

Office Suites - Best of Both Worlds

Innovations in technology have historically provoked profound changes in literacy acquisition and expression. From the development of the written alphabet to the printing press, changes in technology affect the way we think, write, and communicate and, by extension, the way we teach written communication. The personal computer as writing tool is now as ubiquitous as the printed page, and like advances in writing technology before it, the computer has affected the process of writing at every stage, from invention, through revision, to delivery. The subsequent write up is all about the online office suites available for writing...



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Thanks in part to the remarkable growth of the Internet and the explosion of high-speed Internet access, a new generation of Web applications is beginning to compete with traditional office-productivity products such as Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. Unlike traditional applications that are installed and maintained on a local client, these online apps live entirely on the Web, and their files reside on the application provider's file servers. For example, Google Docs lets you create, edit, print, and save spreadsheet, word processor, and presentation documents without needing to install an application on your PC. These products also leverage the strengths of the Internet by allowing for the easy sharing of documents among office workers who are separated geographically from one another. And here's the kicker: Most of these online apps are free (or very low cost), which has captured the interest of many cash strapped IT managers. Few important online office suites available presently are as follows:

- **Google Docs** - An AJAX-based online office suite from Google, Inc. The suite includes a word processor, spreadsheet program, presentation editor etc.
- **OpenGoo** - an open source, fully featured online office suite.
- **ShareOffice** - A Web-based office suite which utilizes separate word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation applications from other vendors.
- **Simdesk** - this suite offers partial compatibility with Microsoft Office file formats (Word, Excel, and Powerpoint) but with a minor cost.
- **ThinkFree Office** - An office suite written in Java and includes word processor (Write), a spreadsheet (Calc), and a presentation program (Show) for Microsoft Windows, Linux, and Mac OS X.
- **Zoho Office Suite** - A perfect alternative of MS Word when you talk about online word processor. It doesn't have the features of complete MS Word but it gives you more than what a desktop based word processor can't give you and that will be Collaboration with other users. It's still in beta so you can expect some serious features in short time.
- **AjaxWrite** - It is a web-based word processor that can read and write Microsoft Word and other standard document formats. Anytime you need to open, read or write a word processor file, simply point your Firefox browser to www.ajaxwrite.com and in seconds a full-featured program will be available for you to open, edit, print and save.
- **Glide Write v2.0** - Enables users to create media rich documents and securely edit and share from desktop or mobile device. Program features integrated email, project management, and

live conferencing capabilities, making it possible for unlimited number of Glide users and non-users to collaborate on documents. Users can synchronize documents for online/offline access on Windows, Mac, and Linux PCs, as well as export documents to Word, PDF, and RTF formats.

- **Peepel** - Allows to import and export documents with Word and Open Office, collaborate with others on a document, and even work offline, and then re-sync when you can get Internet connectivity again.
- **Microsoft Live Office** - Not to be left behind in the race, the Microsoft too have offered this product for online use.



Advantages of Using Web-Based Office Suites

- When the demand is mainly to create document and view it without using the much advanced features which many propriety office suits offer, it is better to use online office suits which are well-suited for these purposes. The cost involved in the purchase of the offline office would be more than the cost spent on internet usage.
- The user is free of worries to take his/her document on any portable storage device but can review/edit the document from any part of the world.

- Keeps the user documents/presentations free from viruses. Remember 1999 Melissa virus which embedded itself in word documents and spread havoc.
- The hidden information which travels with offline created documents can reveal information related to your computer and other files on the system thereby compromising the security and privacy.
- The version compatibility of various offline office suites can create problems for the users whereas the online office suites take care of these version changes behind the scene without affecting the work.
- Online office suits allow inviting people either as collaborators, or as viewers, who can look at documents without being able to edit them. Still better different roles can be set for author, reviewers and viewers.
- When the purpose of creating a document is to share it online or through web-site, or blogs, it is better to use the online office suites.
- Last but not the least, most famous word processing software features are available across the different platform online.

Conclusion

Most of us don't really use advanced functions available in advance office suites. Those who do will probably continue to proprietary office suites, but for the vast majority of users, the browser is a fine place to work and the ability to work online and offline means that it isn't the same at all by virtue of the fact that your documents will follow you regardless of device (mobile, desktop, laptop) and you can work on them even when you don't have a connection.

Online office applications cannot completely replace standalone software programs but will be complementary to offline applications. However, for creating and editing documents that are intended primarily to be read online, it makes a lot of sense to use a word processor that's native to the online medium.

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