



Analysing a Year of Microsoft 365 Change

2025 Report Insights & Trends

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Introduction

As an evergreen service, Microsoft 365 undergoes constant change.

Microsoft communicate changes by publishing item notifications via their Roadmap and Message Center.

This paper examines all change items over a full year (2024), looking at trends, the products with most change, and to better understand how Microsoft 365 change works.

About Empowering.Cloud

Empowering.Cloud's mission is to empower individuals and organisations to unlock the transformative value of Microsoft Teams and Microsoft 365 through Community, Research, and Enablement.

Founded in December 2021, Empowering.Cloud has rapidly grown to become a trusted resource for thousands of professionals seeking to enhance their knowledge and skills.

Curated by industry experts and Microsoft MVPs, the Empowering.Cloud community regularly engages over 10,000 individuals globally, offering expert video briefings, podcasts, newsletters and research reports, while also hosting regular live user groups, roundtables and Online "Fireside Chats" to further foster a collaborative environment where members can share insights and best practices.

Members of this Community contributed to a research exercise to identify top IT challenges faced by organisations. The results led to the development and launch of ChangePilot; a tool that addresses the challenge of keeping up with the volume of change from Microsoft regarding Microsoft 365.

ChangePilot uses a combination of AI, industry experts and IP to understand, manage, and optimise Microsoft 365. Today, ChangePilot is used globally by organisations across Legal, Professional Services, Logistics and Retail sectors.

It is data from 22 Microsoft 365 tenants from around the world and the Microsoft 365 Roadmap service that have been processed by ChangePilot to make this report possible.

Understanding Microsoft 365 Change

Scope and Scale - a Cloud Service with over 430 million users

Microsoft 365 has over 430 million users and is by far the most popular productivity suite for enterprises globally.

It is not a single product, but a suite of over 60 products and services, 40+ of which we see updates for on a regular basis. Microsoft offers many licencing bundle and suite options, such as Microsoft 365 Business, Office 365 E1, E3 and E5 and Microsoft 365 ME3 and ME5 that define users access to various combinations of the products and services.

In organisations from tens of users to multiple thousands you will find different combinations of user licences related to user roles.

The products, services and whole suite are constantly evolving, with features added, changed, and removed on a weekly, if not daily basis.

An organisation's users are collectively managed in what is called a **tenant**. A tenant is an organisation's dedicated instance of Office/Microsoft 365. It's identified by a unique domain, something like "yourcompany.onmicrosoft.com". IT administrators control user accounts, licenses, security settings, and policies for the tenant.

The term "tenant" comes from the concept of multitenancy in cloud computing, reflecting that you are a tenant of Microsoft 365's multitenancy cloud. Some organisations have multiple tenants.

Microsoft also has some specific Microsoft 365 "clouds" for specific customer types (Government and Education for example).

The typical tenant undergoes hundreds of changes annually. Some changes are very low impact to users and admins, such as an additional feature capability in little-used products like Clipchamp. Other changes are massively impactful, like the rollout of a completely new Microsoft Teams Client, the transition to a new Outlook client, and various security and policy updates that can impact an organisation's internal and external compliance obligations.

At different times, different products have led in quantity of changes, with Microsoft Teams alone being the leader in recent years, being responsible for

up to a third of the total number of changes communicated. However, Microsoft Copilot, in all its variants and with all its developments, is hot on its heels.

Research Methodology

This paper analyses comprehensive data collected from 22 Microsoft 365 tenants throughout 2024, examining change patterns, impact, and change management strategies.

Through this analysis, we provide insights into Microsoft 365 change and evidence-based recommendations for optimising your organisation's approach to Microsoft 365 change management.

Office 365 vs Microsoft 365 – What's in a name?

Initially, "Microsoft 365" and "Office 365" referred to two distinct Enterprise product suites, but now are terms often used interchangeably, even by Microsoft.

Office 365 covers several licences for productivity and collaboration apps (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Teams, etc.). Licenses include Office 365 E1, E3 and E5.

Microsoft 365 is a broader suite including Office 365 plus advanced security, device management, compliance tools, identity management, and additional features designed for enterprise management and protection. Licenses include Microsoft 365 E3 (ME3) and Microsoft 365 E5 (ME5).

Microsoft also uses the "Microsoft 365" brand for its home/consumer suites (Microsoft 365 Family, Microsoft 365 Personal) and what was initially the Business Office 365 suites, now called **Microsoft 365** Business Basic, Standard, Premium, and **Microsoft 365** Apps for business.

Even if you buy all Office 365 E3 licences, the admin portal is still called "Microsoft 365 admin center," and the included Copilot access is "Microsoft 365 Copilot Chat."

Regardless of naming, all Business and Enterprise Office 365/Microsoft 365 tenants and products follow the same roadmap and change processes.

As Microsoft does, in this document, we will use Microsoft 365 to mean Microsoft 365 and or Office 365 for the sake of simplicity.

Why Microsoft 365 change is important to the Enterprise – Admin and User Impact

Understanding and managing change in Microsoft 365 is critical for enterprises. As an evergreen cloud service, by default, a lot of changes will just happen, and often require action to limit the business impact, specifically around security, compliance and communication to users to drive usage and overall return on investment (ROI) from Microsoft 365.

Beyond security, compliance, and regulation, unanticipated updates can disrupt business workflows or confuse users, reducing efficiency and increasing support tickets.

Many features now ship “on” by default, including various transcription and Copilot features that organisations need to assess. A trend we have seen is more features shipping on by default than in previous years.

New or modified services or features, as well as services being removed and functionality being depreciated, need to be managed carefully. For example, changes to data retention policies or permissions structures could impact adherence to internal policy or regulatory requirements.

By proactively managing these changes, IT teams can assess risks, plan adoption strategies, and ensure the organisation fully leverages Microsoft 365's evolving capabilities.

