



# Utilizing the Microsoft Office 365 Collaboration Toolbox

*Open up Collaboration with Office Groups and Teams*



## UTILIZING THE OFFICE 365 COLLABORATION TOOLBOX

Picture yourself standing next to an empty tool box. If you are building a shed, you'll need to make sure that tool box contains a hammer, a saw, a level, and the host of other tools necessary to build your shed. Without the right tools, you can't build the shed.

What if instead of building a shed, your goal is to build a pool? You'll need a tool box filled with a different set of tools. The same principle applies. If you don't have everything you need for the job, that end goal is going to stay out of range.

If enterprise collaboration is your goal, Microsoft's Office 365 can help you achieve it. Think of Office 365 as a bunch of tools at your disposal. For the first time in any collaboration platform, Microsoft has started making toolboxes in the form of Office Groups and Microsoft Teams. Both are combinations of tools to help you work better, resulting in everything you need to bring employees closer together – regardless of actual physical location – and enabling them to work more effectively and efficiently within your business.

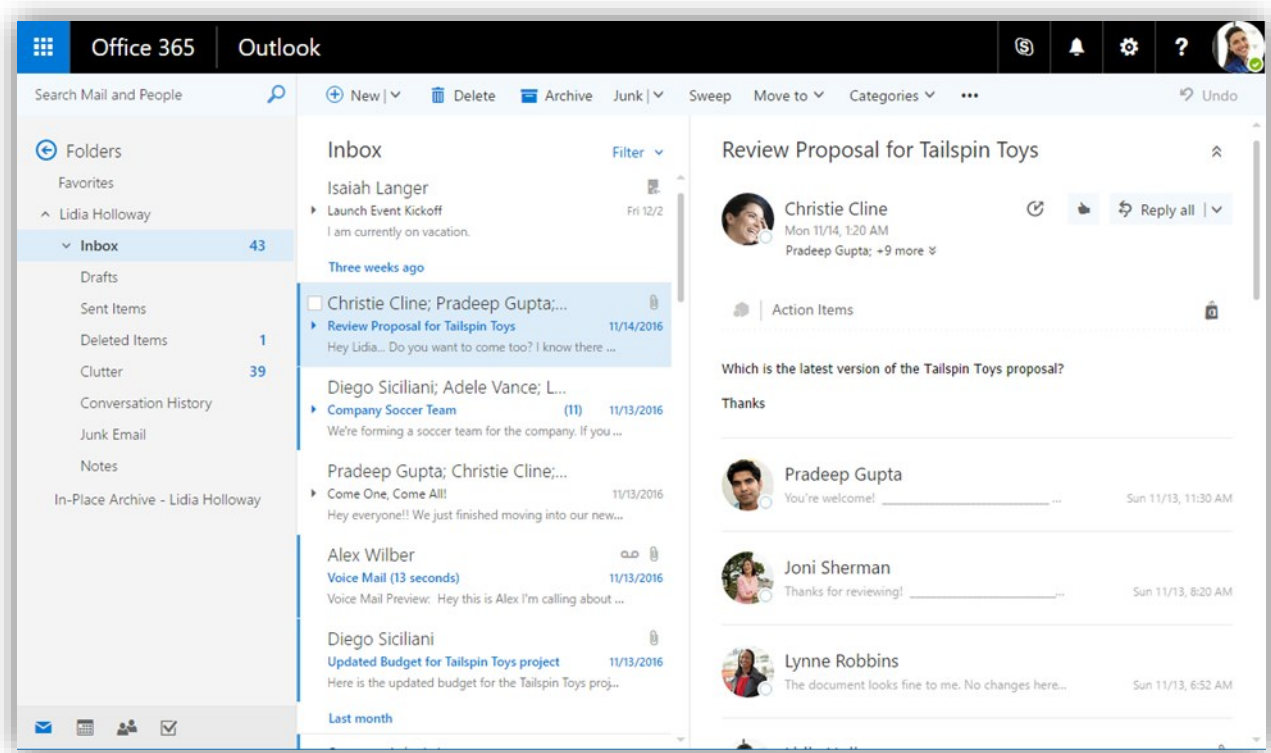
Both Groups and Teams have their place in your organization and, despite looking similar on the surface, they have different use cases. First, let's review what tools are available with Office 365 and, more importantly, how you should use them.



