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The Shift to Collaboration Tools in Enterprise Environments

**McGhee Productivity
Solutions**

About This Paper

The purpose of this document is to introduce the value of collaboration tools, such as Microsoft Teams, in an organizational setting. This paper serves as a resource for IT and business leaders who are interested in investing in or improving their organization's usage of collaboration tools.

Introduction

Do you remember the first time you sent an email? If you were like most people, you probably sent your first email in the mid to late-1990s, which is already nearly 25 years ago! From that point forward, workplace communication and collaboration permanently changed. And since the emergence of email, workplace communication has again evolved away from the formal structure of email, and into a more collaborative, instantaneous environment. Most employees today, regardless of their role or company size, are no longer working in silos—we are constantly coordinating projects and activities with our peers, with teams focusing more and more on how their performance impacts an organization's success.

Historically, technology has been very “me” centric, as it focused on what was best and most useful for individuals rather than for groups or teams. Now, collaboration platforms are expanding that awareness to focus on what works best for individuals, teams, and organizations. We are in the midst of a change in organizational communication and collaboration that could rival email in its impact!

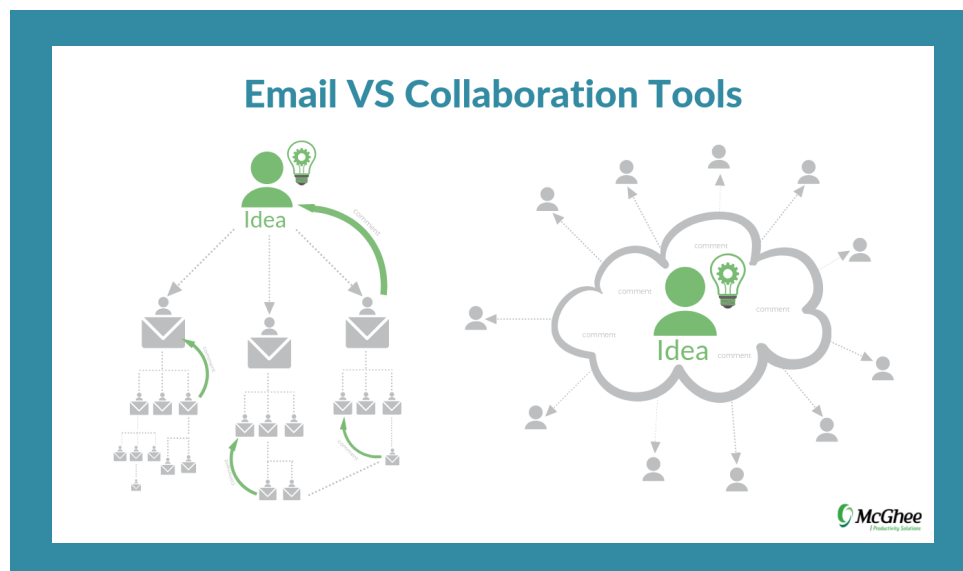
Email vs Collaboration Tools

What was originally intended to make communicating at work easier, has now become a form of work in itself. In today's world, employees are spending an average of 6.3 hours a day sending and receiving emails, which is daunting considering the typical work day is supposed to only be eight hours. Given this apparent time suck, a growing number of organizations are phasing email out as their primary form of workplace collaboration, and are adopting chat-based communication methods instead. While the formal structure of email still has a time and a place in the business community, collaboration platforms have grown increasingly popular, and after comparing the two forms of communication against each other, it's easy to see why.

Collaboration Tools Save Time

One of the biggest advantages to using a collaboration tool for workplace communication instead of email is the amount of time it can save employees each day. According to a study conducted by Danwood Group, it takes an average of 64

seconds to recover from an email interruption. Given the average person receives 96 emails each day, that adds up to a significant amount of time wasted not only on emails, but the interruptions that emails cause, as well. Emails consume the time and productivity of employees, which is why an increasing number of organizations are utilizing the time-saving aspect of chat-based collaboration tools. Even if your organization isn't using collaboration tools yet, making small changes to your email processing system can make a noticeable difference in your productivity. However, adopting chat-based collaboration apps can make an even bigger impact on your productivity, as they are less formal than emails and allow individuals to send, receive, and respond to messages instantly, saving the effort of reading and typing out an entire formally structured email.



