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# **Creating Infrastructure and Governance for Productivity in Microsoft Teams**

**McGhee Productivity  
Solutions**

# About This Paper

The purpose of this document is to discuss the potential of Microsoft Teams in enterprise environments, while laying out our recommendations for an adoption and governance process that is necessary for sustainable and effective use. This paper will also discuss the consequences that come from poor or unstructured deployment of Microsoft Teams, while emphasizing the power of strategic governance.

## Introduction

Do you remember when email was first invented and various organizations and individuals insisted that it was ‘[just a fad](#)?’ Well, 25 years later email is used globally now more than ever, exemplifying the permanent mark that emerging technologies can have. While email is still the main form of workplace communication for most organizations, the emergence of collaboration tools has taken the business world by storm. In our recently published white paper, [The Value of Collaboration Tools in Enterprise Environments](#), we discussed the power and impact that collaboration tools can have on an organization, including their potential ROI, their productivity enhancing properties, and the ways they can help organizations succeed if used correctly, such as streamlined communication and increased transparency. In that paper, we also provided evidence for our belief that Microsoft Teams is the most enterprise-ready collaboration tool available today.

Being Microsoft’s [fastest growing](#) business app in company history, the adoption numbers around Teams speak for themselves. However, if organizational leaders don’t create or enforce the right standards to use it, it can result in [even more](#) confusion and anguish than before. Teams should not be treated as simply the next iteration of Skype for Business, used only for chat and calling communication. It must be setup and governed with much more intention and strategy, with companies focusing on infrastructure, governance, and workflow management during deployment for sustainable adoption and success.

# Microsoft Teams can be a Game Changer if Used as Intended

We need to first be clear that Microsoft Outlook and the process of managing personal e-mail, tasks, and calendaring is intended to be an effective process for individuals, whereas Microsoft Teams was created to be an effective tool for, well, teams. If a company is using Teams, they should be using it at a team level, organizing and communicating any efforts that need to be completed by team members. What we're finding, however, is that few organizations are using Teams in that manner, and that many are using it on an individual level, or as a replacement for Outlook and Skype instead.

When we work with organizations who have already deployed Microsoft Teams on their own, we typically find their employees are using the application in one of two ways. First, they're using it as a messenger tool without recognizing or knowing about the other features it offers. Second, they're using it as a type of internal social media application like Yammer, purely because that's the only level of education they have on it. When there is no structure or plan surrounding deployment, Teams quickly becomes a social tool rather than a collaborative one, making it one more program for employees to manage that will hinder their productivity levels rather than help it.



Teams has the potential to be a powerful tool, but only if organizations are willing to slow down and take the time that is needed to implement it effectively. Most organizations hand off Microsoft Teams to their employees with a standard "features and benefits" training, failing to acknowledge the different roles that will be using the tool. The problem with this standardized training is that it isn't customized around your teams and their goals, meaning the training may not even be relevant to what your members will be using it for, and it fails to give them the power they need to utilize the tool productively.

Without a customized infrastructure in place, Microsoft Teams can become a free for all and employees begin using it without intention, driving away from organizational efforts and goals, and towards their own personal motives. Teams isn't like other tools your organization is or has been using, it's truly a permanent paradigm shift in workplace collaboration that requires an infrastructure and governance process to be used effectively.

## Common Pitfalls When Deploying Microsoft Teams

According to research firm IDC, the collaboration applications market is expected to grow [70% in the next three years](#), which would raise it to a nearly \$6 billion marketplace. This trend is partially to credit for the rise in remote working, which [43%](#) of U.S. workers now do to some degree, but also due to the benefits that come from streamlined communication within an organization. McKinsey found that the average employee spends [up to 28%](#) of their workweek managing their email, and another 20% of their time is put towards finding the information they need to do their work. With nearly half of employees' time being used on administrative activities each week, collaboration tools like Microsoft Teams were intended to reduce that wasted time by decreasing email volume and simplifying the process to find and store information. Unfortunately, a lack of awareness around these tools has resulted in them achieving the opposite, and we've noticed the following pitfalls of our clients deploying Teams incorrectly.

