

UNCOVERING NEW VALUE



Microsoft Office 365 is changing the way school business professionals approach projects and challenges. ISBL Approved Partner TSG Ltd explores the tools that can make a difference.

As one of the UK's leading technology support and services providers, TSG employs experts who deliver events and webinars on a regular basis to help educate and inform customers about developments in technology. A subject we continue to cover extensively, and actually continue to learn about ourselves, is Office 365.

We know that many have made the transition to Office 365 with very little appreciation about the range and capability of the tools they have at their disposal. Many users might not even have noticed the change if email and the traditional Office suite is all they use. In one sense, it's positive that familiarity with these everyday tools minimises the disruption that can be associated with the introduction of new software. However, it's important that the real value of Office 365 isn't left on the shelf. This value lies in tools such as Teams, Flow, Powerapps, Forms, Sway, Stream and a number of other tools that could, or should, underpin a transformation in the way people work.

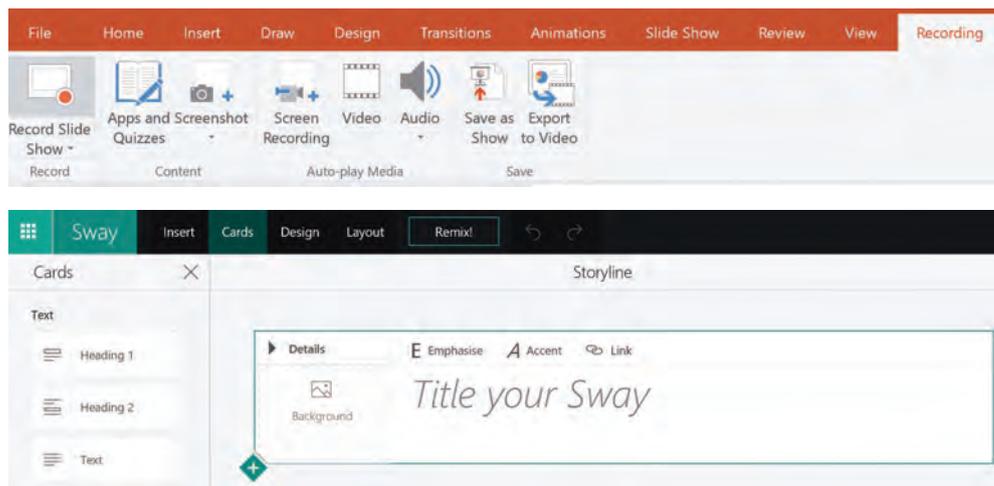
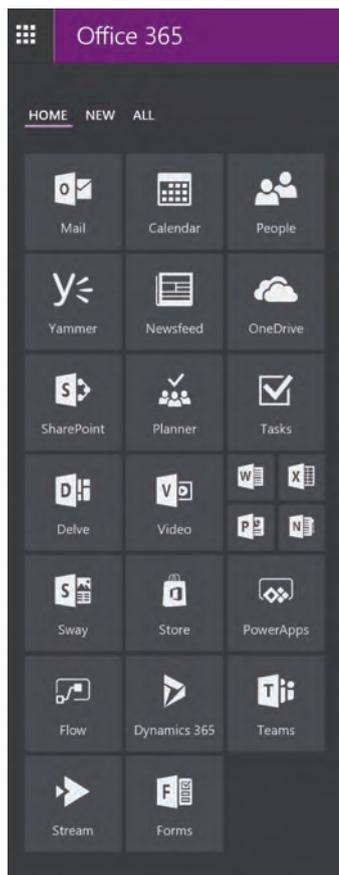
In fairness, these values haven't been well publicised, which is frustrating, so as a technology business we've jumped on them all at 'preview' stage to make sure we're ahead of the game.

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Communicating with Teams

So, why are we so excited, and why do we believe that the hidden gems within your Office 365 subscription shouldn't be overlooked?

It probably makes sense to start with Teams, which Microsoft describes as a chat-based workspace. We're not convinced that description does it justice, but for an audience of so-called millennials, ▶



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it may be spot on. In very simple terms, Teams combines conversation threads, file storage, notes and a range of other resources that are aligned with a specific group of people within your organisation, whether that's pupils, colleagues or both.

There are other tools on the market that do similar things, but a big advantage, aside from the fact that it's effectively free, is that it ties in with all things Microsoft in relation to your organisation and domain.

Teams could be defined by subjects, sets and year groups, for example, providing the perfect place to share coursework and resources such as videos, which can be embedded as 'tabs' thanks to in-built connectors to numerous third-party applications and websites.

If you're working with colleagues, Teams is the ideal platform for co-authoring, eliminating the need for lengthy email trails and ensuring that everyone is working on the definitive version of the document. Better still, because Teams is built on SharePoint, it's also possible to apply genuine document management principles such as version control.

As a slight diversion, if you're looking for a great tool for the preparation of learning materials then it's worth checking out the new 'Recording' tab, which is the latest update to PowerPoint. This allows you to drop screen recordings directly into a PowerPoint slide and narrate over content. The resulting recordings can then be uploaded to Stream – effectively an in-house video streaming service – for sharing with specifically defined groups across an organisation.

Another recent addition to Office 365 – and, at the time of writing, still in 'preview' – is Forms, again with a 'title' that doesn't do justice to its

functionality. It allows you to create quizzes (or tests), polls, feedback forms and surveys and is easy and quick to use. Whilst some elements of Office 365 are restricted for use within the organisation, Forms can be sent out for completion by external users, such as parents.

On the subject of communication with parents, Sway is another useful tool for creating 'responsive' electronic newsletters, bulletins or announcements.

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Maintaining with Flow

Leaving collaboration and communication to one side, even though there's much more to explore, tools such as Powerapps and Flow could make a real difference to the way your establishment operates.

Let's take routine maintenance as an example. Using a data-capture form built in Powerapps and made available to all staff via their mobile device, issues such as blocked sinks, broken hinges, or other minor damage can be reported quickly and easily. Better still, when they're recorded it's possible to use Flow to automatically alert the relevant people to ensure they're resolved as soon as possible. Tasks can be allocated to specific individuals, and they can also use a Powerapp form to confirm that the job has been completed. ■

TSG has two webinars available on 8 and 27 February 2018. For more information and to sign up, visit <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/5541754494843879938>



TOP TIPS:

- 1** Use the recording tab in PowerPoint to drop recordings and voiceovers directly into your presentation slides.
- 2** Powerapps and Flow can help you alert all relevant members of staff, at the same time, about issues that need rectifying.
- 3** Feedback forms and surveys can be sent out to parents for completion using the Forms tool.