According to [McKinsey Global Institute](#), between 25% and 30% of all time spent on email could be saved if the main method for internal communication within an organization was moved to a collaboration platform. A majority of this time back comes from the fact that collaboration tools allow you to see the updates on a project or task all in one place, rather than having to read through ten emails just to figure out what the most recent revisions are. Which brings us to the next major advantage of using chat-based applications: they drastically reduce confusion amongst a team.

Collaboration Tools Reduce Confusion

Email is a closed communication system, meaning the individuals sending the message are able to decide who does and does not see the information, making collaboration not only difficult, but extremely confusing. When numerous people are getting cc-ed, bcc-ed, and forwarded the emails, it's difficult to track who is aware of what, and what the most recent decisions are. In a [study](#) conducted by Salesforce, 86% of CEOs said that poor communication and collaboration are the primary causes for workplace failure. Email is not properly designed for collaboration, as there's no ability to track projects and conversations in real-time like you can do with chat-based tools. If an organization is relying on email to collaborate on tasks, projects, or deadlines, it can often lead to confusion and mistakes being made, which ultimately leads to failure. Collaboration platforms are open communication systems that are built so that every person within a team can see and respond to information being shared, reducing confusion or uncertainty surrounding a project. Additionally, collaboration tools update in real-time, making it simpler to collaborate on editable documents.

Often times, when multiple people are editing and collaborating on a document or file, the most recent changes get lost in the exchange of emails. Rather than having to dig through a thread of emails to find the right attachment, collaboration tools offer the ability to store files in the app itself, allowing for real-time edits and changes to be made in one place. Additionally, this real-time collaboration capability ensures the most recent version of a file is always the one that is being used by team members, reducing the likelihood of past versions being sent out. Even more importantly, though, collaboration tools are cloud-based, which allows you to share large files with your co-workers, whereas most email providers have a 20 megabytes (MB) upload limit. Without a file size limit, the sharing and collaboration possibilities are endless, as you no longer have to worry about whether or not the file will get stuck in your outbox, and you can instantly share larger files with your co-workers.

Collaboration Tools Increase Transparency

Lastly, collaboration tools give your organization's departments more transparency than emails do, especially with lower-ranking team members. When individuals are using email to control who does or does not see certain information, it often results in others feeling left in the dark. However, when collaboration tools are being used, everyone is in the know, and no one is left feeling as if there's information being hidden from them. This increased transparency will lead to more trust within departments, given everyone will feel free to voice their opinions and concerns, and they'll trust what is being told to them. A 2015 study conducted by Interaction Associates found that high-trust companies "are more than 2.5 times more likely to be high performing revenue organizations" compared to low-trust companies. When collaboration tools can be linked to an increase in revenue, what company wouldn't want to look further in to adopting them?

Collaboration tools are drastically changing the way we work. They allow us to communicate quicker, collaborate easier, and spend more time on the tasks that truly matter.

**- Sally McGhee, MPS
Founder and CEO**



Why Collaboration Tools Were Created

Technology advancements have undoubtedly allowed us to get more done in a day than ever before, but now, with so many digital tools available at our disposal, a new issue is arising: the issue of having too many tools. While all digital tools were created in hopes of making our lives easier, the digital tool industry is so saturated now that the tools we're using are beginning to negatively impact our productivity. One study found that 82% of salespeople and marketers lose up to an hour each day, just by managing their tools. Additionally, when it came to the frustrations that come with managing multiple tools, 36% of respondents said monitoring each tool was among their biggest struggles, and 31% said that switching back and forth between tools was another issue they faced. However, both of these frustrations become obsolete when organizations choose to adopt and implement collaboration tools, as they combine multiple tools in to one. Rather than expecting employees to use a cloud storage tool for file sharing and storing, a video chat application for conference calls or meetings, a chat-messaging tool for quick workplace communication, and various other tools for different reasons, companies can now use one collaboration tool for all of those purposes.