### Lack of Complexity in Training Programs

Rather than considering the long-term implications that a rushed or insufficient training program could have on their employees and their productivity, some organizations tend to push out the quickest and easiest training program they have at their disposal, which is generally the included "how-to" Teams instructions from Microsoft focused on features and benefits of the tool versus how to use it for maximum effectiveness in their role and team. As a result, organizations are failing to match the intricacy of their training with the complex requirements of the tool.



Companies perceive Microsoft Teams as simply an upgrade to Skype for Business when it does so much more, such as storing documents and files, managing meeting notes and track action items, and changing project collaboration methods. If the simplistic training matches the assumption that Teams is like Skype, users will not be prepared to take advantage of Teams as intended. These cookie-cutter training programs also fail to cover the strategic ways that Teams can be used for collaboration and do not set usage standards, resulting in a series of issues for teams, individuals, and the organization as a whole.

If your Microsoft Teams training program doesn't have the required depth, employees may never be using teams for maximum productivity as intended by Microsoft. Instead, individuals will create a use case that makes the most sense to them, typically one that uses Teams as a messaging or social tool. These self-designated uses and infrastructures become inconsistent, and suddenly everyone is lacking alignment on what the purpose of Teams is and how it's supposed to be used to support their team goals and outcomes. This also leads to confusion with file sharing and storing, as there are no determined boundaries for documents. If employees don't know which team or channel to send their completed files to (or to put it in Teams at all versus sending via e-mail) , it'll lead to a series of misunderstandings for the rest of the group. Pushing out the quickest training option may seem like the best decision in the moment; however, slowing down and investing in customized training is undoubtedly the best option long-term.

## **Using Microsoft Teams as an Individual Tool**

Despite the opposing use cases behind Outlook and Teams, many organizations are using them in the same manner, which is solely for individual communication purposes. While one of the intents behind Microsoft Teams was to provide instantaneous communication methods, that wasn't intended to be the main use of the tool. According to productivity analytics company Time is Ltd., employees at large companies are sending an average of [200 collaboration tool messages](#) each week, which when multiplied by the number of employees in each channel seems like an impossible number of messages to read and keep up with.

While Teams was created to reduce the amount of time employees are spending in their email inboxes, poor deployment methods are just turning it in to a second inbox for them—one that takes even more time to manage!

This usage pitfall ultimately comes from a lack of clarity surrounding the company's purpose for adopting Teams, as employees are never told how or why they should be using it. Additionally, when a tool's purpose in an organization is never established, it becomes impossible for leaders to govern it and ensure that it's being used in the most productive way. If Teams is being misused by employees, it will become just another tool they have to manage on top of their already busy workload.

## Not Setting Governance Standards for Employees

Proper governance and standards are essential for productive use of any company-wide tools. Yet even when organizations are clarifying their purpose of Teams and slowing down to create a comprehensive training program, they often fail to implement needed governance surrounding its use.

As one of the most common pitfalls of Microsoft Teams, a lack of governance is the difference between sustainable and short-term tool adoption.

Whether an employee is brand new or a company veteran, they're going to misuse a digital tool at some point in their work. Misuse doesn't necessarily mean they're intentionally using the tool for malicious purposes, but more frequently means they unintentionally use it for a reason that doesn't support team goals and outcomes. For example, they may send a document in the wrong channel, send too many messages to the team in a day, or fail to use the tool at all. While each of these misuses seems harmless on the surface, consistent misuse by multiple team members can lead to a significant loss of productivity for everyone on the team. To enforce a governance process, organizational leaders should be making decisions about a series of usage rules before deploying Teams to the rest of the company.

*You have to slow down to speed up.  
If you slow down to set the right  
infrastructure with Teams, you'll  
speed up with your results and  
outcomes.*

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



Microsoft [suggests](#) that organizations clarify and adhere to strict governance rules, such as deciding who can create teams, what the naming conventions for teams will be, and what the guest access capabilities will be. This will reduce confusion and over communication, as it limits who has access to Teams' main usage settings.

## Best Practices When Deploying Teams

Nearly [75%](#) of employers rate teamwork and collaboration as 'very important', yet 39% of employees still believe their organization doesn't collaborate enough. Countless [studies](#) have proven that collaboration is the key to success for any business, and while the pitfalls of collaboration tools can have an adverse effect, organizations who deploy them correctly are setting themselves up for long-term success. In order to experience all of the [benefits that can come from a collaboration tools](#), organizations must ensure they're deploying Teams the right way. In order to do this, companies should focus on setting up a consistent Teams infrastructure, implementing a workflow management process, and creating an approach to shared leadership.

