KNOWLEDGE BASE ARTICLE

Employee Directory vs. Employee Directory (Entra ID): Which Web Part to Choose

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Table of contents

The two web parts at a glance 4

Data source and loading 5

Search behavior 5

Predefined query vs. filter editor 6

Excluding employees 7

Refinement panel 7

A–Z navigation, Group by and sorting 8

Features available in both web parts 8

Comparison table 9

Which one to choose 10

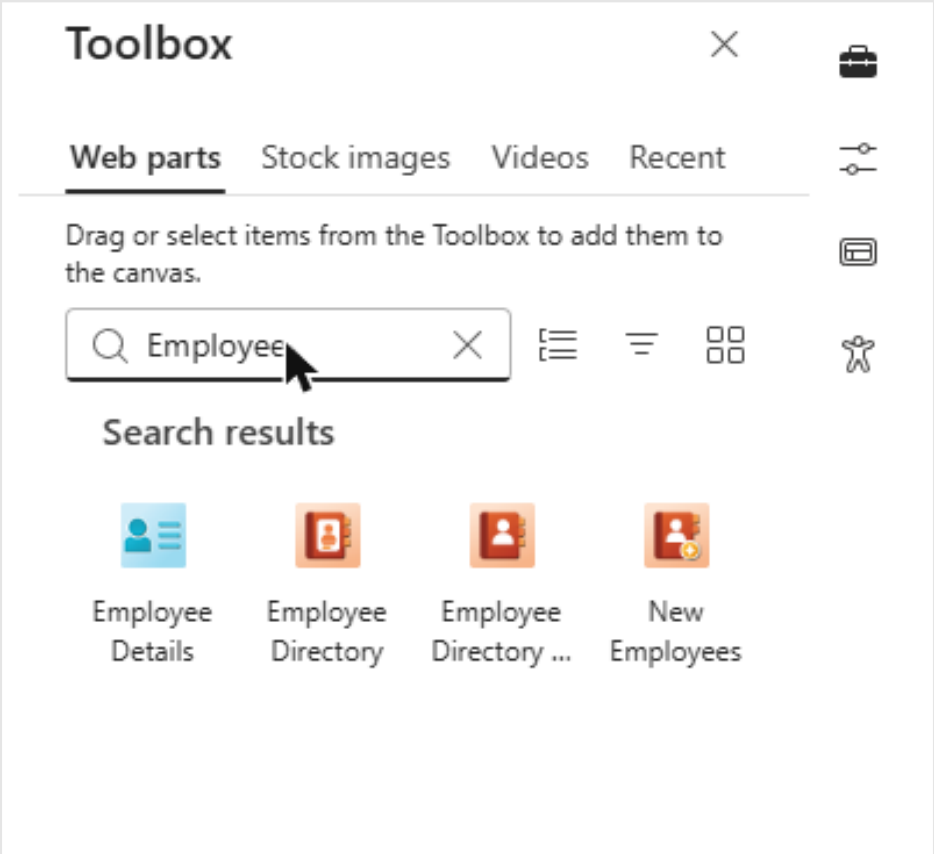
What about New Employees? 12

Terms 13

The Vitextra Employee Directory solution ships with two directory web parts: **Employee Directory** and **Employee Directory (Entra ID)**. Both show a searchable **list** of colleagues with the same cards, details pane, actions and quick filters, but they retrieve and filter people in very different ways. This article compares the two and helps you pick the right one for your page.

The two web parts at a glance

- **Employee Directory** - a search-driven directory. In **Data Source** you choose where people come from: **User profiles** (**SharePoint** search over the SharePoint user profiles) or **Entra ID (Azure AD)** (**Microsoft Graph**). Every search is sent to the server, and results are loaded page by page.
- **Employee Directory (Entra ID)** - a directory built on the complete list of users from **Microsoft Entra ID**. The **web part** loads all users once through Microsoft Graph, keeps them in the browser and filters them locally. This approach makes the filter editor, the exclusion options and the alphabetical navigation possible.



The Employee Directory web parts in the toolbox

Note

Both web parts are part of the same solution and the same license. You can use either one, or both on different pages - for example, a full directory page and a filtered department page.

Data source and loading

Employee Directory queries the data source every time the user searches:

- With **User profiles**, the web part uses SharePoint people search. Only the people indexed by SharePoint search are returned; accounts hidden from address lists are skipped unless **Show hidden users** is turned on, and system and service accounts are always filtered out.
- With **Entra ID (Azure AD)**, the web part sends a Microsoft Graph query for each search. Disabled accounts and guest users are always excluded.

In both cases, results arrive in pages of the size set in **Display items in pages of:** (1–50), and **Show More Results...** loads the next page.