One of the first collaboration platforms to build a reputation in the business community was Slack, a messaging app that allows workspaces to organize communications by channels for both group and private online conversations. One of Slack's most powerful features, especially when it was first released, was its ability to integrate with several other workplace tools such as Google Drive and Dropbox.

Since Slack's rise, countless other collaboration tools have been created in an effort to improve the way businesses work, each one having some similar and unique features offered within them. At one point, there were rumors milling around that Microsoft was actually going to buy Slack, but that Microsoft founder, Bill Gates, and CEO, Satya Nadella, were the ones who shut the deal down because they thought of a better way to spend \$8 billion: create Microsoft Teams, a collaboration app of their very own.



The Most Enterprise-Ready Collaboration Tool

Similar to other tools on the market, Microsoft Teams was created as a means to improve workplace communication and collaboration, by offering instant messaging and video chat capabilities. Microsoft Teams, like most other collaboration tools, can be integrated with external applications, allowing for a simpler process to share and store documents and files. One of the major benefits that Microsoft Teams has over its competitors, though, is the unmatched ability to integrate Teams with any other Office 365 application such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and even SharePoint. Furthermore, Teams is offered for free as part of any Office 365 license, which is likely partly to credit for its sudden rise, given 56% of businesses are already using Microsoft's O365. While Microsoft Teams was not the first collaboration tool on the market, it was the first one to integrate everything that is needed at the enterprise scale. Gartner Research Director, Larry Cannell, says that Teams is more than just a communication tool, and he credits its popularity to the unique content collaboration features it offers.



Microsoft Teams allows intact and cross-functional Teams to create Alignment at the Team level using a Shared Leadership approach through communication, empowerment, and feedback.

**- Joel Sutliff, MPS
Consultant**

One of Microsoft Teams' strongest content collaboration features is the ability to access and edit OneDrive documents without ever leaving the Teams app. Not only has Teams made communicating with coworkers quick and easy, but it's also made working on a document with a group of people more efficient, too. Additionally, Teams pushes companies to adopt flatter organizational structures, as every person within a specific team is able to see the flow of information surrounding their work.

By default, team conversations are visible to everyone in the group, meaning there is no information that is being withheld from individuals and everyone can see everything that's going on. This open communication forum reduces the hierarchical structure that most organizations are built on and encourages more input from lower-level employees. When more people are getting involved in the conversation, it creates a shared-leadership and accountability approach to every decision that is being made.

The ROI on Collaboration Tools is Clear

In addition to the workplace benefits that come from adopting collaboration tools like Microsoft Teams, they can also produce a significant ROI for organizations that choose to invest in them. When employees are being more productive with their time, they're able to get more of their work done in a shorter amount of time, which makes them feel more in control and balanced at the end of the day. This greater sense of control leads to happier employees, improved job performances, and higher output rates throughout the organization. Which, in turn, correlates to higher profit margins that more than pay off the original collaboration tool investment. In fact, one study found that the average ROI for Microsoft Teams is 832%, and that the tool pays itself off within the first six months of deployment.

Learning how to use a new digital tool will always intimidate some people in the office, but making the switch away from email and in to Microsoft Teams is well worth the time, energy, and money it takes to implement it. As you look at your organization's technology road map, refer back to the 1990's when email was first invented. Back then, there were companies who tried to say email was just a 'fad', yet 25 years later we're still using it every single day. Microsoft Teams was not created to replace email, it was created to enhance and improve it, and like email, it's here to stay.

Want to learn more about collaboration tools? Contact us today!

info@mcgheepro.com | www.mcgheepro.com

