

Choosing OpenOffice.org over Microsoft Office 2007

Problem Statement

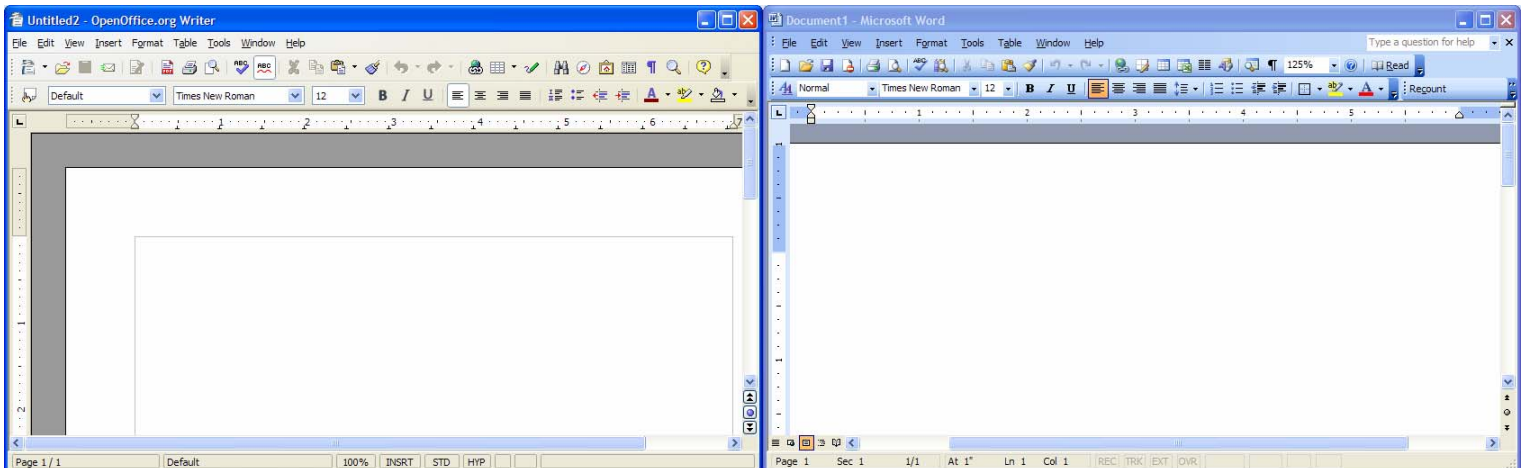
The company provides productivity office software to create documents, spreadsheets and presentations. This software can be expensive to license, so it is important for the company to explore alternatives that may be as well suited to the business. In this space, the company is considering two products: Microsoft Office 2007 and OpenOffice.org version 2. This presentation explains why the company should seriously consider a move to OpenOffice.org over Microsoft Office. This presentation also assumes that the company is currently running an older version of Microsoft Office.

OpenOffice.org 2 basic overview

- **Writer:** Writer is OpenOffice.org's word processing software. Writer includes many of the powerful features that are also included in Word 2007, such as automatic formatting and real-time spell checking.
- **Calc:** Calc is OpenOffice.org's spreadsheet program. Calc includes potent functions and formula possibilities, as well as charting, and even Data Pilot, a feature akin to Excel's Pivot Table function.
- **Impress:** Impress is OpenOffice.org's PowerPoint replacement and includes numerous templates and special effects.

Interface and product similarities/differences

- OpenOffice.org's user interface is modeled after that of Microsoft Office.
 - This similarity eases the training requirements necessary for a migration.
 - Users familiar with the interface in Microsoft Office 97 to 2003 should have few, if any, problems using OpenOffice.org.
 - The screenshots below show the similarity between OpenOffice.org and a version of Microsoft Office that you may already be running. OpenOffice.org Writer is on the left, with Microsoft Word 2003 on the right. On the bottom of the next page, take a look at how different Office 2007 looks when compared to these two screen shots. Now, imagine the training that would be needed to move to a product with a 100% new interface.