How Microsoft Communicates Change – Roadmap and Message Center

Microsoft 365 Roadmap

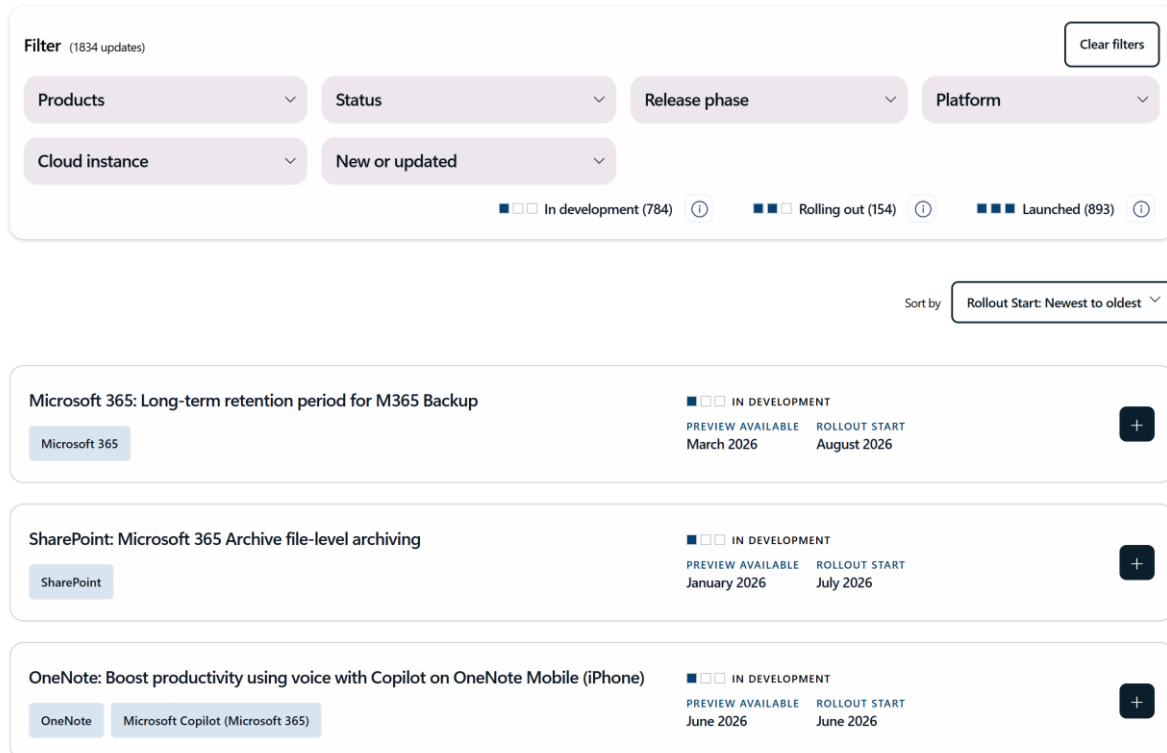
Microsoft has two main mechanisms for communicating Microsoft 365 changes to customers: the Microsoft 365 Roadmap and the Microsoft 365 Message Center. In addition, they also announce and provide details of changes and developments across blogs and events.

The Microsoft 365 Roadmap (microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/roadmap) provides an early view of what Microsoft considers significant changes applicable to most tenants/organisations.

However, not every feature makes it to the public roadmap. Items can be removed from the roadmap service once launched, or if the feature is

cancelled or postponed. There is also not a consistent protocol for how much notice is given before moving to the Message Center, and ultimately production.

Below is a view of the Roadmap:

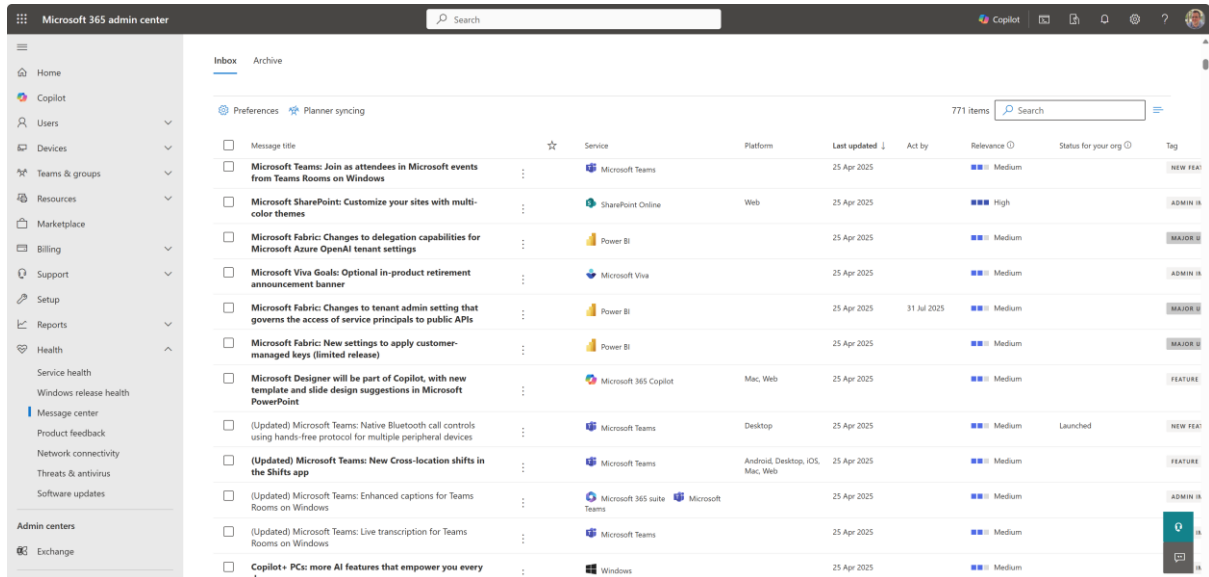


The Microsoft 365 roadmap provides the following metadata for each item:

- Roadmap ID, Title, Description, Data added, and Date modified
- Estimated Rollout Start Date and Preview date if available
- Product Category – There are 39 categories e.g. Microsoft Teams, Copilot, Word, Power BI, Purview
- Platform(s) –Windows, Android, iOS, Web (not always available)
- Cloud Instance(s) - Tenant type impacted - Worldwide (Standard Multi-Tenant), GCC, GCC High, DoD
- Release Phase(s) – How the product will be released, will it include a Targeted release, go to Preview and/or go straight to General Availability
- Feature Status – Items move from "In development" to "Rolling Out" to "Launched".

Microsoft 365 Message Center

The Microsoft 365 Message Center is a communication hub within the Microsoft 365 admin center. Its purpose is to keep administrators, service owners, and end-user communications teams informed about important updates, planned changes, service disruptions, and new features:



Each update is a “message” with a unique ID e.g. MC123456, often referred to as an “MCID”. Messages are also themselves updated over time as information changes, such as deployment dates changing or additional documentation being available.

Microsoft generates thousands of update messages a year globally. Some are sent out broadly for all tenants, some are targeted specifically to a single tenant, while most are targeted to a subset of tenants with that feature or license.

The combination of messages a tenant receives is unique and personalised depending on services enabled, configuration, usage, and other variables.

Overall Trends and Most Impactful Changes of 2024

Following the Microsoft 365 Roadmap and Microsoft 365 Message Center gives a good perspective on where Microsoft's focus is. Unsurprisingly in 2024 and into 2025, it is AI, but also still a heavy focus on Teams and collaboration.

Possibly surprising is that Microsoft Teams still had more new features and feature updates on the Roadmap and Message Center than Microsoft 365 Copilot. Less surprising though, is that a lot of the Copilot updates are the individual product teams adding Copilot to their products.

