

# Where Research Goes to Die:

*8 Things Consumer Insights Researchers Need to Know About Microsoft SharePoint™*



Northern Light

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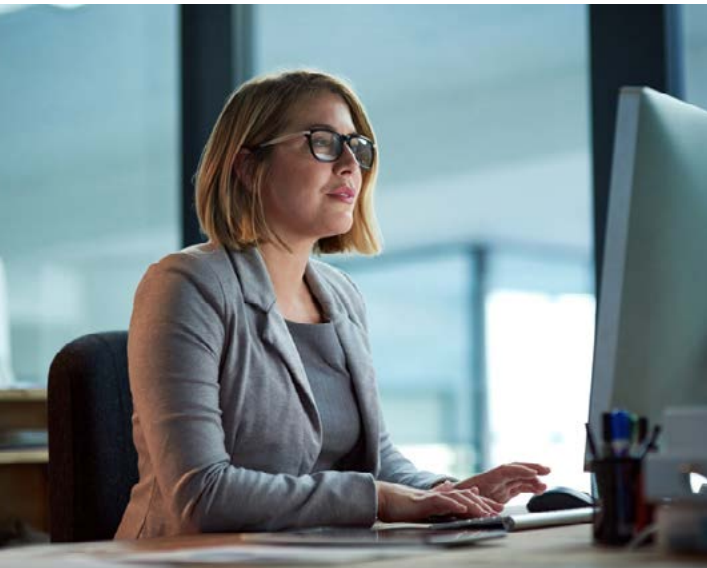
# Where Research Goes to Die:

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A Northern Light client once told us, **“SharePoint is where research goes to die.”**

Wow. That’s a pointed conclusion.

So, what’s the problem with SharePoint? Let’s take a look at the eight things consumer insights professionals report to us about their struggles with their use of SharePoint.



**#1:**  
**SharePoint libraries spring up all over the place like mushrooms in the forest.**

Anyone can publish a SharePoint site and put documents in it. Sounds democratic, doesn’t it? But that is the problem. Quickly, sites containing some portions of the consumer insights research collections are everywhere. Every brand team has some of the research. Every consumer insights group has some portion of the research. Which library has the latest studies on this topic? Which exact folder in which exact SharePoint library is the report I am looking for in?

Here’s a real case study: Northern Light has a client that delivered content from seven SharePoint libraries to us to use to create a unified consumer insights library where all the latest research could be found. How many of the thousands of files in the last folder we got were unique and not in one or more of the other folders we were given? Zero. Yep. Zero. 100% duplication. Oh, and which one of the duplicated copies was the most recent and reliable? There is no real way to tell.

Here is an even worse story. One of our clients discovered one day that they had 80,000 abandoned SharePoint sites on the corporate network. Staff members had moved on, left, or lost interest in a site they had thrown up. Being a pharmaceutical company, they couldn’t just turn them off. What if one of the sites had a report of an adverse event or research required to support a drug application? The client spent \$200 million over two years examining every document on the abandoned SharePoint sites with a team of scientists, market researchers, and lawyers. Oh, and SharePoint is “free” with Microsoft Office, is it not?

## #2: You know the information is there, but you can't find it.

**Y**ou have to dig for the content; it isn't going to come to you easily. Most everyone that has worked with Microsoft SharePoint agrees on how hard it is to find documents you know are there somewhere.

There is a good reason for this. The search engine technology in Microsoft SharePoint is not optimized for research applications because SharePoint has to be able to search everything (email messages, chat services, HR forms, expense reports, company policies, operational procedures, company picnic announcements, the daily cafeteria menu etc. etc. etc.) so it becomes lowest-common denominator search.

Research is different than other types of documents. Research documents are large,



not short like chat messages or web pages, and filled with terms of art and terms of context. Searching them requires special adjustments to search techniques like relevance ranking that Microsoft SharePoint is not usually tuned to do because it has to search all types of content.

Also, SharePoint uses a rigid folder structure to organize content. Without effective search, you pretty much have to know the exact folder that the document you are looking for is in so that you can find it. If you don't know where it is in the SharePoint folder structure, you are out of luck.



## #3: Microsoft SharePoint doesn't provide automatic tagging.

**M**icrosoft SharePoint does not contain out-of-the-box business taxonomies or text analytics to automatically tag documents. It doesn't tag your brand names or your competitors' names. It doesn't know that "Millennials,"

"sustainability marketing," or "strategic partnerships" are important. You have to add every tag manually to every document, which in the real world means tagging is incomplete, inconsistent, and unreliable. You might as well not bother.

## #4: Good luck implementing AI-assisted search; you are on your own.

Microsoft SharePoint contains no already configured AI-assisted search features, and your IT department is probably not going to be able to help you, either. Microsoft SharePoint will not learn what your users are interested in and find content for them without their asking. It won't read the documents and summarize the important ideas it finds for you. SharePoint won't build training models for you to use to improve your search results and insight discovery.

Microsoft Corporation of course knows a lot about AI – but there is none of that knowledge in out-of-the-box SharePoint. Microsoft charges separately for their AI solutions and the starting point is beyond the budget of most consumer insights departments. And then you need a staff of machine learning consultants to make use of it.



## #5: SharePoint doesn't give you a way to integrate externally hosted content.

Consumer insights research most often originates outside the organization. You may license content from subscription research providers or commission research with agencies. SharePoint has no built-in ability to ingest content from external subscription research publishers, custom research agencies, social media, external data providers, business news feeds (crucial for competitive intelligence applications), or from the web.