### Set Up a Consistent Infrastructure

To avoid Teams from becoming a tool that employees use at an individual level, it's imperative for organizations to set up a consistent infrastructure that supports the achievement of team goals. When employees aren't given any information on how they should proceed with a new tool, the culture surrounding that tool resembles the "wild west," where individuals are shooting before they aim and employ behaviors similar to the approach to social media. To avoid this, companies should clarify why they're deploying this new tool, who is expected to use it, and what the standards of use are.

One of the most important standards to set before your organization begins using Teams is how communication should be conducted within the tool. One way to do this is by having leaders clarify what the standard process should look like for chats, conversations, calls, and meetings in Teams, and ensure each leader is following and adhering to these standards themselves. A best practice when it comes to communication standards in Teams is having employees use the 'Chat' tab for private and continuous conversations, while using the 'Teams' tab for collaboration, communication, and reference. This standard operating procedure explains what two similar but different features of Teams should be used for, and promotes a consistent infrastructure for each person within the organization. If every employee were to abide by this specific Teams standard, communication would instantly become more streamlined and there would be less confusion within teams.

*This is not the same as Outlook and OneNote, this is a new tool with a new purpose. To use it effectively, it will require a conversation around structure and boundaries. Then and only then will the 'features and benefits' of Teams become useful.*

**- Joel Sutliff, MPS Consultant**

Further, it's vital that employees know how to communicate in addition to where communicate in Teams. For example, we always recommend following our "R@D model" for team communication in Teams, which is a process to ensure all conversations are clear and directional. Creating a R@D conversation means creating an awareness around what the purpose of your message is and what your intended results from it are. When using this communication model, each message that is sent in a team or channel should include what the Request is, whether it needs to be read, responded to, or acted on, @who needs to be notified of this request, perhaps certain individuals or teams, and what the Deliverable is, which includes any due dates or relevant documents. By including all relevant information in one message, it reduces any follow up questions from other members and drastically reduces the number of messages being sent and received in Teams each day. When everyone on a team has the same infrastructure, Teams becomes an intentional collaboration space that everyone is able to navigate. Each organization's infrastructure should include clear guidelines on where and how to share specific information, allowing for a simpler process of information searching and collecting.



Rather than spending nearly [two hours](#) each day looking for the information they need to do their job, a consistent infrastructure makes it easier for employees to find what they need, resulting in more time spent working towards strategic objectives.

## **Implement a Workflow Management Process for Employees**

One of the first questions that leaders should ask themselves before they deploy Teams is, “How can this help my employees?” If you don’t show individuals how Microsoft Teams can help them better manage their daily workflow, there’s no way they’ll adopt it at a sustainable level. Once employees understand why they should be using Teams, they’ll become more interested in learning how they should be using it. Organizational leaders should recognize that while there are a few universal ways that Microsoft Teams can help individuals manage their workflow, track activities, and capture action items, the best usage practices will ultimately vary by role and company industry.

Microsoft Teams was designed to help any role in any company better manage their workflow, which has a direct impact on individual and team productivity levels. For starters, to increase individual productivity, team members can capture their personal action items in Teams by using the ‘save this message’ feature. When a Teams message is saved, it files it in a personal saved messages folder that allows you to immediately refer back to that message when you’re working on a task or action item. When that action is complete, all you have to do is re-click the bookmark icon and it will remove the message from that folder. Essentially, this is a quick and easy way to manage your to-do items and organize your reference pieces all in one place. This reduces the need to switch back and forth between tools, allowing employees to get more work done in a shorter period of time.

Another key aspect of implementing a successful [workflow management process](#) is providing individuals with the context and information they need on when to use Teams and when to use Outlook, OneNote, or any other tool that your employees have access to.



This clarification of ‘what tool for what purpose’ will reduce any confusion or uncertainty surrounding the different tools and will allow individuals to leverage every tool they have more efficiently. When you focus on setting up an effective infrastructure within Teams, it inherently leads to more productive use of other digital tools, as well.