Employee Directory (Entra ID) loads every user from Microsoft Entra ID when the page first opens (in batches of 900 through Microsoft Graph) and caches the list in the browser's local storage. On later visits the directory opens instantly from the cache; when the cached copy is older than 24 hours, it is refreshed in the background. The toolbar shows **Last updated:** with a **Refresh** link that reloads the data on demand. Setting **Display items in pages of:** to 0 shows all results without paging.

Warning

Because Employee Directory (Entra ID) downloads the complete user list, the first load takes longer in very large tenants (tens of thousands of accounts). Changes made in Microsoft Entra ID appear after the next refresh - when the page is opened with a cache older than 24 hours, or after a user selects **Refresh**.

Search behavior

The search box looks the same in both web parts, but matching works differently:

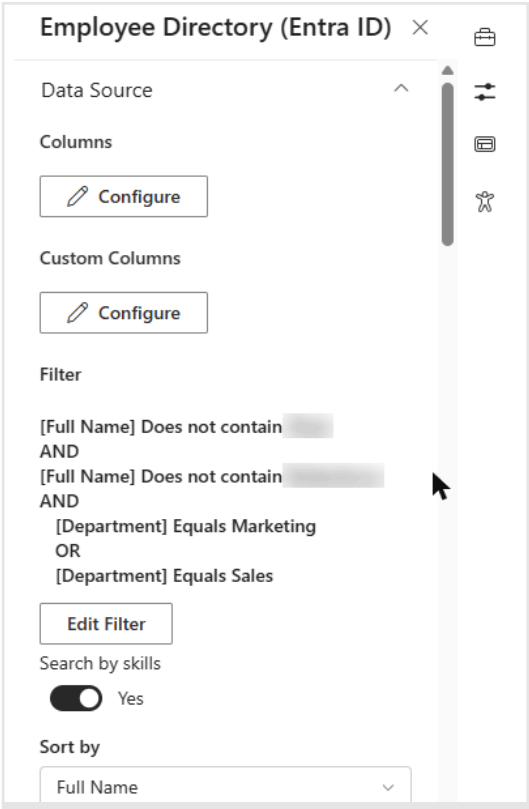
- **Employee Directory, User profiles** - full SharePoint people search: free text across the indexed profile properties, nicknames and phonetic matching, a trailing wildcard (`Ann*`) and KQL property restrictions such as `Department:"Sales"`.

- **Employee Directory, Entra ID (Azure AD)** - a Microsoft Graph "starts with" match on employee ID, department, job title, first name, last name, display name, email, state, city and country.
- **Employee Directory (Entra ID)** - an instant, local "contains" match across the columns marked as searchable in the column configuration, including custom attributes. If no column is marked, **Full Name**, **Job Title**, **Department**, **Business Phone** and **Cell phone** are searched.

Predefined query vs. filter editor

Both web parts let an administrator limit the directory to a subset of people, but with different tools:

- **Employee Directory** with **User profiles** offers **Predefined Query** - a KQL expression added to every search, for example `Department:"Sales"` or `JobTitle:"Engineer"`. With the **Entra ID (Azure AD)** source there is no predefined query; the only restriction is **Show only users with non-empty department**.
- **Employee Directory (Entra ID)** has a visual **filter editor** in the **Data Source** group. You build conditions on any built-in or custom attribute, combine them in groups, and use directory role templates - no query language required.



The filter editor in Employee Directory (Entra ID)

Tip

For all fields, operators and examples of the filter editor, see KB10312. Employee Directory (Entra ID): Filter Editor Reference.

Excluding employees

Employee Directory (Entra ID) has a dedicated **Exclude Employees** group with four toggles:

- **Exclude Unlicensed Employees** - hides accounts without an assigned license (shared mailboxes, rooms, service accounts and similar).
- **Exclude Employees with blank Department**.
- **Exclude Employees with blank Job Title**.
- **Exclude blocked users** - hides disabled accounts; turned on by default.

Employee Directory has no such group. With the **Entra ID (Azure AD)** source, disabled and guest accounts are always excluded and **Show only users with non-empty department** is available (on by default). With **User profiles**, what appears is controlled by the SharePoint **search index**, **Show hidden users** and the **Predefined Query**.

Note

Employee Directory (Entra ID) always leaves guest accounts (user type *Guest*) out of the list, so no setting or filter condition is needed for them.

