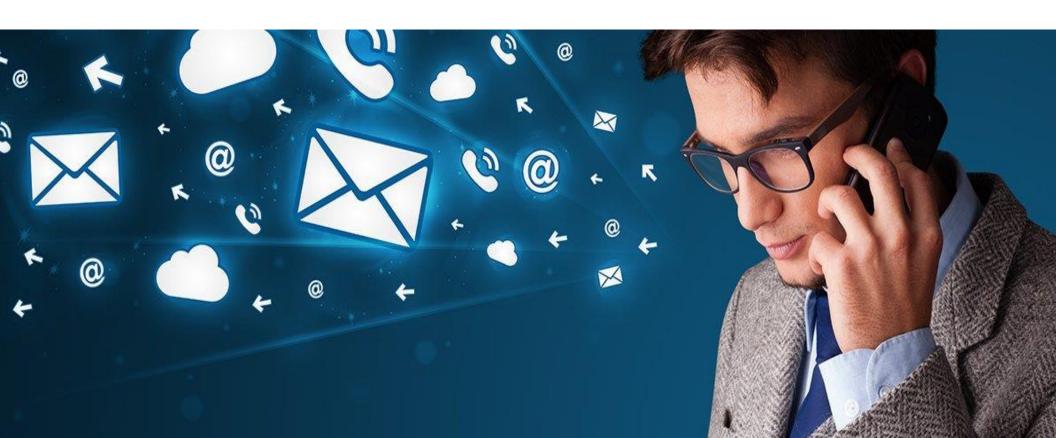# Guide to Workplace Collaboration Tools

In this e-guide:

What features do you need in a collaboration tool?

This is a question you need to answer because the list of tools to choose from is lengthy, and each one is different.

This guide is here to show you how 10 top tools compare. Uncover how tools such as Slack, Microsoft Teams and Amazon Chime stack up on aspects such as:

- Features including private messaging, video conferencing and file sharing

- Supported platforms

- Hardware and technical support

You'll also uncover why the future of work relies on cloud collaboration abilities as many knowledge workers are in the midst of a content tsunami.

◪ Workplace collaboration tool bolsters employee productivity

Anna Fiorentino, Experienced Writing/Editing Consultant – SearchContentManagement

As the amount of digitized data increases at an exponential rate, companies are realizing the importance of workplace collaboration tools for information sharing. They're encouraging, managing and quantifying the gains -- such as increasing response rates to their customers -- of portals like SAP Jam, Fuze and Slack.

"Any business-oriented type of internal collaboration that connects employees with data and content helps employees navigate this complex landscape," said Stephen Hamrick, vice president of product management at SAP Jam.

The secret is out about the benefits of using a cloud-based workplace collaboration tool, which companies rely on to increase employee productivity. Fuze, Slack, Microsoft Teams and Workplace by Facebook offer voice, video conferencing, messaging and more.

Fuze, a provider of cloud-based unified communications as a service, and other workplace collaboration tools aim to help employees connect with the right people, data, processes and content to improve their daily workflow.

While most collaboration platforms focus on broadly defined productivity improvements for employees, SAP Jam centers on what its creators call work patterns, which are simple, customizable processes tailored to the company by employees.

Four tips for workplace collaboration tool adoption:

Four tips for workplace collaboration tool adoption:

1. Don't expect collaboration tools to be adopted immediately.

2. Identify what key business problems you need to solve.

3. Envision how a collaboration tool can support your company's business goals.

4. Know that no collaboration tool, regardless of how new, smart and shiny it is, will solve all your company's problems by itself.

"Since we have focused on employees being able to rapidly redefine the scope and nature of collaboration, these work patterns can be customized quickly via simple point-and-click modification," Hamrick said.

SAP Jam in action

The benefits of SAP Jam struck a chord with Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia. The University and Health System uses the workplace collaboration tool to connect and engage employees, improve access to communication, and create learning and career development opportunities throughout the system, according to Jeffrey Stevens, *executive vice president* and chief human resources officer at Thomas Jefferson University.

