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Comparison between the best online suites

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Abstract—The battle to be the best online suite in the cloud has never been more hotly contested. It's not as straightforward as it seems either. This paper gives the introduction to Office Software Suite, core feature, cloud integration, ease of use, on the mobile, collaboration of different Office Suite software (Office 365, Google Drive, iWork)

Index Terms—Software Engineering, Data mining, software Quality

1. INTRODUCTION

An 'Office Suite' – also known as 'Office Software Suite' or 'Productivity Suite' - is nothing but a collection of programs that improve the productivity of the user. Office productivity software really is just the sum of its parts. If you have ever used a word processing program, spreadsheet application software or a presentation making software, you already have experience working with productivity software. And this is true for most of us because in this day and age, working without these applications is almost impossible. They might not seem to be the most exciting software on the market, but they are absolutely indispensable – be it for organisations, corporations or individuals. Be it for work, school or any other venture, the applications in your office software are extremely crucial since you are likely to use them day in and day out. To give you a gist, even this article is being typed out on word processing software. Among a few possible uses of office software are its ability to draft a letter, make a presentation, write a report or create a budget. Considering that the software is employed not only by offices, but also by schools, families and individuals – the name Office Suite is somewhat a misnomer, and hence the term 'Productivity Suite' might be more apt to describe such a software package. Though the features could differ in each suite, (almost) every credible productivity suite includes some basic applications. Other applications, though not a staple of every suite, are still important inclusions in many available office suites.

Basic application include :

- Word processing software
- Spreadsheet building software
- Presentation creating software

Other application includes :

- Database manager
- Email client
- Publishing platform
- Project management software
- Collaboration software

It was not too long ago that Microsoft Office was the only viable alternative when it came to a productivity suite on the PC. Today, Office. While still popular, is only one of the suites that you can opt for when you want to work with documents, spreadsheets and presentations. Google drive has jumped the line in terms of popularity and is almost as ubiquitous as Office was back in its heydays and, thanks to the overwhelming user base of iDevices, Apple's iWork (that's made up of three separate software – Pages, Numbers and Keynote) has also made its presence felt in all manner of tech products such as desktops, laptops, tablets and phones.

That's why it really isn't a long shot to imagine that plenty of users would be confused about which suite to opt for. So, let's get down to helping you decide:

2. CORE FEATURES

Microsoft Office has always been top-dog when it comes to features and Office 365 offers the full-featured versions of the most popular Office software including Word, Excel and PowerPoint (and also OneNote, Outlook, Publisher and Access). If you have ever used Office before, you know that you can't beat it in terms of the options it provides with respect to working with files. If you have subscribed to Office 365 (or own a Windows Phone), then you also get access to Office Mobile, which is a pared down version of the desktop suite-

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with limited formatting options and inability to create presentations.

Google Drive almost seems lightweight when compared to Office 365. While basic users probably won't miss much when working on Drive, they might feel slightly frustrated if they are used to Office, the Drive mobile app is a 'lite' version of the actual service and does not allow you to create presentations.

Apple's iWork is kind of like the mid-way point between Office and Drive. It offers more features than Drive but not as much as the Microsoft software. It offers the standard software for documents, presentations and spreadsheets (Pages, Keynote and Numbers) and all of these software also have their mobile app versions for the iPhone and the iPad.

3. CLOUD INTEGRATION

Office 365 uses SkyDrive as its cloud solution which means that all you need to do is install the SkyDrive app on your desktop (Windows or Mac), or phone/tablet (iOS, Android or Windows Phone) and you will be able to access the files created under the same ID. In Windows or Mac, installing SkyDrive will create a new folder where all the files you want to access on the cloud can be saved. In a step that is quite confusing, using SkyDrive online (through Outlook.com) lets you edit and create spreadsheets, documents and presentations. Now, remember this is without any office branding and inside Outlook Live, so it is strange that Microsoft would effectively hide this functionality. The SkyDrive app, on the other hand, merely lets you view files and if you want to edit them, then you will need to install Office Mobile and subscribe to Office 365.

Google Drive makes the entire process simpler by letting you create and work with your files directly on the cloud (through the browser) so that everything is synced instantaneously. Like SkyDrive, you can also install the Drive tool on your PC and then move files to the folder that's created.

iWork uses Apple's iCloud to store files in the cloud. Everything that you create using the iWork tools either on iOS or Mac is automatically saved to the cloud. However, unlike Drive or SkyDrive, you can't directly access the files on your local drive since iCloud. Result: tie between Drive and Office 365.