## EXCHANGE & OUTLOOK

Let's start with an easy one: Exchange and Outlook, Office 365's business-class email apps. Email is built on standards and is a core component of business collaboration, a position it's held for decades. As such, its role has been well established. Email – and by extension, Exchange and Outlook – should be leveraged when instant feedback is not a requirement. The expected conversation flow is: Send an email, wait for the recipient to read and respond. If a reasonable amount of time passes and you don't hear back, either send another email or escalate to a different communication method. Either way, there isn't a sense of urgency with email. It requires patience to be effective.

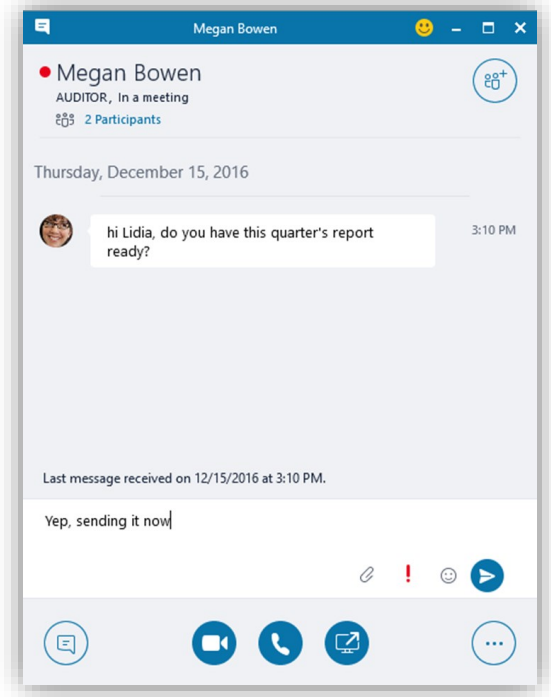
Email is a great way to get work done at a steady pace. Nothing urgent should ever be done over email because it doesn't solicit immediate feedback and too many things can go wrong (spam filters, message queues, etc.).



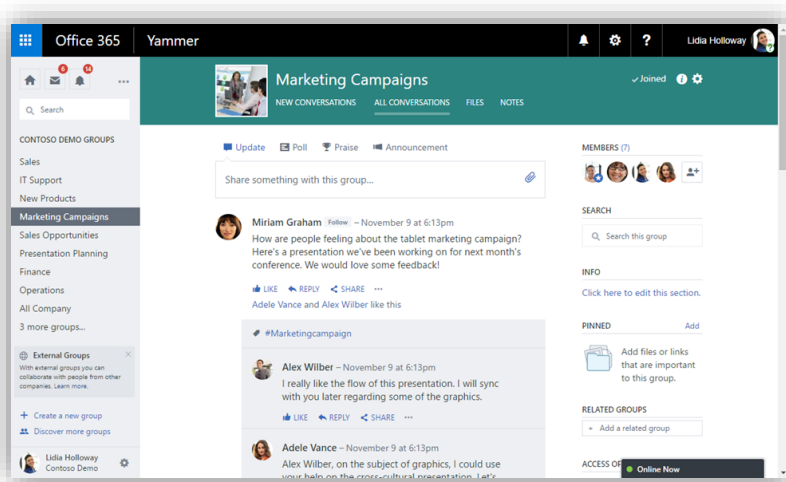
## SKYPE FOR BUSINESS ONLINE

Skype for Business Online is a totally different story. Skype is a messaging, voice, video, desktop sharing, and conferencing app designed to foster real time interactions. There's an intimacy to Skype interactions not found in less urgent methods, such as email. It's perfect for situations where immediate feedback is important. For example, you need an answer to a quick question and need it right away.

Consider your workflow. During the day, you work on a bunch of different tasks. In the middle of a task, you can quickly get an answer without having to send an email and then switch to another task while you wait. This helps you avoid a lengthy and unnecessary email thread and gets you to an answer quickly.



