# ownCloud 8 – What is New?

Version 8

ownCloud introduces a number of improvements and new features with version 8 which include file sharing across different ownCloud server installations (Federated Cloud), tools for the administration (e.g. a more comfortable File Firewall configuration), extended functionalities in the mobile Apps and a reworked and extended offer of support options.
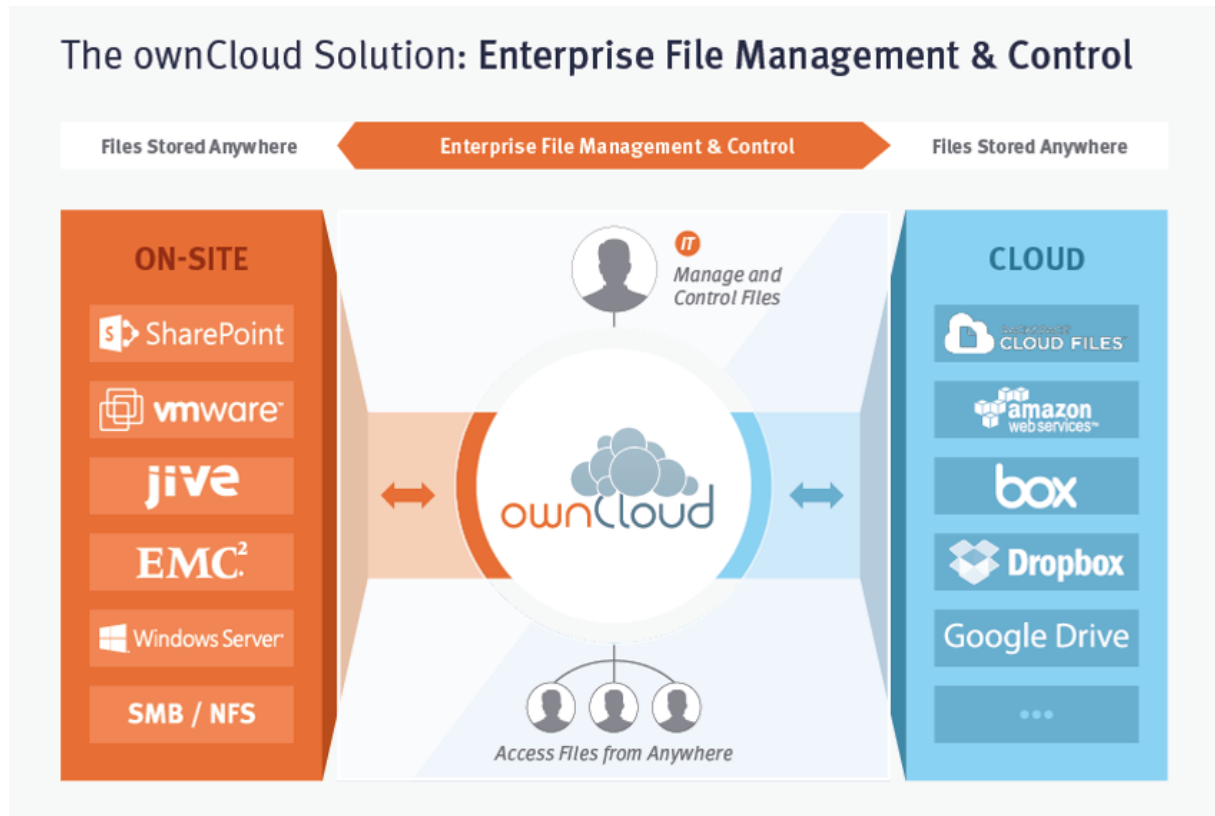
*Graphic 1: Overview of the supported storage systems in ownCloud*

As a reminder: It is the main idea of ownCloud to provide the benefits of cloud solutions, and protect the users privacy without IT having to give up control over their data and servers to third parties, like it is the case with vendors like Dropbox & Co. ownCloud offers a central and single access point for company data with ownCloud Server, no matter if the data is stored on a Fileserver, FTP-Server, DropBox, SharePoint or other storage systems.

This article offers an overview of the significant new features and also takes a look at the Microsoft SharePoint integration in ownCloud, which was added in the ownCloud Enterprise Edition 7. It supports cloud scenarios for on-premise installations of SharePoint Server 2007, 2010 and 2013, which enable employees to synchronize and share their files on-the-go internally and externally with others in an easy, secure and controlled way.

What is new in ownCloud 8?