- **Microsoft Teams: Teams leads in update velocity**, shipping the newest features. It also showed one of the highest delay rates (~38% features delayed), reflecting rapid iteration with frequent adjustments.
- Notable Themes: 2024 saw **new meeting experiences** (improved meeting UI, intelligent recap with AI-generated notes/tasks, and Teams Premium features). The **"new Teams" client** (faster, redesigned) rolled out with a revamped channels/chat experience. **AI features** (Copilot in Teams chat and meetings) expanded, and **Teams Places** and **Mesh for Teams** hints emerged, focusing on hybrid work scenarios. Teams also introduced quality-of-life improvements (customised reactions, avatars, better Teams Rooms management).
- **SharePoint and OneDrive:** SharePoint had a high volume of enhancements as well – second only to Teams. SharePoint updates focused on content collaboration and intranet improvements.
- Notable Themes: Introduction of **new site templates** (e.g. HR onboarding template, Syntex-powered contract management) to accelerate site creation. Continuous enhancements to pages and lists (e.g. private drafts for pages, improved list performance, multilingual translation features). **Integration of AI and Syntex** for content understanding and automation is rising. OneDrive saw updates like **file sharing controls** and **sync client improvements** (e.g. "block specific folder from sync" and new admin reports for OneDrive sync health).
- **Outlook and Exchange:** Outlook and Exchange Online received fewer in number, but more significant updates. Many relate to making Outlook more integrated and intelligent across Microsoft 365.
- Notable Themes: The new Outlook for Windows (One Outlook) continued to get feature parity – e.g. the **"Org Explorer" people directory feature** coming to Outlook for enterprise users. Calendar and scheduling improvements, like auto-adding shared calendars, rolled out. Exchange Online had critical

changes such as **retiring legacy protocols/APIs** (e.g. retirement of Azure AD Graph API and old PowerShell modules) and tightening security (blocking emails with multiple "From" addresses, basic auth deprecations). These ensure Outlook/Exchange stays modern and secure.

- **Microsoft's Secure Future Initiative (SFI):** launched in November 2023, a company side initiative to be secure by default, secure by design and secure operations. This has taken a lot of resources, but most of that effort does not translate to user facing features.
- **Higher Overall Volume of Updates:** Microsoft 365 sees a steady stream of feature updates each month, often ranging from 80 to 100 new roadmap items monthly. For example, a single week in February 2025 saw 37 new updates across SharePoint, Teams, Purview, and Copilot, reflecting the rapid pace of change.
- **Delay Rates (Roadmap vs. Reality): A significant portion of roadmap items experience timeline changes or delays.** Studies show roughly 30–40% of announced features get delayed past their original release dates. For instance, Teams and SharePoint each saw about ~38% of their new features delayed (requiring updated rollout dates) in one analysis. Microsoft often cites "ensuring the best possible experience" as a reason for postponements.
- **Adoption Messaging Uptick:** The Message Center now frequently includes **user adoption and training** communications. Microsoft has introduced "organisational messages" to help admins drive feature adoption and educate users in-app. The number of adoption-related messages (tips for end-users, training prompts) has grown as new features (like Teams updates or Office changes) roll out, underlining Microsoft's focus on **driving usage** of new capabilities.
- **Urgent & Major Notifications:** Each month typically brings a handful of **"important" or "action required"** messages for IT admins. These include security mandates, breaking changes, or major service updates that require attention. IT teams should expect ~2–5 high-priority alerts per month that may require action (security fixes, deprecations with deadlines, etc.).
- **Themes – Copilot, AI, Security, Collaboration:** Several cross-cutting themes emerged throughout the year's updates:
- **AI Integrations:** Many new features involve Microsoft **Copilot and AI** – from Copilot in Teams meetings (intelligent recap, AI-generated notes) to AI-assisted security (Copilot in Purview for DLP insights). AI-driven capabilities

(chat assistants, content summaries, etc.) are a major trend across the Microsoft 365 suite.

- **Security & Compliance:** Continuous enhancements in **security** are evident – e.g. new data loss prevention predicates and policies in Purview, compliance dashboard improvements, and integration of Insider Risk alerts into Defender XDR. **Identity and access updates** (like deprecated legacy auth, stricter roles) also feature regularly to bolster security posture.
- **Collaboration & UX:** Microsoft is refining collaboration experiences – e.g. the **new Teams channels and chat UI** (streamlined view with custom sections), deeper **Loop integration** in Teams for real-time co-authoring, and **enhanced meeting experiences** (like intelligent recap and new webinar/town-hall features).

Key Microsoft 365 Changes in 2024

Some of the bigger and more impacting changes in 2024 included:

- **Microsoft 365 Copilot GA for Business Plans** (February 2024)
Enterprise AI assistant expanded to Microsoft 365 Business Basic, Standard, and Premium subscribers after initial enterprise-only (E Plans) launch.
- **Microsoft Teams new 2.1 Client Rollout:** The new client became generally available on October 5, 2023, and Microsoft began transitioning users from the classic Teams client to the new version throughout 2024. By mid-May 2024, users still on the classic client were automatically switched to the new Teams, with the option to revert removed.
- **Teams Premium Meeting Recap launched** (March 2024) - AI-powered meeting summary feature providing automated notes, action items, and highlights without requiring Copilot licenses.
- **SharePoint Syntex** (March 2024) Enhanced AI capabilities in SharePoint Syntex for better content understanding and automation
- **Exchange Online Modern Authentication Enforced** (May 2024)
Legacy authentication protocols are permanently disabled for all Exchange Online tenants, significantly enhancing the security posture.
- **Outlook for Windows Desktop Client Retirement Timeline** (June 2024)
Microsoft announced the transition roadmap from classic Outlook to the new web-based client, with support for the desktop version ending in late 2025.

- **Exchange Server SE and Skype for Business Server SE announced:**
Planned for summer 2025, this edition supports hybrid setups. IT in hybrid environments should prepare.
- **Microsoft launched native Archive and Backup Services:** Microsoft 365 Archive and Backup entered production, moving unlicensed OneDrive accounts to Archive, requiring Azure subscriptions.
- **Microsoft Purview DLP Enhanced Controls (October 21, 2024)**
Major update to data loss prevention capabilities with AI-powered adaptive policies and automated remediation workflows across all Microsoft 365 applications.
- **Copilot Integration:** Copilot was integrated across Microsoft 365 apps, enhancing productivity with AI-driven features. Notably, Copilot Pages were rolled out in September 2024.

Message Center - 2024 Insights

In 2024, we saw 2,319 new, unique messages from the 22 tenants. This is more than any one tenant will get, as messages are often targeted to a subset or even a single tenant, so there are likely many more messages across the whole service in a year.

A typical tenant receives around 1,500 new messages a year. That number skews much higher if that organisation uses Dynamics, as that product team sends lots of regular messages about changes and upgrades for each instance of Dynamics in a tenant. Some tenants have multiple instances for development/test and business reasons.

Examples of targeted tenant messages:

- Power Platform, Dataverse and Dynamics environments updates
- End of service announcements typically only go to tenants using that service, e.g. in Realware support for Teams was end of life in 2024
- Yammer/Viva upgrades were time targeted in 2024 and into 2025
- GDPR potential issues alerts (usually Office Forms)
- China Audio Conferencing changes
- Multi-Geo expansions
- Timed rollouts of features to specific subsets of tenants, usually by region

425 of the 2,319 messages were only received by a single tenant in the tenants we tracked.

On average, over our data set, around 80% of messages broadly apply to all tenants, while 20% are targeted at specific tenants based on their configuration.

That ratio varies from tenant to tenant; the more generic your licences and configuration, the less specific messages you will get. The larger the tenant in terms of users, locations, different licences, enabled services, and type of use, the more likely you are to receive targeted messages.

Message IDs went from MC703185 for the first message we saw of 2024 to MC969523 for the last we saw. While not all IDs are used (some messages are drafted but then not used or sent), this is still a huge number; 266,338 Message IDs.

