major decision in the less common block is whether the site will be used primarily for search. If so you'll have to decide whether you need multiple search interfaces in the same site – in other words a tabbed interface. If yes, then you'll need to use the Enterprise site template which includes the built in capability to include multiple search and result pages. If a simple site – without tabs – will do then you can use the basic search center.

The final block includes the most common templates. In this block the major questions are whether the site will be used primarily for communication (vs. collaboration), whether the site will be project specific, and finally whether you anticipate more than 100 users.

Communication sites are different than collaboration sites. If the site will be primarily intended for a small number of people to communicate with a large number of people then it is a communication site. If it's a communication site the next question is whether the information will be unstructured – in other words a collection of random notes. If that's the case, an Enterprise Wiki – with its less structured approach may be ideal.

If it's for structured communication, you simply need to decide whether you're going to have a formal approval workflow. Of the Publishing Site and Publishing Site with Workflow templates the Publishing Site with Workflow template is used for more formal approval situations.

If the site won't be for communication, the next question is whether it is project related. That is, will the site be associated with a single specific project – in that case you'll probably want to use the project site template.

The last question is the basis of the site. Are you building a site to have conversations or manage documents? If you're doing a conversation based site, you'll want to leverage the community site template. If, instead you're focused around management of documents, you'll want to use the Team Site template.

With those questions you should have determined which of the 18 site templates that may work best for your situation.

