KNOWLEDGE BASE ARTICLE

Discussions vs. the Classic SharePoint Discussion Board vs. Viva Engage vs. Teams Channels: Which to Choose

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Overview

"Where do we put the forum?" is a question every intranet owner asks sooner or later: a place where employees ask, colleagues answer, and the answer can still be found a year later. **Microsoft 365** offers several candidates, and they are not interchangeable. This article compares the four that come up in practice - the **Discussion Board**, **Viva Engage** communities, **Microsoft Teams** channels and the Vitextra Discussions **web part** - on the criteria that decide the choice: where the forum lives, who may read and post, how replies are organized, how people are notified, and what it costs.

Note

The statements about Microsoft features reflect Microsoft's documentation and Message Center announcements as of October 2026. Microsoft changes Viva Engage and Teams regularly; check the current documentation for details.

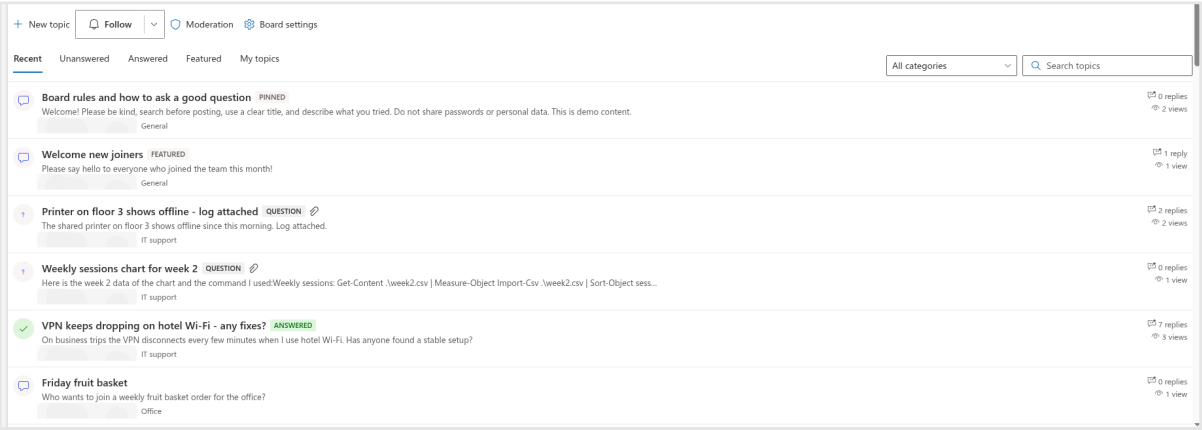
The options in brief

The classic SharePoint Discussion Board. The **list** template that SharePoint has shipped since the 2000s: a discussion is a folder, replies are items inside it, with threaded and flat views, a *Question* flag and a *Best reply*. It exists only in the classic experience.

Viva Engage. The enterprise social network of Microsoft 365. A community is a **Microsoft 365 group** with a feed of conversations, questions with a marked best answer, and - in the paid **Answers** experience - a company-wide question hub. A SharePoint page can show a community feed through the Viva Engage web parts.

Microsoft Teams channels. Channel posts with replies, with posts and threads layouts where supported. Conversations live in the team, where the day-to-day chat happens. Microsoft

Vitextra Discussions. An SPFx web part that puts a forum on a modern SharePoint page or into a **Teams tab**: boards with categories, topics and questions, threaded replies, best answer, follow subscriptions, moderation and an importer for classic boards. Everything is stored in lists on the **site** itself.



Discussions on a modern SharePoint page

Where the classic Discussion Board stands

A lot of advice on the web says that Microsoft has "removed" the Discussion Board. That is not accurate, and it matters for planning. As of October 2026, Microsoft has **not formally retired** the Discussion Board list template. Its actual status is this:

- The template is **hidden** from the modern *New* menu and is created only through the classic experience (or PowerShell). On communication sites it appears only after the *Team Collaboration Lists* **feature** is activated.
- It uses the **classic interface**. Linking to or embedding a classic page does not turn it into a native modern forum.
- Page modernization requires a suitable mapping from each classic web part to a modern counterpart; assess the board separately when planning migration. Microsoft

Two dated changes around it are what you should plan for:

Change	Date	Effect on a classic board
Retirement of SharePoint Alerts (Microsoft)	Creation of new alerts switched off gradually from January 2026; the ability to use alerts removed from July 2026	The only built-in notification mechanism of the classic board - *Alert me* on a discussion or a list - no longer works
Classic user-created pages become read-only (Microsoft)	1 October 2028	The classic pages that host discussion boards can no longer be edited. Microsoft states that classic **list views and list forms are not in the scope**

Change	Date	Effect on a classic board
		of this change and "might be addressed on a separate timeline"

Warning

A classic board keeps working for now, but without alerts, without a modern or Teams experience. If a forum is part of your intranet plans, treat the classic board as content to migrate rather than a platform to build on.