Messages by Category

Microsoft categorises Message Center items into one of 3 categories:

- **Stay informed** – New or updated features we are turning on in your organisation.
- **Plan for change** – Informs you of changes to Microsoft 365 that may require you to act to avoid disruptions in service. For example, features that are being removed. Microsoft try to provide at least 30 days' notice of any change that requires an admin to act to keep the service running normally.
- **Prevent or fix issues** – Informs you of known issues affecting your organisation and may require that you take action to avoid disruptions in service.

In 2024, for our overall messages: **63%** (1,149) of items were 'Stay Informed'. 'Plan for change' **32%** (572) and 'Prevent or Fix' **5%** (98).

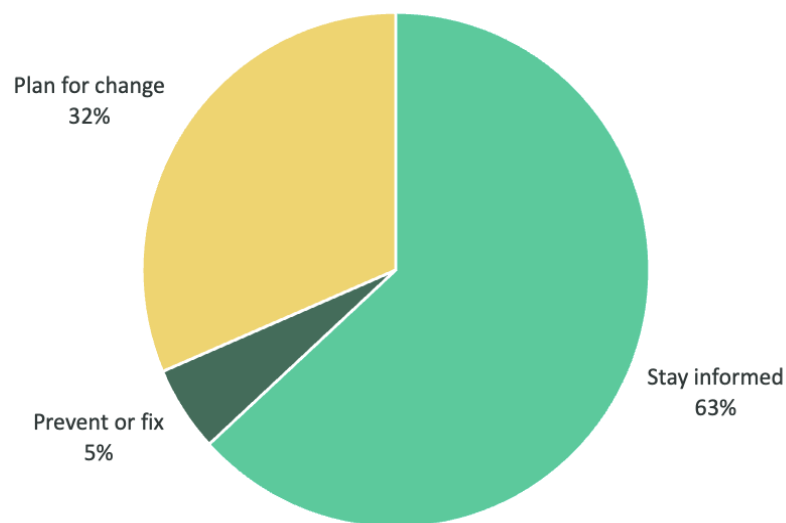


Figure 1 - Microsoft 365 Message Center - Items by Category

'Plan for change' and 'Prevent or fix' highlight an item that may require action to avoid disruptions in service or impact user functionality.

For the typical tenant, of an average 125 new items per month:

- 79 will be 'Stay informed'

- 40 will be 'Plan for change'
- 6 will be 'Prevent or fix'

The number of 'Prevent or fix' items vary heavily based on tenant config. Of our 22 tenants, the highest 'Prevent or fix' in a month in 2024 was 38 on a single tenant.

The figure below demonstrates the split between Informational ('Stay informed') vs Take Action ('Plan for change' and 'Prevent or fix') items across the 22 tenants considered for this report.

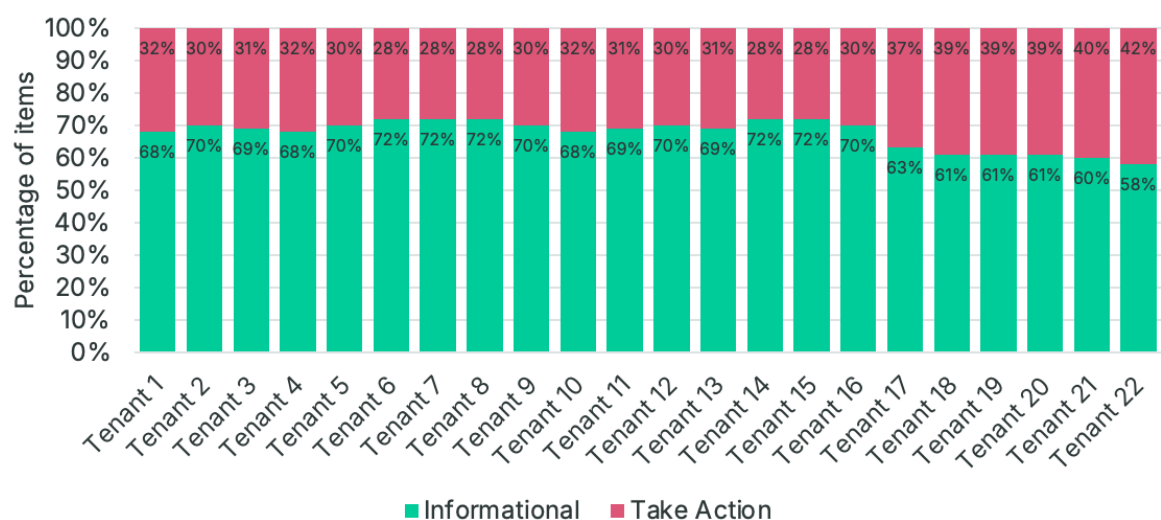


Figure 2 - Microsoft 365 Message Center - Informational vs Take Action

Message Center items can also have an 'Act by' date. This field provides crucial information for administrators. However, our analysis reveals that only **85** items, representing a mere **4%** of the total, have a date set. Microsoft do not use the field consistently.

Similarly, Microsoft can define specific updates as "Major Updates", but again, we found it is used inconsistently. This low utilisation of the field significantly undermines the usefulness of this feature for administrative and management purposes.

Message Center Items by Product

The Microsoft 365 Message Center identifies 43 unique products/services. Some of these incorporate multiple products, for example “Microsoft 365 Apps”.

The figure below indicates the top Microsoft 365 products/services over 2024.

