Microsoft adds Sway presentation tool to Office suite

August 7 2015, by Matt Day, The Seattle Times

Microsoft is hoping to Sway a few more people with its new presentation tool.

The company on Wednesday was set to take the "preview" label off of Sway, the design and presentation app introduced last year.

Business users of the Office 365 Web-based productivity suite will see Sway appear alongside Word, Excel and other Office applications. Preview versions of the tool, already included among the free-to-use Office Online apps, will stay there for consumers to use. The company is also releasing a Windows 10 app to accompany the apps that were released earlier for Apple devices.

Sway is designed to divorce the act of creating presentations from micromanaging fonts or color palettes.

Chris Pratley, the general manager of the Sway engineering team, compares the idea behind Sway to Internet radio service Pandora. In Pandora, users don't need to specify their musical tastes in beats-per-minute or favorite instruments. Instead, they can enter an artist's name, and after rendering judgment on a few songs, Pandora's algorithms get pretty good at coming up with music recommendations.

Similarly, in Sway, users don't have to select text point sizes or crop photos. Instead, they tell the software to emphasize portions of text, focus on a portion of a video clip, or group images together. Sway, with

input from design concepts and algorithms designed to gauge a user's intent, takes care of the rest.

The goal is to get users to "focus on the story and the content and the relationships, rather than the nitty gritty of the tool you're using," said Pratley, a veteran of Microsoft's Office team who also guided the team that built the OneNote collaboration and note-taking app.

Sway lets users embed source material from a wide range of the media common on the Web - Twitter posts, YouTube videos, pictures from cloud storage or a computer or Flickr. The software automatically adjusts presentations so that the design holds up whether viewed on a desktop monitor or smaller screen.

Pratley sees a wide range of applications for Sway, from teachers posting interactive lesson plans to groups in the workplace collaborating and personal users making travelogues.

The intended simplicity of Sway contrasts with Office stalwarts like Word and Outlook, tools capable of myriad specific, complicated tasks after decades of user requests for added functions.

"Isn't it amazing we had to learn about fonts and point sizes and leading and all that?" said Pratley. "In the traditional model you straitjacket everything."

©2015 The Seattle Times
Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Microsoft adds Sway presentation tool to Office suite (2015, August 7) retrieved 24 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2015-08-microsoft-sway-tool-office.html

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private

study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.