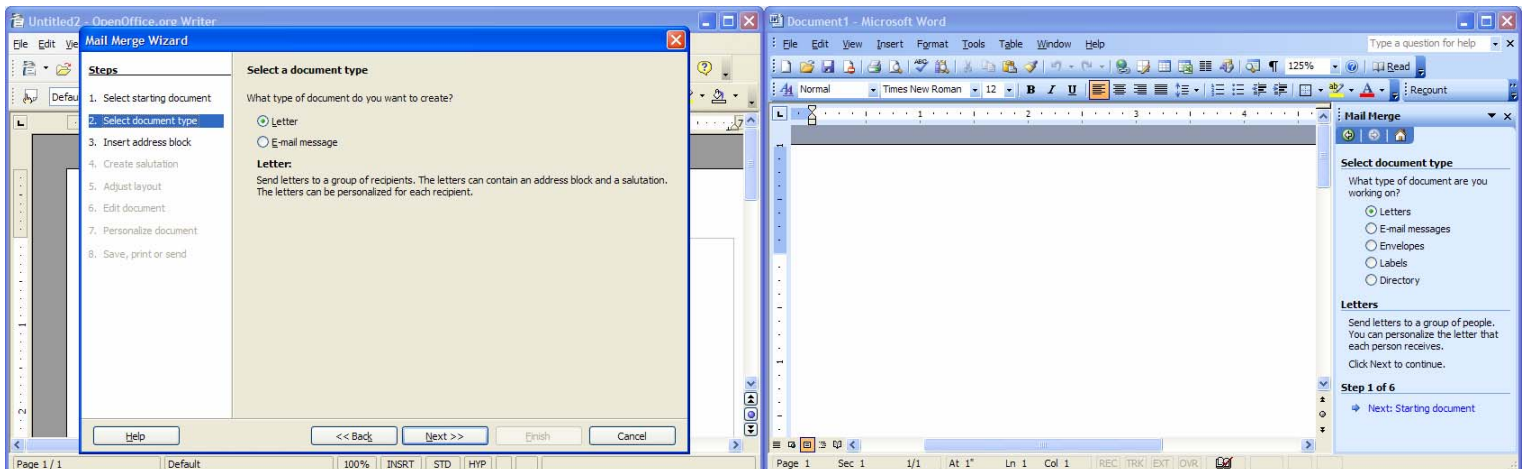
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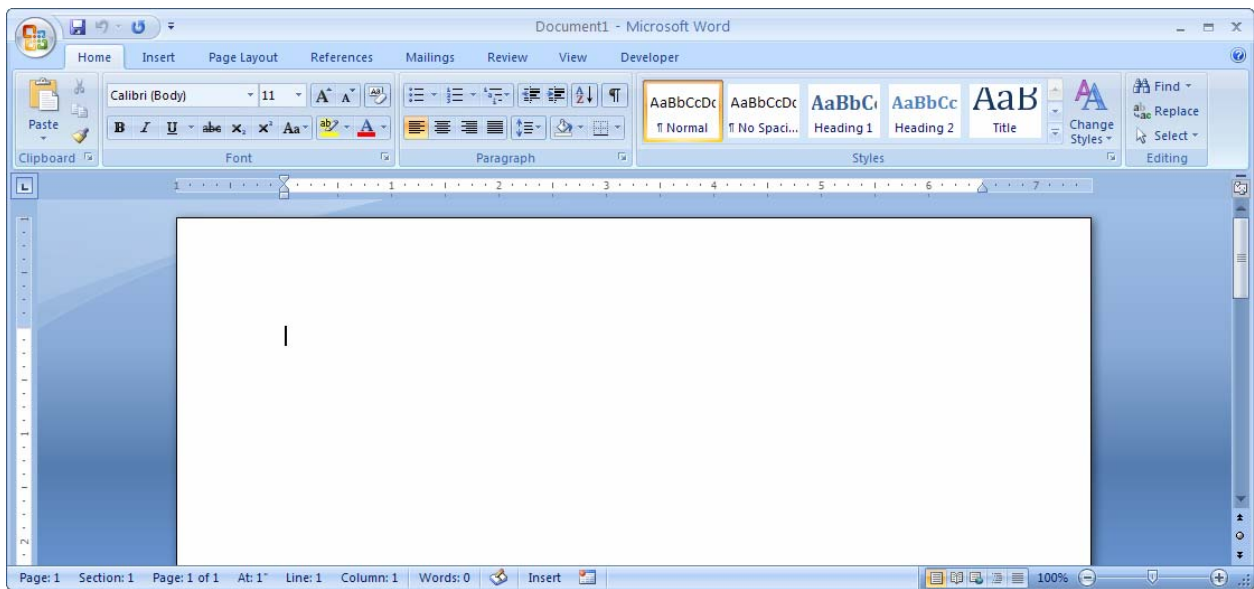
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- OpenOffice.org's functionality is also modeled after older versions of Microsoft Office.
 - Even the wizards in OpenOffice.org feature significant similarity when put right next to Word 2003, as evidenced by the screen show below.
 - Even though not every single Office 2007 functional aspect has been implemented in OpenOffice.org, users should have little trouble seeing what is different and adjusting.