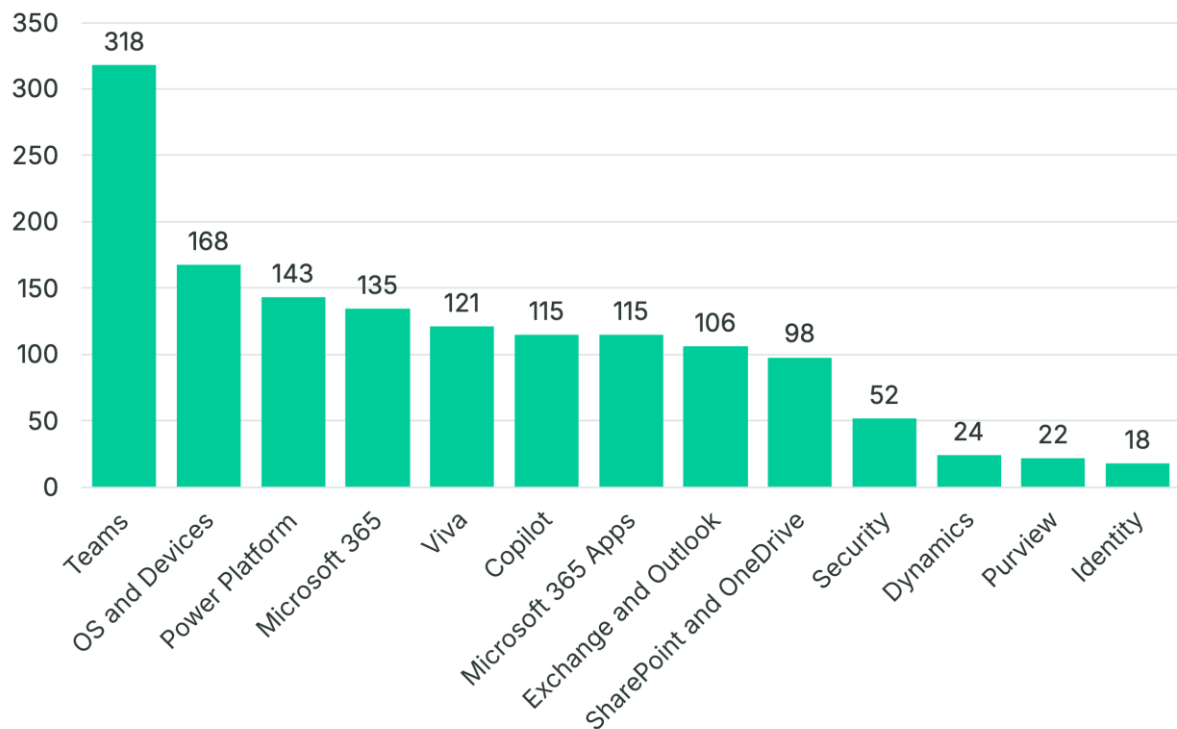


Figure 3 - Microsoft 365 Message Center - Messages by Product/Group

Messages by Month

Somewhat surprisingly, the number of Message Center items is fairly even month to month. Within months peaks happen, especially after big announcement events like Microsoft Ignite and the Microsoft 365 Copilot Wave updates, where Microsoft is waiting until announcements are public to then send messages with more detail.

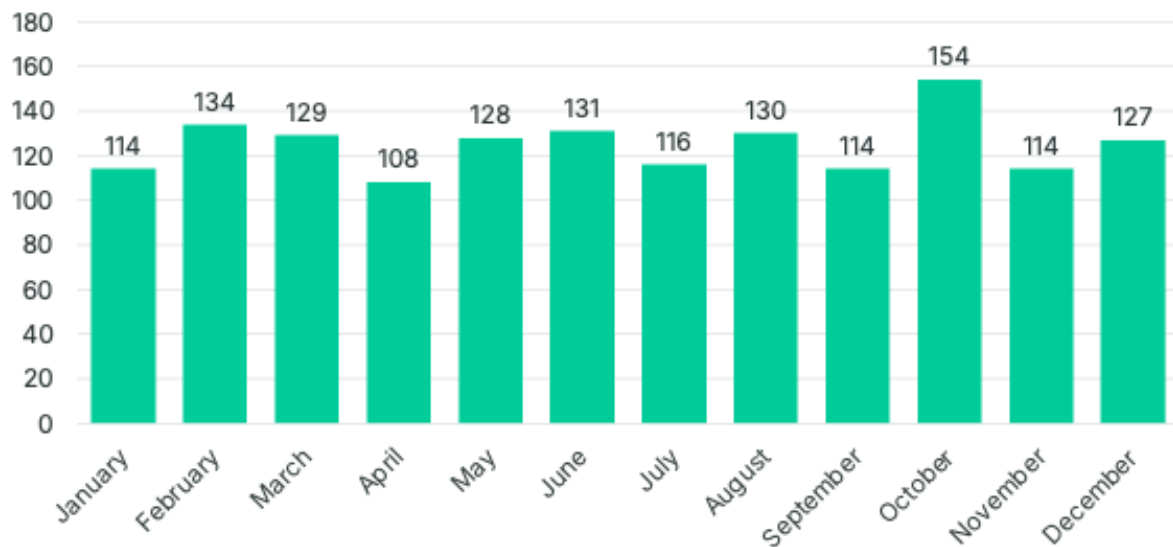


Figure 4 - Microsoft 365 Message Center - Messages and Feature Rollout by Month

Feature Rollout by Month

This graph shows features by their target start rollout date. Even though messages per month tends to be even over time, there are months where more change is rolling out to tenants.

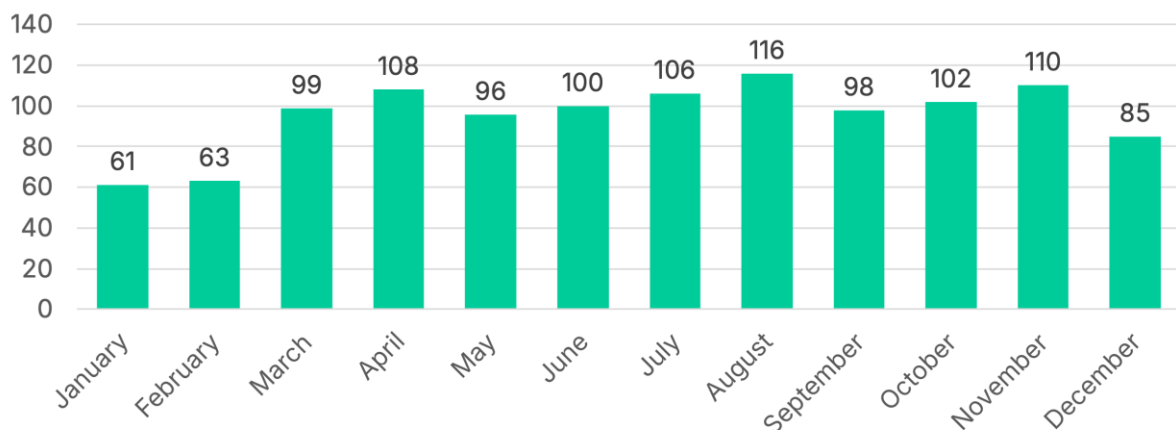


Figure 5- Microsoft 365 Message Center - Feature Rollout by Month

Products with Most Increased Message Center Items

With all the marketing noise on Copilot, our assumption was that Copilot would have been the product with the most increased Message Center items for 2024, but this was proven to not be true and Copilot remained consistent over the year.

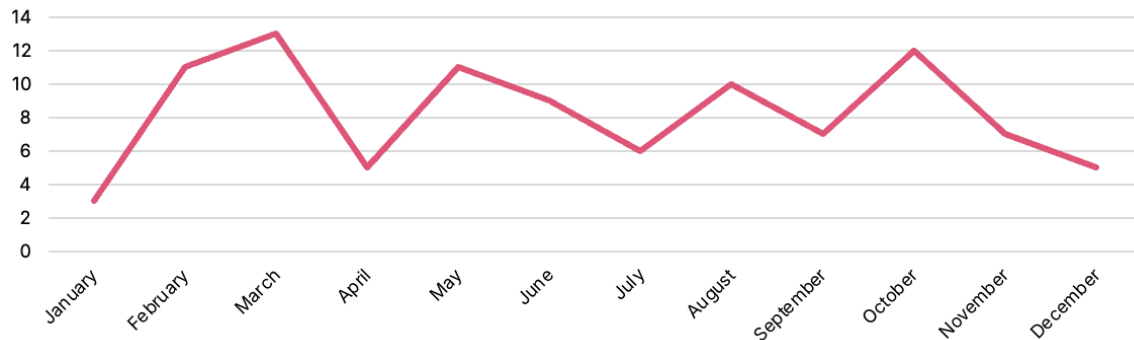


Figure 6 - Microsoft 365 Message Center – Copilot Message Center items over the year

However, Power Platform, largely driven by the Dataverse updates, saw a significant increase in messages over the year.