4. EASE OF USE

Setting up Office 365 requires you to first subscribe to the service, download it and then install it on your PC. On Windows Phone, you will need to download and install the Office Mobile app and then sign in using the same ID to be able to use it. Once installed, Office on Windows can be a little overwhelming especially for people who have never used Office before. However, that comes with the territory since Office is, by far, the most powerful productivity suite of the three and therefore, offers a lot more tools and options.

Google Drive is the simplest to use of the lot, if you are only looking to work online. Just open <http://drive.google.com> in the browser where you are logged into your Google account, and you will immediately see all the files you have worked with. Since the entire suite works online, there is no need to install anything on your machine. The downside is that there is no simple way to work offline. You can set up an offline profile, but in our personal experience, it's quite a buggy mess.

iWork offers a simple enough process to get started. Just install the software/app on your iDevice, log in using your iTunes account and you are good to go. You will see all your files in one place within the corresponding app (Pages, Keynotes, Numbers). The actual interface within these apps is quite clean but many will find them shorn of common features, especially if they have some experience with Microsoft Office. Overall, iWork will satisfy users who have previously worked with iWork while others will prefer Drive or Office.

5. ON THE MOBILE

Office Mobile for Office 365 is available on iOS, Android and Windows Phone. On Windows Phone, Office Mobile is a fully –fully-functional productivity suite that comes pre-installed on every device. To use Office Mobile on iOS and Android, you will need to have a subscription to Office 365. Office Mobile offers a relatively succinct interface that suits small screens. Like Google Drive, it does not allow you to create PowerPoint presentations. To be able to access your cloud files, you will have to install the SkyDrive app separately.

Google Drive continues its tradition of simplicity in its mobile app as well. You just need to install the Drive app and you are good to go. You can create documents or spreadsheets from within the app itself, as well as browse through your folders and files. The options on offer when creating spreadsheets or documents are quite basic at best even when compared against the apps from Apple and Microsoft.

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On the iPhone and iPad, all three iWork apps are available as separate downloads from the App store. Even though the apps do feel like they deserve larger real estate than an iPhone's 3.5 or 4-in screen, there is no doubt that these are the best productivity apps for touchscreen devices. The intuitive design of the apps sparkle on the iPad and its quite amazing how fluidly Keynote and Numbers work. This is also the only mobile app suite that let you create presentations.

6. COLLABORATION

Collaboration is pretty much the 'buzz word' for productivity suites and Office 365 obliges. You can invite other users to start working on a document/spreadsheet/presentation with you, by saving the file in SkyDrive and then emailing the link to the other users. The users will then be able to work on the file either in Word (provide they too have Office 2013 installed) or online in the Word Web app(for which they require their own Microsoft ID). While this sounds fine, in practice, we stumbled across multiple connection issues which meant collaboration was almost impossible. Also, real-time collaborations does not exist.

Google Drive, on the other hand, does a fine, fine job at collaboration. Just invite other Google user through email, and they will be let by the hand to your file through an email. Real-time collaboration tools such as live chat and notes work flawlessly and when we say, real-time, we mean real-time as in when other users begin typing on your file, and you see the changes almost instantaneously.

Apple allows for collaboration through the iWork for iCloud service that, surprisingly, works seamlessly. Go to iCloud.com, sign in, open a document and click the share button. This allows you to email a link of the file to anyone, yes even someone without an Apple ID. This person can then start working on the document at the same time as you and you will see the changes real-time. Drive wins here again, but iWork is a worthy mention.

5. CONCLUSION

The battle for the best productivity suite is quite a tough one as can be seen above and it feels a bit unfair to just name one as undoubtedly the best. Therefore, let us cheat a bit and give you three winners across 3 different use-case scenarios.

If you are looking for a powerful, full-featured productivity suite and plan to work primarily offline on your desktop or

laptop, go for Microsoft Office 365. If you are a home or student user, then choose the free Google Drive.

If you are looking for a basic productivity suite that compromises on features to give you excellent accessibility and you don't mind always working online, then Google Drive is quite obviously the choice for you.

If you already own an iPad and other Apple devices, and want to work on it while on the go, then iWork suite of apps will allow you pretty decent productivity for a decent price.

At gunpoint, if asked to choose only of the suites as the winner, we are in unanimous agreement that Google Drive is by far the suite we would want to live without. Plus, its free and easy to use.

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