Side-by-side comparison

Criterion	Classic Discussion Board	Viva Engage	Teams channel	Discussions
Lives on a modern SharePoint page	No (classic pages or an iframe)	Conversations shows a community, topic, user or home feed; Highlights can show up to four selected conversations Microsoft	No web part embeds a live channel	Yes - any modern page, full-page app, Teams tab and personal app
Who may read and post	Site permissions	Members of the community (a Microsoft 365 group); a public community grants its site access to *Everyone except external users*	Members of the team	Site permissions: readers read, members post, users with *Manage Lists* moderate

Criterion	Classic Discussion Board	Viva Engage	Teams channel	Discussions
Guests	By site permissions	Microsoft Entra B2B guests, subject to external collaboration settings Microsoft	Guests of the team	By site permissions, no extra setup
Reply hierarchy	Threaded (folder + items)	Two levels in questions and conversations	Replies in posts or threads layouts; availability depends on account and client	Nested replies; the stored parent path is limited to 255 characters
Question, best answer, unanswered list	*Question* flag and *Best reply*	Questions with a best answer; full **Answers** requires a license that includes the Viva Engage Knowledge service plan Microsoft	No native question topic with a best-answer marker	Question topics, **Mark as answer** by the author or a moderator, *Unanswered* and *Answered* views, default view configurable
Notifications	SharePoint Alerts (retired July 2026)	In-app, e-mail and Teams notifications	Teams activity	Follow a board or a topic (*Immediately*, *Daily digest*, *Weekly digest*) and @mentions; e-mail delivery

Criterion	Classic Discussion Board	Viva Engage	Teams channel	Discussions
				through a **Power Automate** flow built on the subscriptions list
Moderation	List content approval can be configured; editing others' posts depends on list permissions Microsoft	Community admins, reporting	Team owners and designated channel moderators	*Require approval of new posts* per board, moderation queue, **Report**, pin, feature, lock
Categories and views	Classic discussion views; community sites also provide categories	Topics (tags)	Channels	Categories per board; *Recent*, *Unanswered*, *Answered*, *Featured*, *My topics*; search by title
Where the content is stored	A list on the site	The Viva Engage service (Microsoft 365 group)	Teams chat service; compliance copies in Exchange; channel files in SharePoint Microsoft	Four lists on the site (boards, topics, posts, subscriptions) and an assets library
Microsoft Purview Microsoft	SharePoint controls apply according to configuration,	eDiscovery and retention; community container	Teams retention policies	SharePoint controls apply according to configuration,

Criterion	Classic Discussion Board	Viva Engage	Teams channel	Discussions
	licensing and content type; a site sensitivity label does not automatically label its content	labels; files stored in SharePoint follow the applicable SharePoint controls, configuration and licensing Microsoft		licensing and content type; a site sensitivity label does not automatically label its content
Availability	Wherever classic **SharePoint Online** is available	Not available in GCC High and DoD; Engage in Teams not available for EDU tenants	Teams license required	Modern SharePoint Online and SPFx deployment required; Viva is not required; Teams use requires Teams access
Migration of an existing classic board	-	No importer	No importer	Built-in importer: topics, reply hierarchy, best answers, likes and attachments
Price	Included	Core community features are included in eligible plans; full Answers	Teams license required	Flat per **tenant**, Standard and Plus plans, 14-day trial

Criterion	Classic Discussion Board	Viva Engage	Teams channel	Discussions
		requires Viva Engage Knowledge		

When to choose which

Choose Viva Engage when you want a company-wide social network: storylines, campaigns, leadership Q&A, open communities that anyone in the organization can join. It is the right tool when the audience is "everyone" and the content is conversation rather than a structured knowledge base - provided it is enabled in your tenant and available in your cloud.

Choose a Teams channel when the discussion belongs to a working team and its daily chat: a project, a shift, a class team that already meets in Teams. Threads keep a conversation together, but there is no list of topics, no categories and no best answer, and the content stays in the team rather than on the intranet.