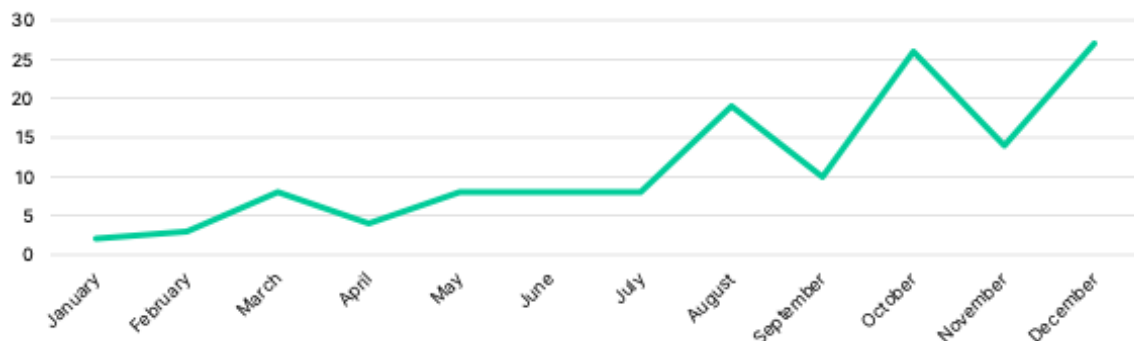








Figure 7 - Microsoft 365 Message Center – Increase in Power Platform Message Center items over the year

Admin and User Change Impact Ratings

Microsoft does not categorise user or admin impact in their change notifications. ChangePilot does, which further enables an understanding to help organisations prioritise messages. This section of the report is based on this distinction; the table below provides the definitions used.

Admin Impact	User Impact
 Low Admin Impact: No option for admins to configure, control or influence the change.	 Low User Impact: No impact on typical use cases for the user. No need to communicate to your users.
 Medium Admin Impact: Can be configured, but default behaviour is acceptable for most customers.	 Medium User Impact: Typical new features. You may need to update existing documentation or consider some communication.
 High Admin Impact: New configuration option, new product or service.	 High User Impact: Changes the experience of an app, service or product in a meaningful way. E.g. new user interface, new client, meaningful new feature.

A total of 250 items were marked 'high' for both admin *and* user impact during the year across all products, by definition, if these items were not managed in a proactive way, there would have been a business impact to either the user and/or the technology teams.

There are examples of where a service desk ticket to an "IT issue" could have been avoided if items were proactively managed, improving confidence in IT and minimising any lost productivity.

Here are the top 5 product categories for items marked High/High, meaning both high admin impact and user impact. Teams takes the top spot with many items impacting both administrative policies and bringing user impact through new or updated features.

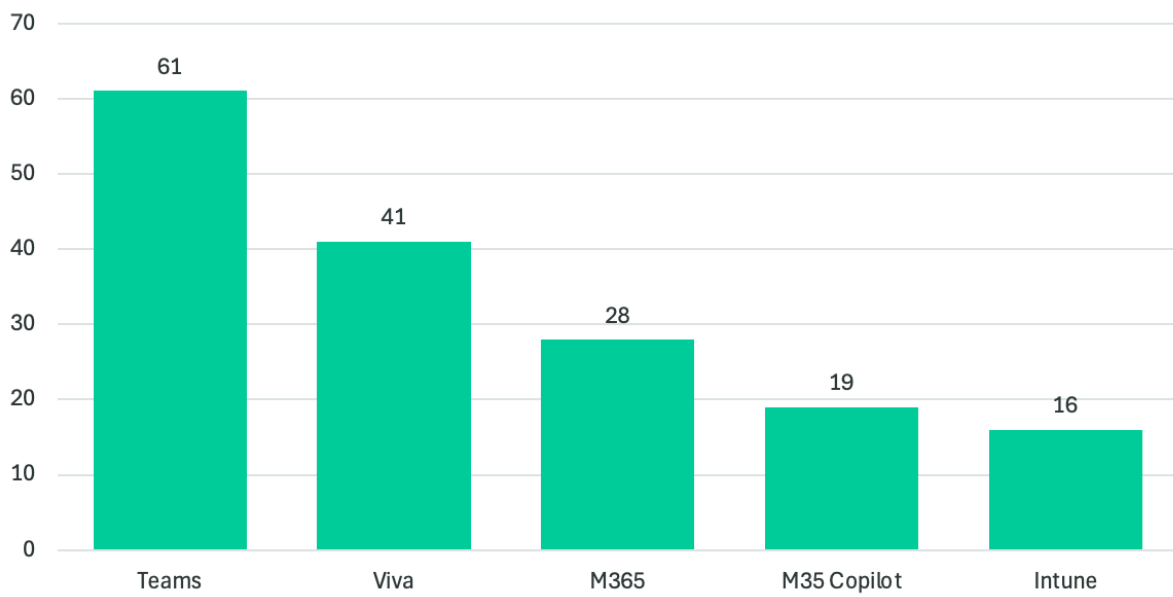


Figure 8 - Microsoft 365 Message Center - High/High items by product/group

Updates to Message Center Messages

Microsoft frequently push updates to Message Center items; the volume and impact of tracking and managing these updates is something many organisations don't appreciate.

For the 22 tenants monitored, there were a total of **1,765** updates to messages across **817** different items in 2024, meaning many items had multiple updates.

For our typical tenant, we saw **672** items updated for the year, equating to **56** items updated per month.

Many of these updates are timeline updates, usually rollouts pushing out (being delayed). The ratio of date updates to more information being provided is approximately 11:1.

Where the updates are not date changes, they are usually providing more information or additional documentation. Throughout the year and into 2025 we have seen more and more messages being posted with "This message will be updated when documentation is available".

Dealing with these date changes is a big benefit of ChangePilot. ChangePilot collects Message Center Messages via the Microsoft API. Unfortunately, the API does not provide dates as a dedicated field, which would make them easier to manage, they are instead provided within the body text of the message.

In ChangePilot we use OpenAI models on Azure to extract the data information for reporting and filtering.

Microsoft 365 Roadmap – 2024 Insights

Roadmap Items generally move through the defined stages of “In development” to “Rolling out” to “Launched”. Microsoft typically takes Items off the roadmap one year after launch.

At the end of 2024 (31st December), there were

- 555 items in development
- 127 items rolling out

New Items and ‘Launched’ items in 2024

In 2024, 897 items moved to ‘Launched’, meaning they were live in production.

At the start of 2024 (1st January), there were:

- 485 items in development
- 145 items rolling out

Some items are special tenant type specific i.e. 14 were GCC only and 7 GCC High only.

Not everything in development at the start of 2024 made it to launch. Only 446 did. It is not unusual to see some items removed/abandoned as priorities change.

During 2024:

- 1,245 new items were added
- 608 of the new items moved from ‘In-development’ to ‘Rolling Out’
- 507 of the new items moved from ‘In-development’ or ‘Rolling Out’ to ‘Launched’

October 2024 was the busiest single month for change, with 132 items added and 109 items moving to launch.

