

Business Productivity Online

What you already can use

After the speech of Steve Ballmer it is clear that Microsoft is embracing the Cloud. Besides the free Live Workspace beta, Microsoft has already other paid services online.

In this article I will give you a short overview of one of these services, the standard business productivity suite. No future talk, but just services that you can order now and start using right away.

Business Productivity Online Standard Suite

This productivity suite consists of the following products:

Exchange Online: mail en mobile (push mail)

SharePoint Online: documents and collaboration

Office Live Meeting: conference solution

Office Communications Online: instant messaging (requires MS Office Communicator 2007 R2).

Details of this offering you will find by clicking [Standard Suite](#)

You can order per service or you can buy the whole suite for less than 10 euro a day per user. These are price settings we are not used from Microsoft.

Office suite

However Microsoft hasn't an online offering of its Office Suite, used by the majority of the market. So you still need your expensive licenses. The expectation is that during this year Microsoft will bring the Office Suite online.

Indeed, Online Services add extra functionality to your business, but you have to pay for it, every month. So you really should workout a business case first, before you sign up. You need to save money elsewhere to afford this nice functionality. Be careful, otherwise your out-of-pocket expenses will go up instead of down.

There are offerings in the market for free or against much lower cost that delivers almost the same functionality. Maybe the look and feel is not so niche and rich, but do consider offerings like Google Apps and the widely used Skype Services as well.

Ease of use

The Cloud offerings are growing fast and they all promise that it is a piece of cake to start using it. Keep in mind that you should configure the Service in such away that it delivers the functionality you want for your employees.

In this starting market you really should use a trial period to find out if your organization is able to configure the services as quick as the vendor's promises