Federated Cloud Sharing

The ownCloud 8 Federated Cloud sharing simplifies the sharing and synchronizing of files and folders between different ownCloud installations. This feature extends and replaces the former Server-To-Server sharing.
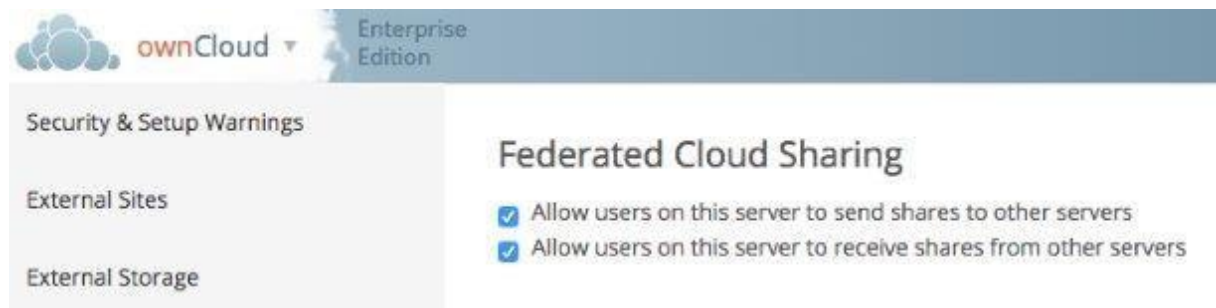
Graphic 2: Activation of the Federated Cloud in the Administration

User of an ownCloud installation can synchronize and change files with users of another ownCloud installation through the Federated Cloud. The Master-Version however will always stay on the original server. Therefore the respective administrators of the ownCloud servers keep control over their files and policies, but the users can work collaboratively on the files across server borders.

Federated Cloud is part of the international OpenCloudMesh initiative, which wants to connect the private clouds of various research facilities around the world under the roof of the GÉANT Association to a global network on the foundation of ownCloud's open APIs.

File Firewall

The File Firewall was already in version 7 - a mighty feature to secure the ownCloud Server from unpermitted access. The configuration of the firewall however was complicated and only possible via text input of JSON-Code.

In version 8, ownCloud developed a comfortable graphic interface for the File Firewall, which makes the rule definition a lot easier for the administrator. With these rules it is possible to detect and block access from unknown IP addresses, from unknown devices, at unusual times or from unfamiliar areas. This can also be recorded with the Log-Function. Only requests that fulfill the defined security rules are accepted by ownCloud.

As shown in the graphic, the rule configuration is done with dropdown list fields in the web interface.

*Abbildung 1 Neues UI zur Konfiguration der Regeln der File Firewall*

Favorites

New in ownCloud 8 are Favorites, which allow users to save the addresses of their favorite files in a single place. This might sound like a small improvement, but ownCloud announced that Favorites will be the first step or foundation of a more extensive Metadata-management in future versions of ownCloud.

Mobile Apps

The ownCloud mobile Apps were also improved. The Android App now allows users to download an entire folder to the mobile device, and files marked as favorites are now synchronized with the server automatically.