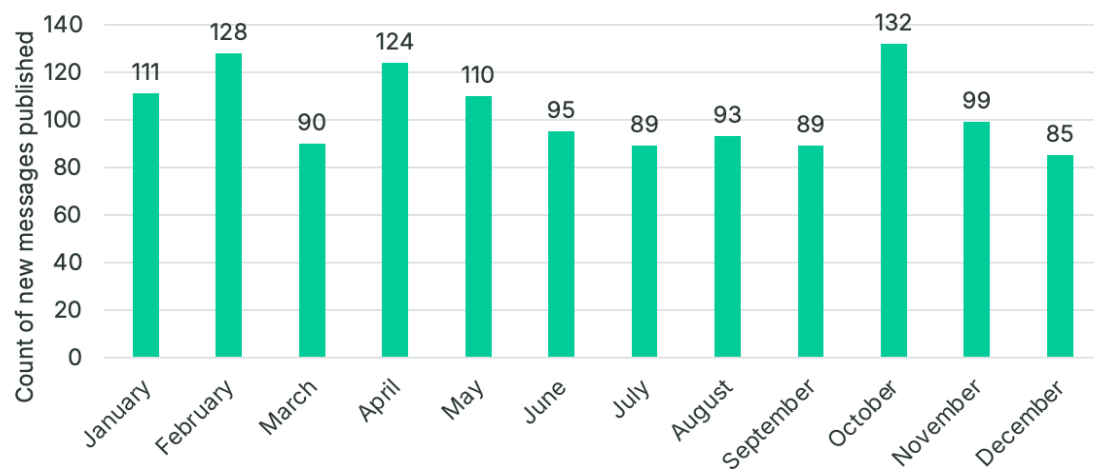


Figure 9 - Microsoft 365 Roadmap - New Microsoft 365 Roadmap items published by month

Roadmap Items Added and Launched by Product

Products with the most activity throughout the year were:

- Teams, with 310 new items and 154 items launched
- Copilot, which came onto the scene this year with 236 new items, 80 launched
- Purview with 209 new items, with 88 launched
- Viva with 186 new items, 77 launched

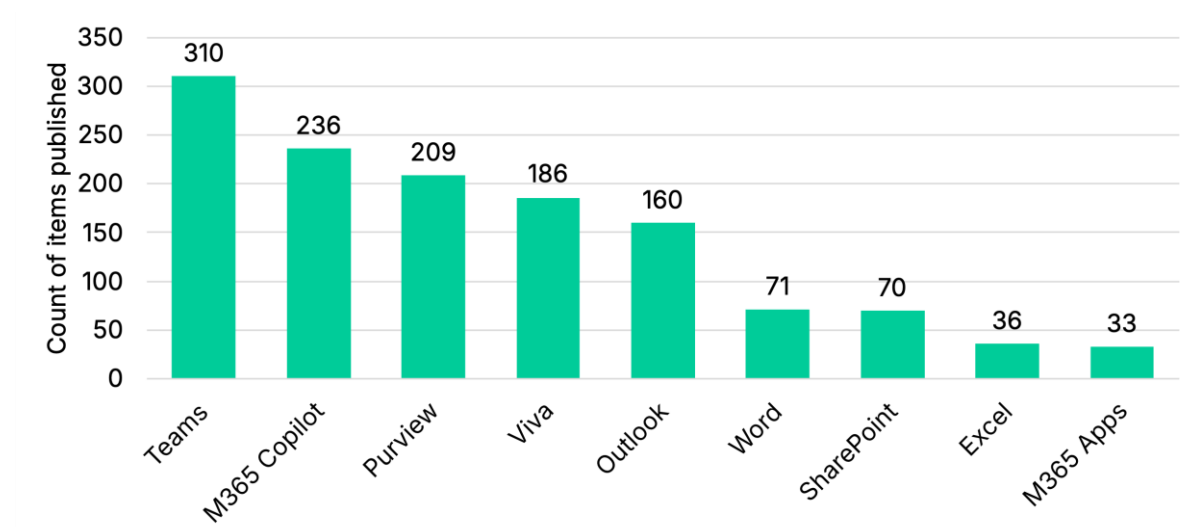


Figure 10 - Microsoft 365 Roadmap– Activity throughout the year by product

Timeline to Launch - Roadmap Items

It is interesting to look at the journey of items on the roadmap. It is not very consistent; some items will be on for months and some for less than a month before launch.

Here are the averages for items in 2024:

- Average time from added as 'In development' to 'Launched' – 218 days
- Min Timeline - 13 days (23 items were 30 days or less)
- Max Timeline – 1,666 days

Examples of items with a very short turnaround from Roadmap to Launch:

- Microsoft Purview compliance portal: Data Lifecycle Management - Enable deletion of non-empty folders in SharePoint for Microsoft 365 and OneDrive for Business when under a retention policy - 13 Days – 2nd May 2024 > 15th May 2024
- Microsoft Viva: Admins and delegates in Viva Engage can close conversations on behalf of others - 15 Days – 2nd April 2024 > 17th April 2024
- PowerPoint: Microsoft Copilot (Microsoft 365) – Copilot can create presentations from a PDF file - 15 Days – 29th May 2024 > 13th June 2024

Examples of items with a long turnaround from Roadmap to Launch:

- Exchange: Adding Inbound Support for DNSSEC/DANE for SMTP to Exchange Online - 1666 Days – April 2020 > October 2024
- Microsoft Purview compliance portal: Information Protection - | API to set label on files in SharePoint online in bulk - 1136 Days – Sept 2021 > October 2024
- Microsoft Viva: Topics in Viva Engage - 1069 Days – March 2021 > Feb 2024

Cancelled Roadmap Items

The roadmap also ends up having items that do not make it to production.

In 2024, 162 items were removed. Microsoft does not make it easy to track removed items; this is something we track in our database and Power BI reports.

For completeness, ChangePilot also tracks items considered abandoned. These are items have been "In development" for over a year once the rollout start date has passed by 2 months. At the end of 2024, 15 items were abandoned. Usually and eventually, the roadmap team remove these items.

Summary: The Critical Imperative of Microsoft 365 Change Management

As this paper demonstrates, Microsoft 365 is not a static solution but rather an evergreen cloud service undergoing constant evolution. The sheer volume of change is staggering, with a typical tenant receiving approximately 1,500 new Message Center items, and nearly 900 Roadmap items annually.

Proactively monitoring both the Microsoft 365 Roadmap and Message Center is not optional, but a business necessity. The Roadmap provides critical foresight into upcoming changes, giving organisations valuable time to prepare. Meanwhile, the Message Center delivers targeted, timely notifications about changes directly affecting your specific tenant configuration.

The consequences of failing to manage these changes effectively can be severe. As highlighted in this report, hundreds of "high impact" changes affect both administrators and users annually. Without proper monitoring and management, organisations risk:

- Security vulnerabilities from missed compliance updates
- Workflow disruptions when core services change unexpectedly
- Reduced ROI as potentially valuable new features go unutilised
- Increased support ticket volume when users encounter unexpected changes
- Compliance risks as data governance capabilities evolve

Organisations that implement systematic monitoring of the Roadmap and Message Center gain a strategic advantage; the ability to anticipate, evaluate, plan for, manage, and effectively communicate changes to stakeholders. This proactive approach transforms Microsoft 365 change from a reactive challenge into a strategic opportunity to maximise your Microsoft 365 investment.