Refinement panel

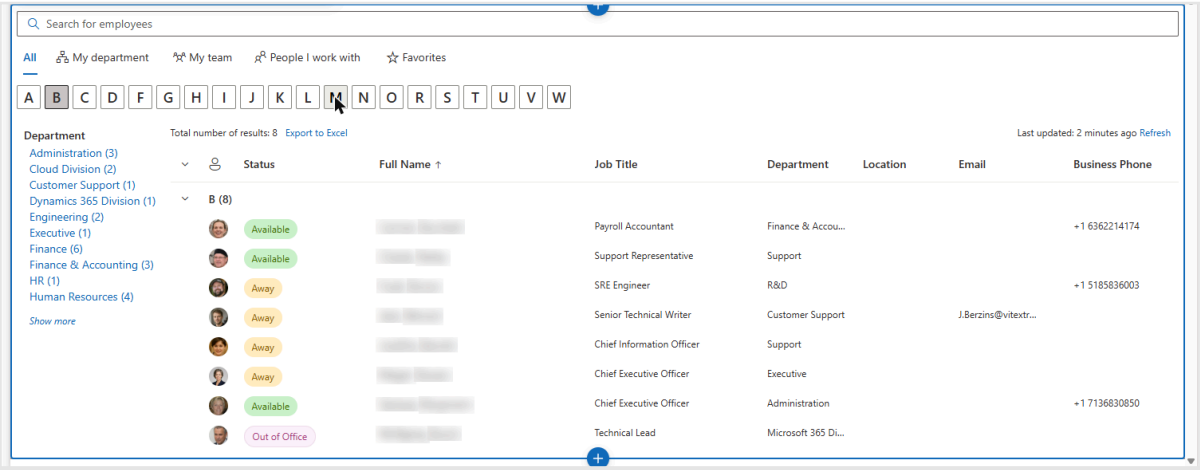
Both web parts support a **Refinement Panel** (on the left, at the top or on the right), but it is built differently:

- **Employee Directory** shows the refinement panel only with the **User profiles** source. Refiners are SharePoint search managed properties (for example, `Department` or `Office`) that you type in by name, and their values and counts come from SharePoint search.
- **Employee Directory (Entra ID)** builds refiners from the columns you configured, including custom attributes, and calculates values and counts from the loaded data.

With the **Entra ID (Azure AD)** source of Employee Directory, the refinement panel group is not available.

A–Z navigation, Group by and sorting

- **Show alphabetical navigation** (in **Appearance**) is available only in **Employee Directory (Entra ID)**. It shows a row of letters built from the first letters of last names; users can select one or several letters to narrow the list.
- **Group by** is available in both web parts and offers **Last name (first letter)** plus the configured columns and custom attributes - a good alternative to A–Z navigation in Employee Directory.
- **Sort by** in Employee Directory offers **(Default)**, **First Name** or **Last Name** with User profiles, and **(Default)** or **Full Name** with the Entra ID source. Employee Directory (Entra ID) can sort by any configured column.



Alphabetical navigation and the refinement panel in Employee Directory (Entra ID)

Features available in both web parts

Many features work the same way in both web parts, so the choice does not limit the user experience:

- **Quick filters** - My department, My team, People I work with and Favorites (KB10214).
- **Layouts** - the **Details** (table) and **Contact** (cards) views, card size and card fields, **Group by**.
- **Details pane** - manager, direct reports, availability, local time, documents, About me, interests and skills (KB10199).
- **Actions** - chat, call, email, copy email, schedule a meeting and vCard, in the context menu and as quick actions on cards.
- **Search by skills** - with the toggle on, people whose profile skills match the search text are added to the results, with the matched skills shown first. In Employee Directory the toggle applies to the **Entra ID (Azure AD)** source; with **User profiles**, SharePoint people search already covers profile properties. Selecting a skill in the details pane searches for everyone with that skill in both web parts.
- **Export to Excel** - when enabled in the **Export** group. Employee Directory exports all

results of the current search; Employee Directory (Entra ID) exports the current filtered list (KB10062).
- **Custom attributes** - Employee Directory works with custom **User Profile** properties (KB10049); Employee Directory (Entra ID) works with custom Microsoft Entra ID attributes (KB10060), which can also be used in the filter editor, refiners and search.
- **Microsoft Teams** - the **Teams app** included in the package (*Employees*) opens the **Employee Directory** web part, as a personal app and as a channel tab. The tenant-wide personal-app configuration is therefore saved with **Save Settings** from an Employee Directory web part. To use Employee Directory (Entra ID) in Teams, add a SharePoint page with it to a channel as a SharePoint tab.

Comparison table

Capability	Employee Directory	Employee Directory (Entra ID)
Data source	User profiles (SharePoint search) or Entra ID (Microsoft Graph), selectable	Microsoft Entra ID (Microsoft Graph)
Loading	Server-side query for every search, page by page	All users loaded once, cached in the browser for 24 hours, **Refresh** on demand
Search	User profiles: SharePoint people search with KQL, wildcards, nicknames, phonetic matching; Entra ID: "starts with" on standard fields	Instant "contains" match on the columns marked searchable, including custom attributes
Predefined restriction	**Predefined Query** (KQL, User profiles only)	Visual **filter editor** with condition groups and role templates
Exclusions	Entra ID source: disabled and guest accounts always excluded, **Show only users with non-empty department**; User profiles: **Show hidden users**	**Exclude Unlicensed Employees**, blank Department, blank Job Title, **Exclude blocked users**