A big step forward was made with ownCloud 8 in respects to the iOS platform integration, with the implementation in iOS 8 of support for other storage vendors. In practice this means that users of Microsoft Office Apps now can open, change and save their iPad Office documents directly in the respective application from their ownCloud Server.
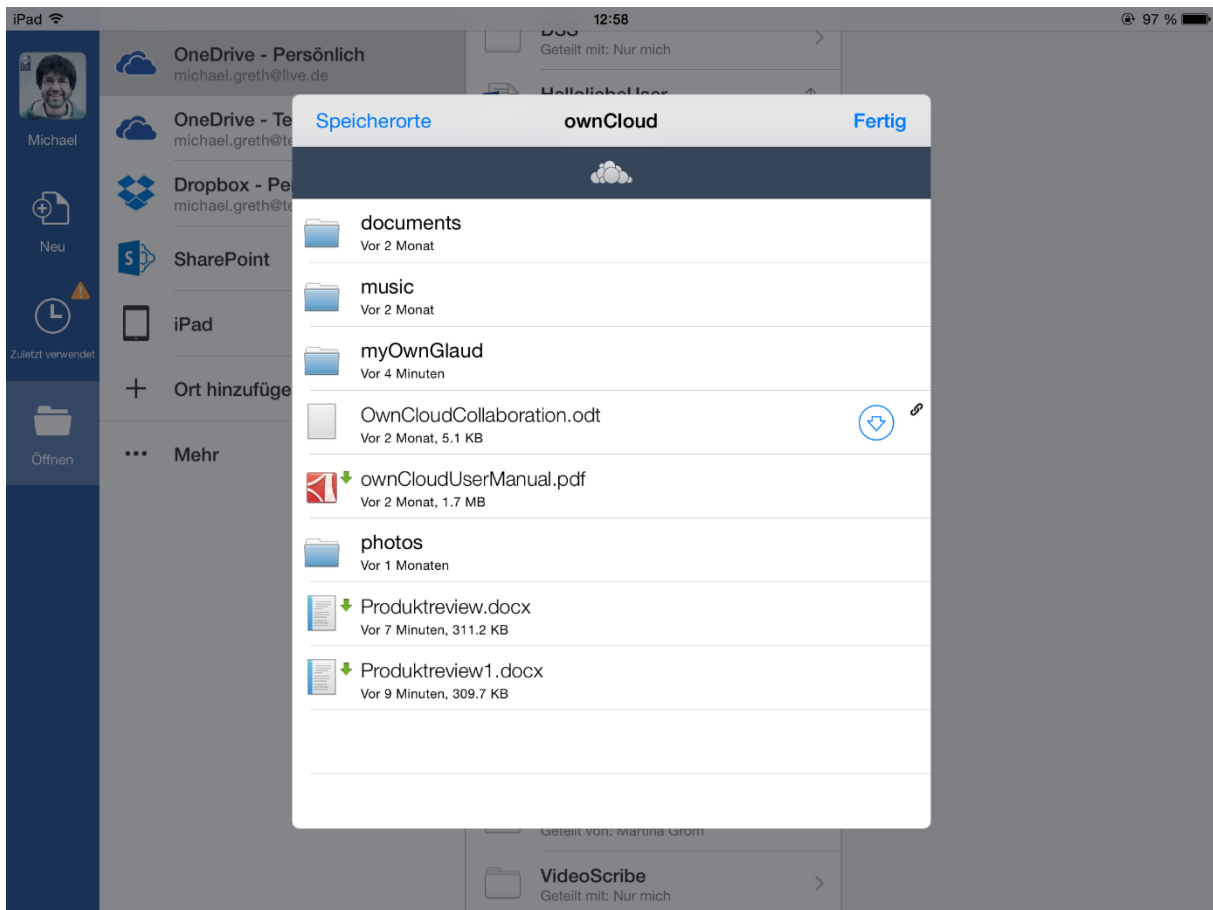
Graphic 4: Direct access to a Word document on ownCloud from the WORD iPad App

Now the work on Office documents on an iPad through ownCloud is just as simple as having the files in OneDrive, SharePoint or DropBox.

Support Options

The support offerings of ownCloud have been fundamentally changed with version 8. The new support model offers four levels for the user to choose the most fitting.

Level 1 ownCloud Community

The foundation here is **ownCloud Server** (formerly ownCloud Community Edition), which is a cost-free open source project available through ownCloud. There is no organized support, but, as usual for Open Source Applications, a big community of volunteers in the ownCloud Community is available and helps with problems through online forums.

Level 2 ownCloud Standard Subscription

The **ownCloud Standard Subscription** offers paid professional 8x5 support via E-Mail. The support includes ownCloud Server as well as the ownCloud Standard Apps (Activities, Anti-Virus, Encryption, External Storage, LDAP/AD, PDF Viewers, Pictures, Sharing, Provisioning, Text Editor, Trash Bin, and Versioning). Other Apps like Calendar or Contacts can of course also be used, but are not covered by the support.

This support option is designed as an entry for professional users that need an easy file sync and share solution without additional Enterprise features but require contractually secured support.

Level 3 ownCloud Enterprise Subscription

The **ownCloud Enterprise Subscription** is the offering for companies that have higher and more specific software requirements and are looking for secured support with SLAs, reliable contacts and competent consulting, and proven and certified extensions. It includes all of the benefits of the Standard Subscription and extends it with 12x5 Support through E-Mail and phone.

The foundation here is also ownCloud Server with Enterprise Apps including features like Files Drop, File Firewall, SharePoint, Windows Home and Windows Network Drives, S3 Primary Storage, Logging and SSO/SAML.

The mobile Apps, which need to be purchased from the app store in Level 1 and 2, are included.

The ownBrander feature is also new, which allows the admin to customize the logo and design of ownCloud and the ownCloud Apps individually to the CI of the customer's enterprise.

Level 4 ownCloud Custom Subscription

The most comprehensive support is offered with the **ownCloud Custom Subscription**. In addition to the benefits of the Enterprise Subscription you get up to 24x7 Support via E-Mail and phone, and options such as specific Support from ownCloud, ownBrander Support for the design adjustment, individual development or deployment support.

Details for the support options and the prices of the different levels can be found on owncloud.com or through direct contact to the ownCloud Sales.