As Microsoft's focus on AI, security, and collaboration accelerates, the pace of change will only increase. Organisations must establish robust processes to monitor these changes and integrate them into their broader technology management strategy.

By doing so, organisations can ensure their Microsoft 365 environment remains secure, compliant and optimised to deliver maximum business value.

About ChangePilot: Take Control of Microsoft 365 Change

ChangePilot is a service that provides Microsoft 365 Product and Service Owners with complete visibility and workflow for all roadmap items and Message Center changes.

Developed by Empowering.Cloud, ChangePilot combines artificial intelligence with human expertise to collect, analyse, categorise, and prioritise every Microsoft 365 change item affecting your environment.

ChangePilot a four-step process:

- **Collate and Review:** ChangePilot gathers all Microsoft 365 Message Center notifications, Roadmap items, and Service Health alerts specific to your tenant(s).
- **AI + Human Intelligence:** Each item undergoes analysis through Azure OpenAI, followed by assessment from subject matter experts who provide clarity, context, and categorisation with admin/user impact ratings.
- **Streamlined Delivery:** Changes are delivered through multiple channels—monthly email bulletins, a dedicated portal, and for Pro users, directly into Microsoft Teams channels for collaboration and workflow management.
- **Operational Oversight:** Power BI dashboards provide comprehensive visibility into change health, allowing organisations to filter by service, release date, and impact level to maintain control over the change management process.

ChangePilot transforms Microsoft 365 change management from an operational burden into a strategic advantage:

Measurable Cost Savings:

- **Resource Reallocation:** Eliminates the need for a full-time senior technical resource dedicated to tracking and managing changes
- **Six-Month ROI:** Delivers measurable return within six months through resource optimisation

Risk Mitigation:

- **Reduced Disruption:** Proactively manages the 250+ high-impact changes annually that affect both administrators and users
- **Enhanced Security Posture:** Ensures critical security updates and compliance requirements aren't missed

- **Service Continuity:** Real-time service health notifications reduce mean time to resolution during outages

Improved Operational Efficiency:

- **Streamlined Processes:** Reduces the manual effort of tracking 1,765+ message updates across 817 different items (2024 figures)
- **Optimised Workflows:** Automates triaging, assigns owners, and tracks progress through dedicated Teams integration
- **Maturity Advancement:** Enables organisations to achieve Level 500 of Microsoft's Change Maturity Model and comply with ITIL and ISO standards

Enhanced Technology Adoption:

- **Feature Awareness:** Surfaces "quietly released" features that might otherwise go unnoticed
- **Strategic Implementation:** Provides subject matter expert guidance on implementing changes effectively
- **Maximised ROI:** Ensures the full value of Microsoft 365 licenses is realised through appropriate feature adoption

By converting the reactive challenge of Microsoft 365 change management into a proactive, structured process, ChangePilot enables organisations to focus on strategic initiatives rather than continuous disruption management. ChangePilot delivers the visibility, control, and expertise needed to maximise your Microsoft 365 investment.

Find out more and sign up for a free 6-week trial at <https://change pilot.cloud/>

Appendix: Factors that make your Microsoft 365 Unique

Microsoft 365, the business/enterprise suite, has an estimated 428 million users¹.

These are divided into Tenants. A Microsoft 365 tenant refers to a dedicated instance of Microsoft 365 services for an organisation created when an organisation purchases a subscription. Each tenant is isolated and unique, hosting its own data, configurations, and users.

There is no public information on the number of tenants, but organisations can range from single-digit users, usually Business subscriptions, to single Enterprise Tenants with up hundreds of thousands of users. Many organisations, individual consultants, and developers will have test tenants. The likely number of tenants is in the millions.

Microsoft 365 is one of the world's largest and most complex SaaS services. It comprises of dozens of major services (Exchange, SharePoint, Teams, Entra) with then hundreds of SKUs (Stock Keeping Units) with different capabilities. m365maps.com provides a good visual as to the complexity of feature and licence alignment².

There are many variables that can make the services and experiences available to a tenant/user different, including:

- Tenant Type – Microsoft has a number of different tenant types that have specific configurations, these include:
- Worldwide (Standard Multi-Tenant) Commercial Tenants: The default and most common type of tenants suitable for most businesses and organisations
- US Government tenants: Government Tenants (GCC, GCC High, and DoD):
- GCC (Government Community Cloud): Designed for U.S. government agencies and their partners, it provides enhanced security and compliance features.
- GCC High: Stricter compliance standards for federal agencies or contractors handling sensitive data.

¹ <https://office365itpros.com/2025/01/30/microsoft-cloud-revenues-fy25q2/>

² <https://m365maps.com/>

- DoD (Department of Defence): Tailored for the U.S. Department of Defence with the highest level of security and compliance.
- Education Tenants: For educational institutions, these tenants provide licenses for faculty, staff, and students under special pricing and terms
- Nonprofit Tenants: Available to eligible nonprofit organisations, these tenants offer discounted licenses and services tailored to their needs.
- Multi-Tenant Organisations: Some organisations operate multiple tenants due to mergers and acquisitions and/or to meet specific business or data requirements such as regional data residency and administrative isolation. Multi-tenant configurations allow synchronisation of selected user objects across up to five tenants.
- Tenant's Physical location – Customers can choose the primary location of their tenant, depending on feature rollout and regional requirements this impacts features available.
- Services can be from a "Global cloud" United States, Europe, Asia Pacific, "Go Local" cloud: Canada, Brazil, UK, France, India, Japan, Australia or Sovereign cloud: US Government, Germany, China, dedicated instances in that country for the whole service.
- New features or workloads may first become available in specific regions before being rolled out globally. Organisations with global operations can also use multi-Geo to store user data in multiple geographic locations while maintaining a single tenant.
- User licenses. Users get access to different capabilities within a tenant depending on their licence e.g. (e.g., Business Basic, Business Standard, E3, E5).
- How it bought, direct or via PARTNER – NHS tenant
- Tenant Configuration – How your tenant is configured will impact services used and available to users. Security Policies like multi-factor authentication (MFA), Conditional Access policies and compliance policies such as data retention policies, auditing capabilities, and access controls impact your configuration.
- Hybrid and third-party integrations – Microsoft 365 support many hybrid configurations, for example, with Microsoft Exchange or Azure Active Directory and Entra, as well as third-party integrations, including certified backup and compliance tools, VDI solutions and Microsoft Teams Direct Routing, which all require specific configuration on the tenant.

- Usage – If a feature is/was used or not affects your tenant. Microsoft frequently adds and removes features and capabilities, and the steps needed to do this are different if a feature has been actively used, any maybe generated data to be maintained, vs not. This is common in Dynamics and Power Platform in particular.
- Procurement Path – Direct from Microsoft or via Cloud Solution Provider (CSP). Most services are identical regardless of procurement path, but some features will differ, particularly around billing and licence availability. For example, some Pay-As-You-Go scenarios may be different depending on if you are procuring directly from Microsoft or via a partner.
- Preview Programs – Office 365 insider, rings, preview programs for products. Targeted vs standard