Indeed, your IT department may actively resist opening the corporate firewall to outside research and content providers. This makes it hard to build a unified, one-stop shop for your research if SharePoint is your foundation. Unless, of course, you and your staff decide to download every research study to your laptops and then upload it all to the SharePoint consumer insights library. Thousands of documents a year. That sounds like fun.

## #6: SharePoint doesn't support automated log-in to external research content and services.



Okay, your IT department won't let you automate bringing the external content onto your corporate network because they don't want to open a hole in your firewall for all of your content providers. You and your staff don't want to have to upload every document yourselves, so your users across the organization have to follow links on a SharePoint site to go to the websites of external research providers. Then the users must log into the external sites to find the research generated by the research providers.

But wait, then those users have to know login credentials for your providers. SharePoint won't help with this because it has no facilities in it for managing external logins and administering access rights to external content.

## #7: The platform is not already setup for consumer insights.

SharePoint does not have built-in functionality for a consumer insights-optimized knowledge management solution. It doesn't offer a wide range of market-research specific dashboard widgets to display content and has a complicated method of installing and managing widgets. At times it may feel like the dashboard system requires a computer science degree to make a robust, automatically updating, and visually engaging dashboard on your topic of personal expertise. The result? SharePoint dashboards are often simple content posts manually

made by users, and SharePoint sites may just be a collection of folders with documents in them. Without dashboards or effective search, SharePoint users often aren't sharing documents and bookmarks or forming groups as intended, and out of necessity have reverted to old habits like sending documents using regular email. There are no newsletters to keep users engaged or expert searches to bring the knowledge of your subject matter experts to the masses. A [study by AIIM](#) found that 43% of companies surveyed said their employees prefer using their file-share application (e.g., Box, OneDrive, Z drives) for sharing content. Only 13% believed SharePoint is important to their overall Enterprise Content Management /Document Management environment, and only 7% cited they have successfully achieved their planned ECM/DM goals.

How many users know external research providers' credentials? Northern Light has good data on this question and the answer is 86% of rank-and-file staff in marketing, product management, and product development staff know zero external login credentials to the licensed consumer insights their companies pay millions a year for. 86% know zero credentials. Seven percent know one login. Four percent know two logins. Two percent know three logins. One percent knows four logins, and almost no one knows five or more. Northern Light clients usually license 10 to 20 external consumer insights sources; perhaps you do, too. If you are requiring your users to know login credentials, do you see why your expensive market research subscriptions aren't being used as much as you thought they would be?

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## #8: Welcome to the long, long queue.

Users of Microsoft SharePoint must compete for IT priority and budget with all the other projects their companies need IT to execute. Usually, the company's financial, sales order processing, CRM, and operational systems trump the consumer insights department for priority. If you need to create a customized tagging system for consumer insights reports, or an analytics solution for communicating insights derived from research content, or a newsletter tool that will automatically add content to a first draft of a newsletter edition, or a compliance solution that administers rules around the world for consumer insights studies, you are out of luck. And SharePoint doesn't have an out-of-the-box, fully responsive user interface for mobile, either. It requires a specific development project using MS Tools. Take a number and join the line that runs down the hall from the IT department's door.

### So here's the question:

What's the solution that eliminates all eight things consumer insights professionals find most difficult about SharePoint?

**Answer:** Implementing a purpose-built platform that facilitates sound information governance practices, allows you to determine what is in the content repository with ease, provides what you need out of the box, and makes information easy to find and use.



## **Northern Light SinglePoint™ is a custom-built enterprise knowledge management platform that alleviates the challenges of managing your consumer insights assets.**

Our search technology is optimized for business research and the quality of the search results is often surprising to refugees from Microsoft SharePoint. You don't have to know where the document is to find it; the search result brings what you want to the top of the page. Our search technology is business-research optimized, so your searches will always return excellent and comprehensive results.

We provide extensive industry-specific taxonomies for automatically and deeply tagging all of your research. You never have to apply a tag manually again. We can also use your terms (for example, your brand names) for the automatic tagging. You can use the excellent search and robust text analytics to explore and discover content you didn't know to look for.

And the machine learning algorithms that Northern Light provides as part of the SinglePoint platform will find insights for you from your research content. The AI will learn what your users care about and find additional material they will find valuable without them even having to look for it.

Northern Light will aggregate external content for you into the SinglePoint platform by working directly with your external content providers.

We can expose the upload function to your custom research agencies, and they can add their own projects files and final reports to your knowledge management system without you having to touch them. You can integrate your third-party subscription research sources and externally hosted services, so users have access to it all with a single sign-on. They never need to know a login credential to find what they need.

With SinglePoint, you have central, easy control of access rights to content to ensure everyone that should be able to see a particular piece of content can, and that no one who shouldn't be able to see it cannot.

Northern Light SinglePoint has robust content and insight publishing tools like a strategic dashboard system that makes creating impactful and informative dashboards on topics as easy as writing PowerPoint presentations. And SinglePoint includes a newsletter tool that writes the first drafts for you automatically.

Lastly, Northern Light SinglePoint comes with its own high-touch support staff of experienced knowledge management experts. We will do the heavy lifting every step of the way. Your platform is our priority and you can skip the line waiting for internal corporate IT support.

**Let's  
talk**

**Email Vice President of Sales Priscilla Seuss**

**Call 617.794.8095**

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