The private university includes Jefferson University Hospitals, also known as Jefferson Health. They began using SAP Jam in late 2017 to help improve performance and learning modules and to tie together the clinical and academic departments.

How the top cloud collaboration tools compare

	AMAZON CHIME	ATLASSIAN STRIDE	BROADSOFT TEAM-ONE	CA FLOWDOCK	CISCO SPARK	GOOGLE HANGOUTS	MICROSOFT TEAMS	RINGCENTRAL GLIP/OFFICE	SLACK	UNIFY CIRCUIT
Features										
Private messaging	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Group messaging	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
VoIP	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	VoIP	■	■
PSTN conference dial-in	■				■	■	■			■
PSTN DID					■	■	■			■
Video conferencing	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
File sharing	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Screen sharing	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Online meetings	■				■					
Third-party app support	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Supported platforms										
Windows	■	■	■		■		■	■	■	■
macOS	■	■	■		■		■	■	■	■
Android	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
iOS	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Web browser	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Linux		■							■	
Windows Phone							■		■	
Hardware support										
Phone and video conference	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Technical support										
Knowledge base	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Online community		■		■	■		■	■		
Web cases	■									
Video tutorials			■	■	■			■		■
Email			■		■	■	■	■		
Online ticket					■	■	■	■	■	■
Phone					■	■	■	■		■

In just a few months, Stevens watched as a group of heart surgeons on staff remotely collaborated and challenged each other through the SAP Jam portal. Via their version of Jam, called myJeffHub, surgical procedures played out on the surgeons' computer screens, and the group worked collaboratively to advance science.

"MyJeffHub technology also creates individualized orientation and onboarding into the organization, flows recognition awards and earned competencies into one's profile, and will eventually allow AI techniques to use multiple data points to recommend to each [user] individual topics, people to connect with, and future career opportunities," Stevens said.

Jefferson Health purchased licenses enabling all employees to have access to one workplace collaboration tool across the enterprise.

SAP Jam business users can track offline work when teamwork is required to attack business-critical issues. In business applications or on mobile devices, it connects customers, partners and employees directly within a social collaboration environment, with IT protecting corporate data. If a company needs to verify whether a work order has been processed, for example, SAP Jam's work pattern can be custom-tailored to automate the processes and tasks, and calendars can be quickly and easily removed from a workspace when they're not needed.

Other customers use SAP Jam for use cases from hospitality industry worker onboarding and training employees to telecom industry customers operationalizing their call center support personnel, improving customer satisfaction and reducing time to productivity for new hires. Construction industry customers use SAP Jam to manage and plan large-scale construction projects, reduce potential errors and improve coordination.

"By aligning marketing campaigns with customer support, they're also better equipped to introduce new products and services without overwhelming their call center support staff with unexpected questions or issues," Hamrick said.

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⚑ Cloud collaboration benefits the future of work

Geoffrey Bock, Principal – Bock & Company – SearchContentManagement

Cloud collaboration will benefit the future of digital work, where content streams and pools blend in innovative ways to support business purposes and enhance productivity.

Today, without giving it much thought, workers mix digitized content with digital communications to collaborate and share information. Sometimes, there are content streams -- the conversational exchanges of phone, chat and online meetings; other times, digital work entails sifting through content pools, hunting for the right nuggets to answer questions or provide insights.

Many knowledge workers are in the midst of a content tsunami, contending with information overload and the rapidly accelerating pace of digital work. And yet, they have the option to harness the natural cycle where streams flow into pools and then become the sources of new streams. With this continuous motion, content becomes the water for the digital age and clouds a medium for storing water. Thus, cloud collaboration benefits work of the future.

Cloud-powered opportunities

Cloud computing introduces new opportunities for purpose-built experiences that reduce friction and add business value. Through microservices running within a cloud ecosystem, content is woven together to support innovative and increasingly seamless digital experiences. Collaborative applications are no longer limited to the confines of a corporate data center and discrete business activities, and information is not stuck in a stand-alone repository.