## YAMMER



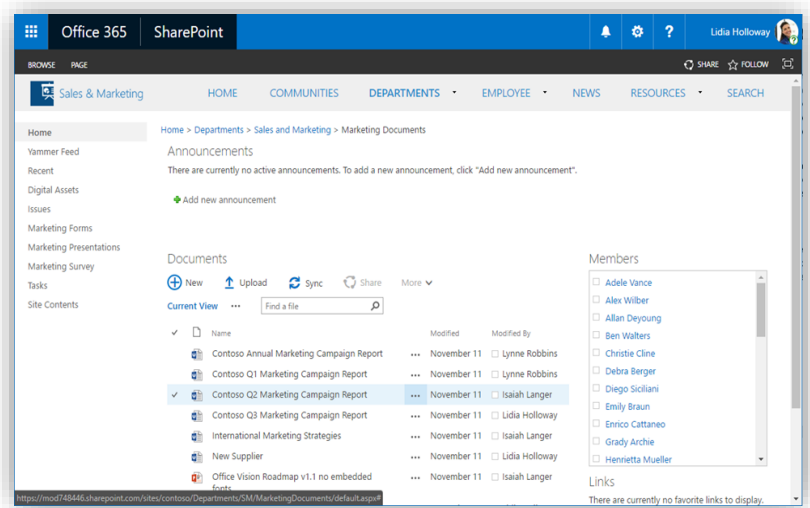
Yammer is social media hub for Office 365. It works great for organizational teams that need to communicate things to the group for discussion. Due to the social nature of the platform, employees can ask questions to a large group and engage in a discussion with anyone who is participating. Similar to email, Yammer is not ideal for immediate conversations. As with all social media networks, it requires the recipient to pick up

the thread and carry it forward. Also, it is not typically targeted to an individual, so there is a risk that the information goes unanswered. However, that is typically a small price to pay for the breadth of expertise of the larger group.

## SHAREPOINT ONLINE

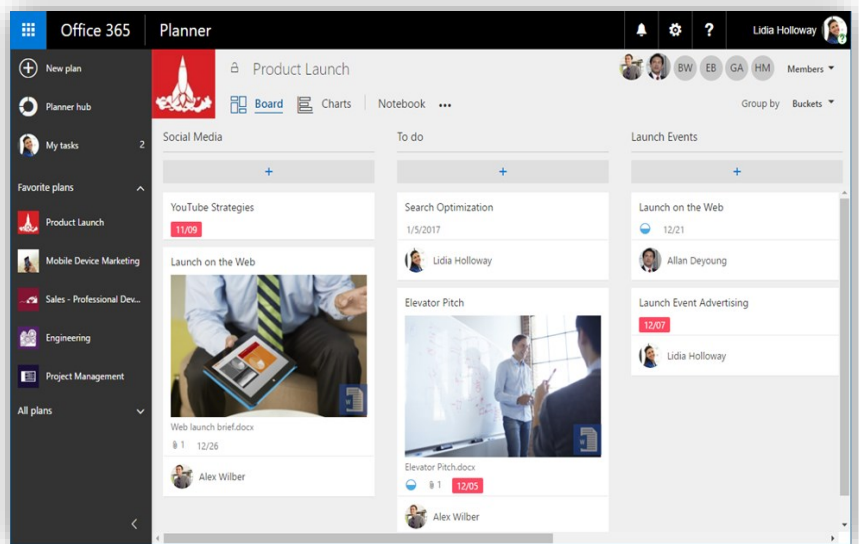
Exchange, Outlook, Skype and Yammer are conversation-based tools, but true collaboration can call for more than starting a dialogue. Sometimes it takes opening a document and reviewing and editing it in tandem with co-workers. SharePoint serves as a central location for that content. Regardless of where employees may be or what device they have at hand, SharePoint gives them access to the files they need to continue to be a productive, contributing member of the team.

By pairing SharePoint Online with Office Pro Plus, you get insight into who else might be editing the document and can start a chat with them without having to switch to Skype. With Word backed by SharePoint, you can even co-author documents. PowerPoint has co-authoring in preview, so expect to see the feature released soon.