Capability	Employee Directory	Employee Directory (Entra ID)
Refinement panel	User profiles source only; SharePoint managed properties	Yes; any configured column or custom attribute
A–Z navigation	No (use **Group by** › **Last name (first letter)**)	Yes, **Show alphabetical navigation**
Sort by	(Default), First Name, Last Name (User profiles); (Default), Full Name (Entra ID)	Any configured column
Search by skills	Yes (Entra ID source)	Yes
Quick filters, Group by, layouts, actions, details pane	Yes	Yes
Custom attributes	User Profile properties	Microsoft Entra ID attributes
Export to Excel	Yes, all results of the search	Yes, the current filtered list
Microsoft Teams	Yes: the *Employees* app (personal app and channel tab)	Through a SharePoint page added as a channel tab

Which one to choose

Choose **Employee Directory** when:

- People data is maintained in the SharePoint user profiles - for example, you sync extra properties or users fill in About me, skills and interests in their profiles.
- Users expect search-engine behavior: KQL, nicknames, phonetic matching, refiners based on SharePoint managed properties.
- The **tenant** is very large and you prefer server-side paging over loading the whole directory into the browser.
- You only need a simple directory restricted by a KQL **Predefined Query** (for example, one country or one department).

Choose **Employee Directory (Entra ID)** when:

- Microsoft Entra ID is the master source of people data, and changes must not wait for the SharePoint search crawl.
- You need to hide unlicensed, blocked, or incomplete accounts (blank department or job title) from the directory.
- You want a precise, visual filter - by office, country, department, a custom attribute or a directory role - without writing queries.
- You need A–Z navigation, sorting by any column, refiners on any attribute, or instant filtering as users type.

Typical scenarios:

Scenario	Recommended web part
Company-wide directory for an intranet home page, profiles enriched in SharePoint	Employee Directory (User profiles)
Directory that must hide shared mailboxes, rooms and service accounts	Employee Directory (Entra ID)
Department or office page that shows only its own people	Employee Directory (Entra ID) with a filter
Very large tenant, search across many profile properties	Employee Directory (User profiles)
Directory with alphabetical browsing and refiners on custom Entra ID attributes	Employee Directory (Entra ID)
Quick setup with live Microsoft Graph data and no extra configuration	Employee Directory (Entra ID (Azure AD) source)

Tip

If you are unsure, start with Employee Directory (Entra ID): it works with Microsoft Graph data only, needs no search configuration, and its exclusion options produce a clean list of real employees. Switch to Employee Directory with User profiles when you need SharePoint search features.

What about New Employees?

The third web part in the solution, **New Employees**, is not a directory. It spotlights people who joined the organization recently (accounts created in Microsoft Entra ID within the selected period) and is typically placed on a home or onboarding page next to one of the directory web parts. See KB10207. How to Showcase New Hires with the New Employees Web Part.

Terms

List
A list is a storage unit in SharePoint. A list can contain columns of different types, content types, and views. A document library is a special type of list and therefore inherits the functionality of a list.

Microsoft Entra ID
Microsoft Entra ID (formerly Azure Active Directory) is a cloud-based identity and access management service offered by Microsoft. It allows organizations to efficiently manage and secure their users' identities and access to a variety of resources, both internal and external. These resources include Microsoft 365, the Azure platform, and thousands of other software-as-a-service (SaaS) applications.

Microsoft Graph
Microsoft Graph is a REST API secured with Microsoft Entra ID (formerly Azure Active Directory) and OAuth 2.0. It provides a single endpoint for accessing data and services in Microsoft 365, such as SharePoint, Outlook, OneDrive, Teams, and others.

Search Index
The search index is the store of content and metadata that the crawler has processed and that search queries run against. Only properties that are mapped to managed properties are included in the index.

SharePoint
SharePoint is a web-based collaboration platform that provides content management, document management, workflow applications, search, and other tools that empower employees and teams to work together. SharePoint is also a secure place to store, organize, and access shared information.

Teams App
A Teams app is an application that extends Microsoft Teams with capabilities such as tabs, bots, message extensions, and meeting extensions. Teams apps are distributed as app packages through the Teams app store, AppSource, or the organization's catalog.

Tenant
A Microsoft 365 tenant is a dedicated instance of Microsoft 365 services. The tenant

holds the organization's information, such as users and domains (Microsoft Entra ID), configurations, subscriptions, and services. An organization receives a tenant by signing up for Microsoft 365 services.

User Profile
A user profile is a set of properties that describe a user. The properties include basic information about the user, contact details, and other data. The user profile is used by services such as Delve, My Site, and others.

Web Part
A web part is a primary building block of functionality or content placed on a SharePoint page. Some web parts support customization, such as configuring the web part or changing its appearance.