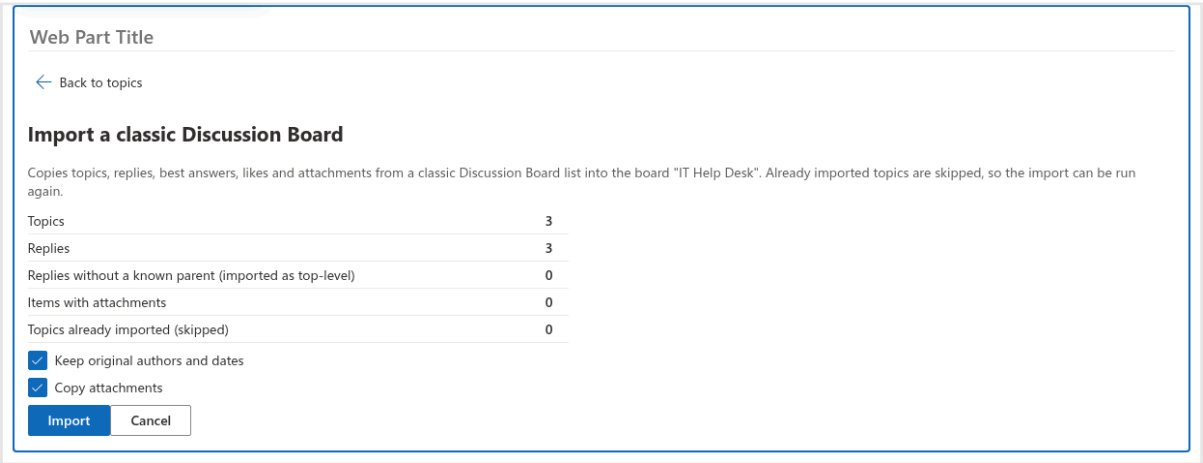
Keep the classic Discussion Board only as a temporary measure for an existing board whose readers still use classic pages. New boards should not be created on it: alerts are gone, modern pages and Teams are out of reach, and the classic pages that host it are on a published retirement timeline.

Choose Discussions when the forum belongs to a **site** - a department, a project, an extranet with guests, a course - and should look and behave like the rest of the modern intranet: on the page, in the site's permissions, in the site's Purview scope, and with a structured list of topics that remains searchable years later. It is also the practical option for tenants where Viva Engage is not available or is switched off by policy, and for organizations with live classic boards that need to be carried over without losing the reply threads.

Moving from the classic board

Discussions includes an importer for classic Discussion Boards (list template 108) on the same site or on another site of the tenant. A site owner opens the page in edit mode, chooses **Import classic board**, picks the source and runs an analysis first: the wizard reports how many topics and replies it found, how many replies lost their parent on a flattened board (they become top-level replies), how many items carry

attachments and how many topics were imported earlier. The import then copies topics, replies with their hierarchy, best answers, likes and attachments; original authors and dates are restored when the account may set system fields. Imported items carry the id of the classic item, so the import can be re-run without duplicates.



The classic board import wizard

Tip

The step-by-step procedure is in KB10417. How to Import a Classic SharePoint Discussion Board into Discussions, and the field mapping in KB10418. What the Importer Copies and How It Rebuilds Reply Threads.

What Discussions does not try to be

Discussions is not a social network and not a chat. There are no storylines, no company-wide feed, no reputation points and no instant messaging. If you need those, Viva Engage and Teams remain the right tools - and a Discussions board can sit next to them, holding the structured, site-scoped knowledge that a feed tends to bury.

Terms

Feature
A feature is a set of SharePoint elements (artifacts), such as site columns, content types, web parts, application pages, custom actions, list templates, list instances, and others.

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 365
Microsoft 365 is a cloud-based subscription service that combines productivity apps such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook with cloud services such as SharePoint, OneDrive, Teams, and Exchange Online, together with advanced security and device management.

Microsoft 365 Group
A Microsoft 365 group is a membership object in Microsoft Entra ID that provides a shared set of resources for its members, such as a shared mailbox, calendar, SharePoint site, Planner plan, and Teams team.

Power Automate
Microsoft Power Automate is a cloud-based service that allows users to create automated workflows between applications and services. It enables the automation of repetitive tasks and processes, such as data collection, notifications, and approvals, without the need for extensive coding knowledge.

SharePoint Online
The cloud version of SharePoint, a web-based collaboration platform within Microsoft 365 that provides an extensive range of capabilities to store, share, and manage the digital information, content, and knowledge of an organization.

Site
A SharePoint site is a container for information within the SharePoint platform. Sites typically offer features such as document libraries, lists, calendars, discussion boards,

and workflows, facilitating collaboration, communication, and document management within teams or across departments. Sites can be customized and configured to suit the specific needs and workflows of an organization.

Teams Tab
A tab in Microsoft Teams is a page that is embedded in a channel, chat, or meeting and displays web content or an app, such as a SharePoint page or a custom application, at the top of the conversation.

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.

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.