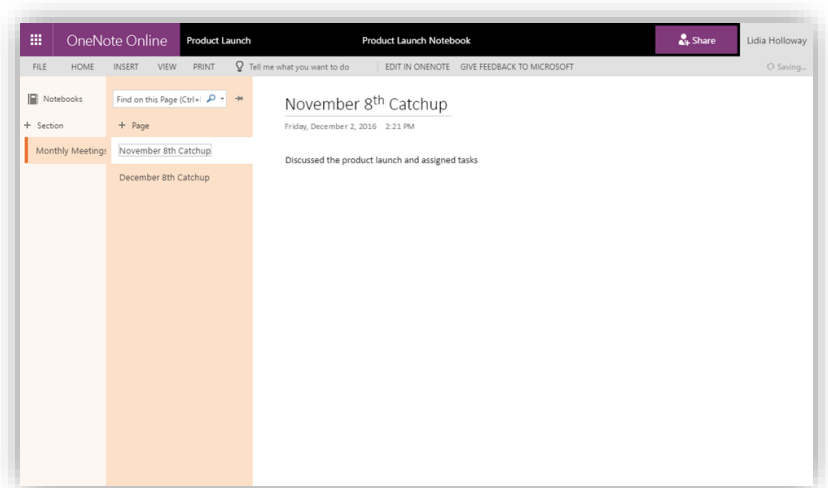
## PLANNER

Teamwork can be chaotic. Planner is meant to restore order and provide structure to the team's activities. It does this by providing a visual dashboard showcasing all of the component tasks that comprise a larger project. These tasks can be arranged based on status or owner to provide a better idea of where things stand and who's working on what.



## ONENOTE

Sharing notes after a meeting used to mean transcribing whatever you had written in your notebook and then emailing it out to the entire team. OneNote streamlines that process to a few clicks and keeps notes out of email. In addition to giving you a place to take and store notes, OneNote notebooks are easily shareable. That way, you can easily make your notes available to the entire team and they can add their thoughts or ask questions of the group. This transforms formerly static meeting minutes into living, collaborative documents.



## Expanding Beyond the Building Blocks

Exchange and Outlook, Skype for Business Online, Yammer, SharePoint Online, Planner, OneNote — these are all Office 365 collaboration tools. You can think of them as Microsoft's version of the hammer, screwdriver, tape measure, etc. These are your tools, but depending on the situation, you might need to use a combination of tools to get your work done. In Office 365, you have two toolboxes, Office Groups and Microsoft Teams, to ensure employees can work together and succeed.

At a high level, these two solutions seem to cover a lot of the same ground. Each solution serves as the collaborative hub for project work. They both work well with similarly sized groups of employees and combine similar tools in Office 365 into a single tool box. Even the names are very similar. If asked to define a group vs. a team in your organization, you would likely struggle because these terms are so interchangeable.

Similarities aside, Groups and Teams are far from one and the same. Let's talk about what each one does, why you might need them, and when you would be better served using one over the other.

## GROUPS

**Tools Included: Exchange & Outlook (or Yammer), Calendar, SharePoint, Planner, OneNote**

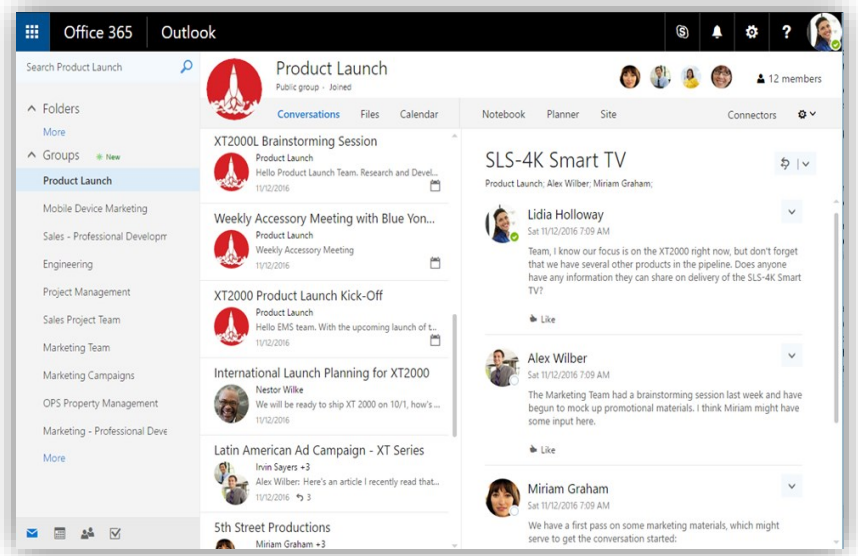
Coming soon there will be two different foundations for Groups. Today, you can have an Outlook Group, but in the future there will also be Yammer Groups. The main difference between the two is the foundation and the nature of Outlook and Yammer themselves.

For the purposes, here, we will be focusing on only Outlook Groups. Groups is included as part of Outlook and it connects people whether they are in the office or on the go, via the mobile Microsoft Groups app. New Groups can be created within Office 365's email client, Outlook or through the mobile app. Once created, the Group gives your team a single source from which to manage its activities.

