



Red River

CREATING A MORE

MODERN WORKPLACE

WITH MICROSOFT TEAMS



IS YOUR BUSINESS APPROACHING A COLLABORATION CONUNDRUM?

New ways of doing business and new technologies are both making effective collaboration a challenge. Modern business ecosystems have changed; collaborative tools need to change with them. Microsoft Teams and Office 365 work together to create a clean and effective collaborative infrastructure.

THE COLLABORATION DILEMMA

Recent studies have shown that even the perception of working together can improve workplace performance. A company's role is to better facilitate employee collaboration -- and the need for better collaboration has been increasing over the last decade.

There are three major reasons why improved collaboration has become both a necessity and a challenge:

- Remote workforces. A new, global “gig economy” has transformed the way modern companies think about their workforce. Companies are increasingly turning towards outsourced workers and contracted employees on a per-project basis. Even in-house employees are frequently completing work from home or off-site -- and some companies have moved away from having a physical, brick-and-mortar infrastructure entirely. Organizations that maintain multiple physical offices may have employees who frequently work together even if they aren't in the same city or even country, or they may have departments that work almost completely independently.
- Team-based organizations. According to Microsoft, employees work on nearly two times the number of teams that they did a mere five years ago. Many organizations have shifted towards a team-based approach for their projects, in which employees may need to work on multiple objectives at once and must be able to work with different sets of colleagues. Employees frequently have to connect to other departments or connect with each other one-on-one as well as in groups. Inter-office initiatives may require further collaboration with both specialized and general purpose teams.
- Siloed apps and platforms. From operating systems to apps, employees are often using entirely different tech from one another. With employees frequently using their own mobile phones, laptops, and tablets to complete their work, employers now need to support a wider array of platforms. Operating systems and apps that are popular in one country may not be popular in another. Different departments may seek to “self-service” their IT and end up with a different working environment than others.

Though these issues are very different from each other, they all ultimately lead to the same place. Employees are finding it difficult to collaborate. They are working on different systems, apps, and geographic locations. They need to track messages through multiple systems, and they need to connect with multiple teams. They need to collaborate with colleagues they've never met in person, and they need to be able to reach out to contacts across the corporate structure.

The solution to these issues is to create a single shared environment in which employees can connect to each other in an organized, streamlined way. By creating a consolidated environment that every employee can access from anywhere, an organization can create an ecosystem that supports their projects and efforts.



COLLABORATION STARTS WITH
COMMUNICATION

- Globally, 70% of employees work remotely at least once a week. This number has been steadily increasing for years.
- Remote workers and out-of-office workers may have difficulty connecting and communicating, due to a wide variety of logistical issues
- Microsoft Teams can provide a centralized area of communication that puts in-office and out-of-office workers on a level playing field.

The number of remote workers and out-of-office workers is growing. Many companies have already transitioned to using a primarily contracted team, while only employing their “core” employees. For this to be effective, companies need to fine-tune their communication standards. Remote workers aren’t just remote; they also tend to come and go, which requires that training be intuitive and straightforward.

Microsoft Teams helps to increase communication between team members by making it easy for them to talk via multiple methods of communication: chat, voice calling, or conference calling. Employees can speak with their entire team at once or can connect one-on-one. Employees have the freedom to get an immediate answer and hold a real-time discussion or to send and reference messages on their own time. Perhaps more importantly, Microsoft Teams is a simple to use platform that has a very shallow learning curve; any employee can jump onto Microsoft Teams and begin using it within minutes.

When it comes to remote workers, one of the significant challenges is that out-of-office employees may not feel as though they are part of the “team.” They may not be able to get responses as quickly as they feel they should, or may feel left out of group communications. Microsoft Teams creates a consolidated channel for each team that can be used by each team member, ensuring that all stakeholders have persistent access to both current and prior communications. The ability to access prior communications also aids in bringing new team members up to speed quickly.

It isn’t just remote or contracted workers that benefit from this. 43% of American employees now report performing at least some of their work remotely. Many employees are also using “flex time” and completing their work when they feel most productive, rather than during scheduled business hours. Out-of-office employees may need to work at different times or in different time zones, which can be prohibitively difficult if they’re relying solely on phone calls and emails for the information they need. Holding large meetings within Teams is seamless for remote workers, with instant connectivity and without fewer technological difficulties - making remote workers truly feel as though they are one with a group. In the past, technology such as video chatting was often plagued with difficulties, with uncomfortable delays and frustrating call quality. Today, this technology provides an easy way to communicate naturally in real-time.

Additional features of Microsoft Teams - such as the ability to add emoticons and gifs - make it easier for employees to build a rapport with each other and to convey tone, which works to improve employee camaraderie and make it easier for them to be efficient and effective. By providing easy ways for employees to communicate their intentions accurately, employers can ensure that employees can work well together and convey information more clearly.