Specifically, cloud-powered collaborative applications use information from disparate sources and break through the confines of content silos. They organize and deliver content around targeted tasks that support business purposes. Relying on microservices deployed as web-based APIs, they easily integrate with back-office data sources, enterprise content management (ECM) repositories and existing enterprise applications.

These next-generation collaborative applications also provide additional layers of security to support private, persistent and searchable digital experiences across an extended enterprise. With a cloud ecosystem in place, there is a continuous flow of information between content pools and streams to deliver business value.

Recurring work patterns

Consider SAP Jam, a collaborative social media platform from SAP, deployed as a set of cloud services to help companies organize information around recurring work patterns. It highlights the importance of turning pools into streams -- sharing documents, accessing specialized knowledge bases, coordinating activities, identifying expertise and streamlining information exchanges across predefined business teams. SAP Jam organizes content and experiences around results -- what needs to happen to bring people, content and decision-making capabilities together.

SAP Jam blends information resources for purpose-built results. It supports virtual collaborative capabilities, ensuring content remains within existing repositories of record -- for example:

- An ECM repository maintains technical documents, managed by formally defined business processes.

- A customer support team maintains a curated collection of frequently asked questions together with various discussion forums.

- A business partner develops training videos, stored on a special-purpose video server and streamed through cloud connections.

The cloud collaboration benefit of this application pieces together multiple content snippets, such as an FAQ summary about a problem with a relevant section from a technical document and a short video snippet, all organized and presented as a seamless experience. Having all the relevant information available in a single place saves time and increases productivity.

Collaborating in the moment

The future of digital work also depends on just-in-time communications that support information exchanges and decision-making within business teams. Once the domain of plain old telephone services and proprietary private branch exchanges, unified communications as a service (UCaaS) now relies on internet-based protocols to support collaborative work environments. Not surprisingly, a cloud ecosystem and web APIs are adding innovative capabilities to channel content streams into pools and to create new kinds of purpose-built applications.

Consider how Fuze, a visionary UCaaS provider, enhances collaboration and information sharing within business teams. Fuze focuses on seamless communications and utilizes a cloud ecosystem. Staffers within an organization no longer need to switch between applications when they make phone calls, share screens, participate in live meetings, join group chats or share information maintained in content repositories.

Fuze provides a unified and extensive set of collaborative tools -- including phone, chat, presence awareness and live meetings -- running on tethered and mobile devices. In addition, Fuze rapidly integrates with line-of-business systems and content repositories accessible in the cloud to support targeted business purposes.

Behind the scenes and deployed within a private cloud infrastructure, Fuze features a UC environment that is part of a cloud ecosystem. Fuze uses WebRTC -- an open source initiative to provide audio and video communications capabilities through standardized APIs -- that is now an integral capability of Chrome, Firefox and Safari browsers. There is no longer a need to install browser plugins or download native applications to deliver browser-based real-time communications.

In addition, Fuze supports open APIs to many cloud-powered enterprise applications, including Salesforce, SugarCRM, NetSuite, ServiceNow and Microsoft OneDrive. These APIs enable microservices for integrating external information sources into the Fuze experience.

Thus, an organization easily provides business teams with uniform and consistent digital experiences. Field workers collaborate with one another and with colleagues at a head office, while on the go. They check for trouble tickets and view current sales information, accessing external enterprise applications as needed, while discussing situations in real time. And at the same time, the IT group channels the flow of information to support business objectives, while centrally maintaining security and access controls.

Harnessing content through microservices

When it comes to collaborative applications deployed in the cloud, both SAP Jam and Fuze highlight an important trend. The cloud introduces new possibilities for the future of digital work. A cloud ecosystem provides big pipes to channel the continuous flow of content between pools and streams. Microservices within these applications introduce unparalleled opportunities to weave together content for innovative experiences.

But microservices must be harnessed to support business purposes. Content services are a necessity for accessing, storing and managing content within shared repositories. Microservices for collaboration need the metadata management capabilities of content services.

Cloud collaboration benefits from the flow of content, organized and managed to support targeted tasks. It is now possible to add communications capabilities to content delivery and produce experiences that would be difficult without a cloud ecosystem. Getting there, though, is going to require some effort.

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