One of the fundamental differences between Groups and Teams is with the access points. Groups isn't necessarily a separate app, at least on your desktop. It is an inherent function of many of the Office 365 tools you may already be using in your workplace.

Every team member you invite to the Group will be collected into a single Exchange distribution list. This list can then be used to send messages or meeting invites to the inboxes of each team member or the Groups mailbox. All messages to the Group will be stored in a central mailbox so members can go back and review them at any time, similar to a Shared Mailbox or Public Folder. The Group becomes a running record of emails sent to it, like an archive underpinning the list. Using Groups through email also gives you access to a shared calendar for coordinating tasks and meetings.

Each Group comes with a SharePoint site to provide employees with a place they can share and collaborate on documents. All attachments emailed to the Group are added to the



document library in SharePoint and are available under Files. There is a built-in SharePoint site and each Group also has a OneNote to provide the team with collaborative note-taking functionality. Lastly, there is a Planner space to keep employees up to date on tasks essential to maintaining the group itself.

When you should use Groups also sets it apart. For one thing, if the borders of your Group extend beyond the friendly confines of your own company, Groups is the only option as Teams lacks that functionality. This may stem from the nature of email being a universal standard and Yammer's ability to allow external participants.



Putting aside instances where you would *have* to use Groups, there are cases where we believe it is the best toolbox for the job. Groups excels in managing the long-term or ongoing initiatives that exist within your organizational group. For example, at an engineering company, a Group might be used to manage the lifecycle of a product, which can occur over many years.

It is also a great resource for connecting people that regularly work together. Take, for example, a business' Marketing and Product Development teams. These two departments may have an ongoing relationship so Marketing can gather information about a product and use that to create new – or update existing – collateral. It's not a project with a specified end date, there is no established timeline, and while the two sides do work together, they only need access to the same sets of resources on a long-term activity.

## TEAMS

**Tools Included: Skype, SharePoint, Planner, OneNote, PowerBI**

Where does that leave Teams, Microsoft's newest collaboration tool box? Before we get into how and when you should leverage Teams, let's first talk more about what it does.

Teams, just as is the case with Groups, combines Office 365 tools to provide users with a smarter, more efficient collaborative experience. Unlike Groups, however, Teams is a separate Office 365 application on your desktop and is available as its own toolbox on the web. Since it has its own client – and is fully

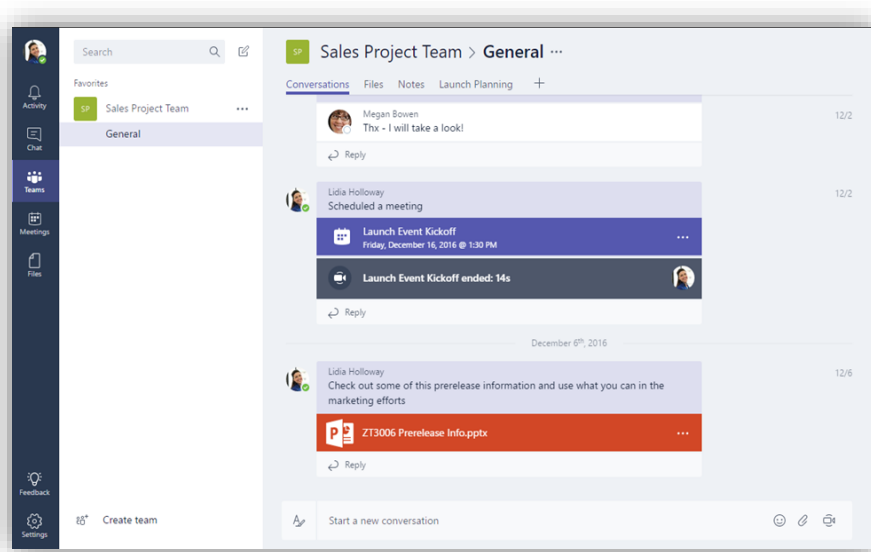


integrated with several products – Teams can make collaboration fast and efficient.

Teams is built on chat, dropping employees into real time conversations occurring between multiple people in multiple locations. The free-flowing nature of conversations in Teams allows it to authentically recreate the feel of an in-person meeting or a conference call.