COLLABORATION REQUIRES **THE RIGHT TOOLS**



- Many employees are working on a number of teams at once and can find it difficult to keep track of their objectives.
- Having to check multiple locations for communication and information waste employees' time.
- Microsoft Teams brings all of the information employees need into a single, centralized location.

When employees are working on multiple teams at once, simply getting an update in the morning can be a challenge. Employees today may have different repositories of information for each team project. They may need to check several inboxes for information regarding different groups or may need to spend a large portion of their time following multiple threads of communication. All of this only increases the chances of an employee missing information, failing to meet a deadline, or making a mistake.

Unfortunately, while working with a multitude of teams and departments may quickly confuse an employee, it's an essential component of business today. Modern companies see team-based projects moving along far more effectively, as small, organized teams are critical to many project management philosophies. Consequently, businesses are now looking to leverage the power of these team-based projects in a more consistent and less stressful way.

Through Teams, employees can check on the groups that they are a part of in a single, consolidated dashboard. On the Teams platform, employees can skip from channel to channel with ease, checking on each group they are contributing to. Teams allows employees to see documents and notes relevant to the team that they're working with. Rather than just seeing random files and documents they can contextualize them on a per team basis. At any time, employees can hold meetings with an entire team to check in or can message each other person to person.

To reduce some of the confusion inherent in working with multiple people, Microsoft Teams makes it easy to share files and co-author documents without fear of over-writing important data. Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and other Microsoft products are all supported within Microsoft Teams, and all team members can work on and view the same document at once. Through OneDrive, different versions of these documents can also be stored, to ensure that the information is never lost and that changes can be reverted.

At this point, it may be important to note the difference between Microsoft Teams and the older (but similar sounding) Office 365 Groups technology. Though both Office365 Groups and Microsoft Teams facilitate communication between employees, they do so in a different way, and they emphasize different aspects of the collaborative process. Microsoft Teams provides a central collaborative workspace where team members can communicate and share documents. Office365 Groups creates an active directory listing of employees who are allowed to share information with each other such as calendars, notebooks, and emails.

Office 365 Groups and Microsoft Teams are not competing technologies, but instead technologies that work best when used together. Though they are often positioned against each other, each technology provides something that the other solution does not. Microsoft Teams provides instant collaboration and communication features, while Office 365 integrates within the active directory system and improves integration with the Office 365 system.

Ultimately, the easiest way for employees to cope with working with a multitude of teams is to give them the tools that they need to manage their teams more effectively. Microsoft Teams is designed specifically for this purpose; to create a single archive of all the information your employees need to be productive



COLLABORATION NEEDS TO BE SEAMLESS

- Employees are often working on multiple platforms, sometimes at the same time.
- When a consistent user experience can't be provided across all platforms, employees may miss information or be unable to complete their tasks.
- Microsoft Teams provides the same user experience independent of platform, through an advanced and scalable cloud-based platform.

A single employee might use an iOS smartphone, Android tablet, Chrome laptop, and Windows PC during the course of a single workday. Thus, an ideal communication hub has to be platform independent. Remote workers will use their own devices to connect to the communication platform. In-office employees will often be using their mobile phones or laptops when they're in a different environment. Different offices may have their own preferred technologies. Cloud-based platforms are necessary to maintain consistency regardless of the type of system the employee is using.

Not only does the communication hub have to be platform independent, but ideally it needs to consolidate all necessary communications into a single application. In this way, employees will not have to install multiple applications across multiple devices or be forced to track streams of conversations throughout different apps. Even something as simple as having to look through both email and instant messaging for information can ultimately lead to lost data and mistakes.

Office 365 is a completely cloud-based solution that works everywhere, on every device, in real-time. Tightly interwoven with the rest of the Office 365 ecosystem, Microsoft Teams can leverage this technology for a better and more universal experience.



COLLABORATE LIKE NEVER BEFORE WITH TEAMS + RED RIVER

- Employees and businesses are encountering a number of challenges that make it difficult to prioritize and facilitate communication.
- As a next generation, all-in-one collaborative solution, Microsoft Teams provides the tools businesses need to surmount these challenges.

38% of employees feel that there isn't enough collaboration going on in their company. Teams can help. Microsoft Teams provides a complete collaborative solution right out of the box. Through Microsoft Teams, employers can immediately begin to manage their departments, groups, and team members. Employees can communicate through a single consolidated system, one that is familiar, intuitive, and functional. Within an established Microsoft architecture, a variety of Microsoft and third-party tools can be integrated together -- such as project management systems and customer relationship platforms.

Are you ready to connect to Microsoft Teams? A transition to Microsoft Teams requires more than just installation -- it needs a dedicated integration partner. For more information about the benefits of Microsoft Teams -- and to begin planning your implementation -- connect with Red River.



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