This four-step model enables each user to select the right support services and features for their needs. The following graphic summarizes the various subscriptions:
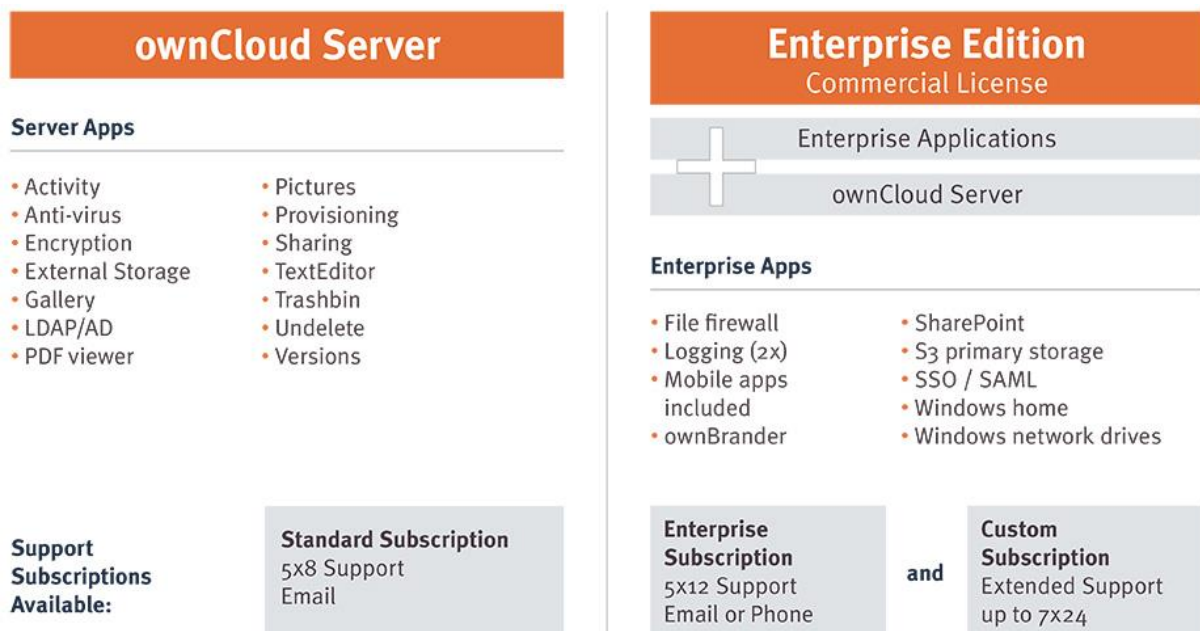
Graphic 5: Overview over the ownCloud versions and the support options

SharePoint Integration

As noted before, ownCloud Enterprise has allowed the integration of Microsoft SharePoint since version 7. Everybody that uses older SharePoint versions has almost no options to enable easy sharing of files in SharePoint libraries. SharePoint 2013 on-premise introduced a better support to tie in external users, but the set-up and practical implementation is a lot of effort.

ownCloud's solution for the sharing and synchronizing of documents in SharePoint is amazingly simple: SharePoint libraries are tied into ownCloud as additional data storages with the SharePoint Enterprise App. ownCloud supports SharePoint 2007, 2010 and 2013, authentication works via NTLM or basic authentication.

As usual for ownCloud, the documents remain in their storage location and the access rights (ACL) set in SharePoint will be maintained by ownCloud.

For the user, the SharePoint library is shown in ownCloud like every other folder. Through the web interface it is possible to access SharePoint documents or sync with the Desktop Client, have them offline and share them. The Desktop Client configures which folder and files are synchronized. The data transfer and the synchronization are done with SOAP and WebDAV.

Graphic 6: Configuration of a Mount Point "Software" to a SharePoint document library

The connection to SharePoint is set up by an administrator (Graphic 8), whereby multiple Mount Points, which are connections to libraries, can be created. The administrator can choose one of three different options for the SharePoint login:

- Login data is provided by the user, he uses his own credentials, all rights for this user stay active
- Global login data – the administrator specifies the credentials in the configuration
- User defined login data – for other credentials

Furthermore, the users can be allowed to tie their own SharePoint libraries into ownCloud.

The sharing of documents in SharePoint libraries is deactivated by default, to meet the specific security requirements of document storage in the enterprise. The user can access and synchronize his SharePoint documents through the ownCloud Server, but is unable to share them. The sharing of documents in SharePoint libraries has to be allowed explicitly in the set-up process of the SharePoint connection.

All in all, the SharePoint integration of ownCloud gives your SharePoint users quick and easy possibilities to share and sync documents, which are just as user friendly as cloud offerings and still meet the security requirements of the company.

Conclusion

ownCloud continues to professionalize the open source solution with version 8, especially the newly designed support model which now offers contractually secured support suited for companies of every size.

Additional Information

Website for the Open Source Project: http://owncloud.org
Website for the Commercial Solutions: http://owncloud.com

An extensive Product Analysis is available at http://www.sharepointsocial.de/

This is an article paid by ownCloud Inc. Based on the ownCloud Enterprise Version 8, April 2015.