Right now, the chat functionality in Teams is built on Skype, but it is not necessarily integrated with Skype for Business. Teams is its own chat space, outside of your existing Skype for Business Online experience. The one feature this allows is the ability for persistent chat, meaning you can join and exit the chat as you want and the chat is always there. This is a feature customers have demanded for some time.

You can schedule meetings via Teams as well. Since it isn't integrated with Skype, you need the Teams



client to participate. The advantage is that you don't have to leave that single workspace to join and you have the same Skype style audio/video functionality available. As with Skype, you can have individual conversations as well.

If you upload a file to Teams – even though it will ultimately live on SharePoint – you will still be able to view and edit it directly from the Teams app. You won't need to launch Teams,

then go and launch SharePoint. As others pull up that document and update it, it will refresh to keep everyone looking at the most recent version. Members can comment on a file in Teams – without switching to Skype – and their comment, along with the ensuing conversation thread, will stay attached to that file in Teams. Team members can also pin a file to the toolbar for easy access.

Like Groups, Teams also incorporates the abilities of Planner and OneNote, but another interesting tool is included. The analytical capabilities of Power BI can help members spot and correct inefficiencies within the team and how it operates.

The strengths of Teams make it ideal for non-permanent project-type teams. If people are working together on a project with a defined goal and a set deadline, then they should be using Teams. Think about a project team assigned to create a report for a customer. This report calls for input from multiple departments. With Teams, those working on this project would be able to pin the draft of their

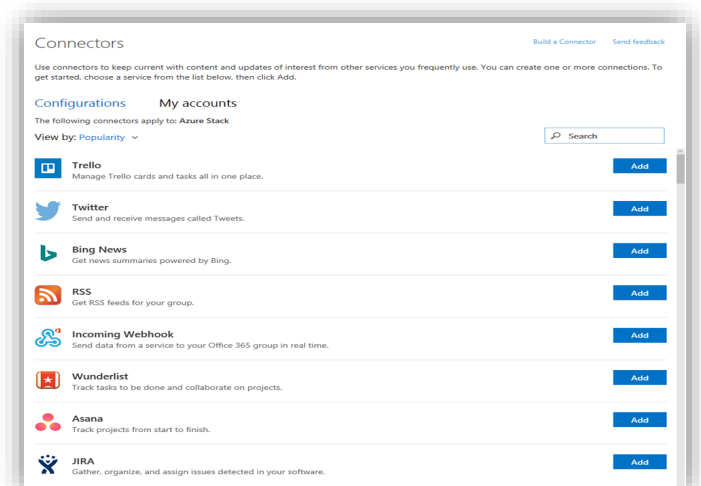


report, then, as others contribute their sections, that pinned copy would be refreshed with the latest content. They can chat in real time, and keep a running record of the chat, to get the document completed and delivered.

Another use case is any day one or war room activity. If you are planning the cutover of an ERP system to Azure, you might need to involve a few different people – server, network and application support, the Help Desk, and end users for testing. The Project Manager could create a Teams channel for the cutover and invite the participants. The project plan could be hosted in Planner with the necessary UAT testing as a pinned Excel file. The chat can keep everyone updated and serve as the running record, so the Help Desk can stay updated.

## Maintaining Control While Being Flexible

Groups and Teams have one major thing in common. The tools you can add to each are not limited to Office 365. Both have Connectors, which allow you to add cloud content from other services into the toolbox, ensuring that you have whatever tools you need.



## BUILDING THE WORKPLACE OF TODAY & TOMORROW

The flexibility to work how you want to work is more important than ever. If IT doesn't provide options, employees will go out and purchase their own services from wherever they can. By combining tools and giving employees more options for integration, IT can maintain control of the corporation's data while allowing people to work how they want.

Groups and, more recently, Teams are the tool boxes that combine these tools into something new. They reflect the idea that, as a company's needs grow and evolve, so too must the ways they collaborate. A collection of tools that continues to evolve and build off each other is essential to foster a more collaborative, more agile, and more productive work environment now and for years to come.



## About Arraya Solutions

Arraya Solutions is a full service technology consulting firm capable of meeting the needs of customers of all sizes, across a wide range of industries. We specialize in enterprise architecture, infrastructure, networking, security, development, and more. Not only will we architect and deploy the solutions our customers need, each of those capabilities can be wrapped in the support of our managed services team.

Our mission is to work with our customers to create and deploy solutions that satisfy their unique business goals. In the process, we educate, engage, and empower IT departments and entire companies to succeed.