What IT architects need to know about groups in Microsoft 365

Microsoft 365 includes five types of groups that are used to manage access to resources and for communication. Group membership is based on Azure Active Directory accounts. As an admin, your team creates some groups to manage conditional access, devices, and other resources. Many groups are created by members of your organization for collaboration using Teams, SharePoint, and other collaboration tools. While membership in these groups can be highly dynamic, you still manage the underlying Azure AD accounts, including enforcing conditional access, using Azure AD Identity Protection, and other controls to protect your organization.

Types of groups and where they are created

Groups can be created in several of the admin centers and by users from within apps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of group</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Security group</td>
<td>Used for granting access to resources and for managing devices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office 365 group</td>
<td>Used for collaboration. Includes a group email and shared workspaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail-enabled security group</td>
<td>Includes the ability to send mail to a group. Cannot be dynamically managed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution list</td>
<td>Used for sending notifications to a list of people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared mailbox</td>
<td>Used when multiple people need to access the same mailbox, such as a support email address.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Azure AD</th>
<th>Microsoft 365 admin center</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outlook</td>
<td>Exchange Admin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teams</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SharePoint</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yammer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Managing groups

Groups can be managed across admin centers. Controls vary depending on the scope of the admin center. For example, Azure AD provides control over dynamic group membership and licensing. The Exchange admin center provides the most controls for managing mail associated with groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manage all group types</th>
<th>Manage most group types</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Microsoft 365 admin center</strong></td>
<td><strong>Azure AD admin center</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sort on group type</td>
<td>• Manage all group types, except shared mailbox groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Manage group members and owners</td>
<td>• Manage group members and owners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Create a friendly email address when creating mail-enabled groups</td>
<td>• Manage dynamic group membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Edit the email address for distribution lists and mail-enabled security groups</td>
<td>• Assign licenses and applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Edit name and description</td>
<td>• Assign Azure resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Edit privacy and subscription settings</td>
<td>• Review activity (access reviews, audit logs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Allow or prevent outside senders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Delete groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Governance for admin-created groups

Use naming conventions for groups created by admins so you can find and manage these.

Additional governance practices

- **Conditional access**
  - Create Office 365 groups in Azure AD to manage access to Microsoft 365 services and other SaaS applications.
  - Create security groups in Azure AD to manage devices.

- **Device management**
  - Create security groups in Azure AD to assign licenses based on groups.

- **Azure resources**
  - Create security groups in Azure AD for managing access to Azure resources.

Collaboration spaces for Office 365 groups

Collaboration spaces for Office 365 groups differ based on where the Office 365 group is created.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where the group is created</th>
<th>Who/what creates it</th>
<th>Shared Outlook inbox</th>
<th>Shared calendar</th>
<th>SharePoint team site and document library</th>
<th>Shared OneNote notebook</th>
<th>Planner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Azure AD</td>
<td>Admin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft 365 admin</td>
<td>Admin</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outlook</td>
<td>User</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teams</td>
<td>Teams</td>
<td>Hidden</td>
<td>Hidden</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SharePoint</td>
<td>SharePoint</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planner</td>
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