

# 80 Million Video Views Reveal the Intent of Office 365 Users

A whitepaper and preliminary analysis of 80 million  
views of training videos by Office 365 Users

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## **Executive Summary**

Over the past few years, we have been logging details of more than 80 million views of 'how-to' videos. The videos are available to Office 365 end users, and cover everything a user might want to do across the entire productivity suite from Microsoft. Except for some basic structuring of the videos into 'products' and 'categories', there is no artificial promotion of any of our content. Each of our 2,000+ videos is as easy to locate and watch as all the others, so we really think that the histogram of how many times each video has been watched provides a clear indication of user intent. In other words, there is an extremely strong correlation between 'what people watch' and 'what they want to achieve' with Office 365. In this article we provide a brief overview of the content being watched, and we release the full (but anonymized) histogram data that reflects the frequency (popularity) of each of our 2,000+ videos to date. We also provide a brief interpretation of the data, along with some possible causes of what might seem to be anomalies. Further analysis is up to you, but we think there is a warning at the end of this article that anyone who professes to be an 'adoption expert' or 'change management' guru would be wise to heed.

## Introduction

Today, for the first time in our history, we are releasing some usage data of our 'How-to' videos used by Office 365 users.

First, though, a bit of background: The data has been generated by the fact that we make over two thousand videos available to end users through a product called LightUp 365 (<http://www.lightup365.com>). The product is integrated into Office 365 tenants where it provides easy, on-demand access to the videos.

The basic premise is that when a user wants to learn how to perform some action in Office 365, they can find a how-to video that shows them the most efficient way of achieving their goal. Each video is short and focused (typically between 30 seconds and two minutes), and cuts right to the chase. We're not interested in presenting marketing messages from Microsoft, nor are we trying to convince or educate users into working one way or another – we're simply helping them to perform a discrete task, which allows us to show them how to do something with just a few clicks.

Now, enough said about the product – the critical piece of information is that each of our videos is as easy to locate and watch as all the others. Apart from the necessary organization of our user interface into product libraries and categories, we don't influence the user's choice of what to watch in any way.

**Note:** Many customers add their own content to LightUp 365, but we have explicitly excluded any custom content, as that is not relevant to this holistic discussion of general user intent.

## Users and Content.

In a nutshell, we are talking about typical end users of Office 365. This rather broad definition ranges from complete novices through to authors, editors, business teams, project managers, business unit managers, executives, and even technical site collection administrators in SharePoint Online. Basically, this is everyone in an organization except for the central IT Administrators and Developers (and even they often need to learn like an end user does these days, given the breadth of Office 365).

Actually, the point is probably better made by describing the content, rather than the user: The content includes tasks that are typically performed by end-users, rather than central IT administrators or developers. So the products covered include (in alphabetical order):

- Delve
- Dynamics CRM
- Excel 2013 Desktop
- Excel 2016 Desktop
- Lync 2013 Desktop
- Microsoft Teams

- Office 365 Planner
- Office Online
- Office Web Apps
- OneNote 2013 Desktop
- OneNote 2016 Desktop
- Outlook 2013 Desktop
- Outlook 2016 Desktop
- Outlook Online
- Power BI
- PowerPoint 2013 Desktop
- PowerPoint 2016 Desktop
- Project Online
- SharePoint Sites
- Skype For Business
- Sway
- Windows 10
- Windows 8
- Windows 8.1
- Word 2013 Desktop
- Word 2016 Desktop
- Yammer

You can see a full list of the content at: <http://www.lightup365.com/guides/LightUp365-AllContent.pdf> (but be warned --- it's over 60 pages long).

## **The Logged Data**

At the time of writing, over 5 million users have collectively watched more than 80 million individual videos. (To be precise, the number is actually 84,844,223). We have aggregated this data from all customers and across all industry segments. (We understand that breaking the data down against industry segments may be interesting in its own right, but that can be a topic for a future whitepaper).

The data is available in an Excel Workbook, zipped up at:

<http://www.lightup365.com/guides/UsageHistogram-2016-09-27.zip>

## **Brief Analysis and Notes**

Well, the data is there in all its glory, and we even included a histogram chart to show the concept of the 'long tail' of usage. Whenever we look at an individual customer's data we see this long tail, effectively showing that a subset of videos appears popular and relevant, while others get watched with decreasing frequency.

The first thing we note was that for any one given customer, the high-frequency cluster (the clump at the left side of the chart) is usually smoother than that of this aggregated data. And it is often more 'bulbous', indicating that there are more than just a few 'popular' videos for any given customer. When aggregated across all customers (like we have done in the spreadsheet), we interpret the rather 'lumpy'

and less 'bulbous' high-frequency cluster as simply being the cancelling out of one customer's preferences with another's usage patterns. And we think that's probably the whole point of the exercise – we now get to see something that approaches an average typical user's intent.

Then, the first and most obvious oddity we spotted in this data is the very first data point. It seems that the video called 'How to: Add Users to Groups' is by far the most popular video. That strikes us as wholly unexpected. After a bit of digging, though, we isolated this anomaly down to a few large Microsoft partner organizations, so we think they use that video as part of some training program for their customer's IT staff. We haven't verified that, but we think it is safe to just ignore this blip as an anomaly.

Moving on, we see that many (but by no means all) of the top 100 videos are about SharePoint. The only thing to be aware of with this is that customers often build a Learning Center for our videos in an actual SharePoint site. Because they are using that environment they probably have a tendency to put the SharePoint training there first. (Or maybe they only put SharePoint training there). In any case, we're sure that it has an effect one way or another. For more detail than you probably wanted, the product has three 'surfaces' where users learn from:

- The App Launcher
- The Help Pane
- SharePoint sites.

So, if a customer only puts SharePoint training in SharePoint sites (in other words, if they don't put training for other topics in SharePoint sites), then the SharePoint videos have a learning surface that is 1.5 times larger than the rest.

Or, of course, it could just be that SharePoint is really what users want to learn about. Or even that they perceive SharePoint as being more difficult than, say, Outlook. That's your call.

## **Conclusion**

How you interpret the data from now on is really down to you. Apart from noting the few possible anomalies, we haven't done much more with the data yet. But at first glance it seems to be genuinely interesting.

Our major point to conclude with, though, is simply this: Aggregating over 80 million views of videos is surely a large enough sample to represent something meaningful. Even if it doesn't quite fit with what you want your users to learn, this is what they actually do learn when left largely to themselves. And, given that most end users are probably assumed to be rational beings (we know, we know...) then you might conclude that what they want to learn about is what they need to know to do their job. We'll leave you with that thought...