## **Create an Approach to Shared Leadership**

When people are working in teams or groups, they need to know what everyone else on that team is up to in order to successfully do their job. By consistently using Teams to collaborate, employees are given complete [transparency](#) on projects and tasks, and are always aware of any issues or celebrations that are going on. Having goals and objectives that are shared by the entire team can foster the sense of shared leadership within that organization. For example, if a problem is shared in the General Channel, everyone in the organization becomes aware of it, and suddenly you have an influx of ideas on how to solve it. Having a General Channel set up not only allows leader to closely govern what is and is not being shared in Teams, but it also increases transparency by housing static information or organizational updates that everyone needs to know about. By setting up your Teams infrastructure, you’re setting up a system that gives every person in the organization a voice, regardless of their role or title.

When it comes to creating teams and channels in Microsoft Teams, we recommend creating them by organizational divisions or departments. For example, here at MPS we have a Marketing team that all of our Sales and Marketing employees are included in. Within that team, we have a variety of channels related to our mutual Sales and Marketing goals such as, collateral, campaigns, and general updates. If a new piece of collateral is created, everyone knows that it should be shared in the Marketing Team and Collateral Channel, allowing everyone in that team to give and see any feedback on it versus a “reply-all fest” over e-mail. This departmental approach ensures that all conversations, channels, and teams are directly correlated to an organizational or team goal or outcome.

Additionally, this makes the process of looking for and finding information much easier, as there are specific locations for every document and conversation. Once your infrastructure is set up and your employees are being and feel heard, the next step is to govern their Teams usage.

Setting up a structured governance process for your organization will help encourage best practices, and enforce a level of accountability for everyone involved. If employees understand the power of effective infrastructure to support greater alignment, they're more likely to hold themselves accountable for proper usage. Additionally, enforcing a Teams governance allows employees to hold each other accountable, further diminishing hierarchical roles and pushing towards an approach of shared leadership. One of our best practices for Teams governance is identifying who the Team Owners are and who the Channel Drivers will be. When certain individuals are designated to drive the conversations in a team or channel, it reduces the chances of over-communication and over-sharing. Additionally, when designated individuals are the only ones allowed to create new teams, it prevents an overload of teams from being created and confirms that each team is created with an intention and goal in mind.

## Conclusion

Despite the potential pitfalls that can come from it, there's a reason that [91 of the Fortune 100](#) companies have begun using Microsoft Teams as a collaboration tool. We strongly support and promote the use of Microsoft Teams within an organization, but encourage organizations to invest in the education process of how to create and use Teams effectively. Otherwise, Teams will become a [second inbox for their employees](#), and it will lead to more workplace stress, fewer goals being reached, and more time being wasted each day. The ROI for Microsoft Teams can be as high as [832%](#), but that's only if an organization is using Teams the right way, rather than rushing the adoption process without proper training, infrastructure, and governance.

Results from organizations  
that have used the MPS  
course to drive adoption

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**38%**

Increase in using Teams  
channels to produce  
desired outcomes and  
reach team goals

**60%**

Increase in tracking  
action items in Teams

**90%**

Increase in creating  
Conversations that are  
productive in Teams

# Make sure your Organization is Setup for Success Today with Microsoft Teams

If you want to take the guess work out of Microsoft Teams and ensure your employees are using it productively, [contact us](#) today to learn more about our Productivity and Collaboration Essentials Using Teams course. This course is customized to your organizational goals, roles, and outcomes, and is adaptable for organizations with any level of Teams experience. Rather than showing participants the basic features and benefits of Microsoft Teams, this course dives deeper in the intention and mindfulness that is required to use Teams at a productive and effective level. Our course provides in-depth training for your employees, while also helping you develop the best infrastructure and governance process for your organization.

The best part of our approach is that it removes the 'celebrity filter' of email and fosters a greater sense of transparency and shared leadership in the company. Which we've found to lead to a happier work environment, stronger trust in the leadership team, and more organizational goals being met. No one thinks they have time to slow down and set the right course when it comes to deploying a new digital tool, but the truth is, if you don't take the time to deploy it right, you end up wasting even more time in the end.

Contact us today to learn  
more about our Microsoft  
Teams course!

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