- Office 2007 sports an entirely new interface.
 - The new interface alone will require significant training time and money.
 - Microsoft has not provided a “classic” version of the interface to ease the transition.



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Where OpenOffice.org shines

OpenOffice.org shines in a number of different areas, both on its own and when compared to Microsoft Office 2007.

Price

- OpenOffice.org: Free.
- Microsoft Office 2007: Potentially hundreds of dollars per computer.
- OpenOffice.org is developed by a team of generous individuals, and financially backed by Sun Microsystems.

Open standards

- OpenOffice.org: Built on open standards such as XML, which improves overall interoperability.
- Microsoft Office 2007: A closed, proprietary system. Microsoft can make changes at will to its work, which could damage product interoperability.
- OpenOffice.org uses the Open Document Format (ODF), an XML-based open file format, for all of its work. Open formats make it more likely that an organization will be able to open very old documents in years to come.

Interoperates with Microsoft Office

- OpenOffice.org has the ability to open even very complex Microsoft Office documents.
- In most cases, OpenOffice.org is able to convert 100% of the content.
- Support for the new Office 2007 file formats is coming to OpenOffice.org soon.

OpenOffice.org is operating system agnostic

- Microsoft Office 2007 can run on Linux, but only with virtualization software. This software would then require both a Windows and Office license for each system.
- OpenOffice.org runs in a variety of operating systems. Across operating systems, functionality is identical, easing the support burden on an IT staff that runs a multitude of different desktops. OpenOffice.org supports:
 - Windows NT, 2000, XP, Server 2003, Vista.
 - Linux (x86, x64, and PPC)
 - Solaris
 - Mac OS X
 - FreeBSD

Enhanced functionality

- OpenOffice.org includes native PDF conversion. That is, from within the individual programs, you can save documents as PDF. This can save the company even more money than just an Office license.
- Scripting: OpenOffice.org has a scripting language. VBA/Office macro and script support is under development.

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OpenOffice.org evaluation steps

- Review necessary features: Put together an inventory of the “must have” features that you need from an office productivity suite. Do you need mail merge, for example? Write it down. This is *the* most important step you take, so be thorough and talk to every user you can.
- Review support needs: Do you really need outside support for your office productivity suite? Not many companies do. Analyze this carefully. If you need third party support, your decision is made: stick with Microsoft Office.
- Review scripting needs: Even though OpenOffice.org is making great strides when it comes to migrating scripts from Microsoft Office to OpenOffice.org, this work is not yet complete. If you don't use scripts, macros or VBA code in your documents, your golden. Otherwise, develop an inventory of your scripts. You'll ultimately have to determine if your scripts will work as-is in OpenOffice.org or if you will have to rewrite them using OpenOffice.org Basic.
- Test OpenOffice.org: This is where you take the information you gathered in steps 1 and 3 and put it to the test. Does OpenOffice.org meet all of your needs? Do scripts work as needed or is it feasible to rewrite them? Carefully document your work here and, if you have lingering doubts, keep testing until your dispel them! You don't want to make a major change like this only to have it fly in your face.
- Test Office 2007: For a fair comparison, you must test both alternatives. This testing can also help you to verify your decision to migrate to OpenOffice.org.
- Make your decision. Is your organization ready for a migration to OpenOffice.org? If so, starting with a pilot group, roll OpenOffice.org out to these people and gather their feedback. Act on their feedback (i.e. do you need to provide additional documentation for a particularly popular feature such as mail merge?) and work with another small group to make sure your “fixes” work. Then, after you and your users are comfortable with the results, push the product out in a more general way.

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