

Unblocking Workplace Collaboration

5 Tools and Strategies



For communications, employees of outdoor apparel leader, **Patagonia**, relied primarily on email and traditional phones, and occasionally used a third-party video conferencing tool located in select conference rooms, but use was not widespread. Without access to capabilities such as presence, instant messaging, and online meetings, employees experienced delays communicating with each other and with outside vendors and suppliers.



Like in the case of Patagonia, many companies look to address the issues of aging technology and growing communications and collaboration needs. That's because today's workforce is more collaborative than ever. The time that managers and employees spend collaborating has increased by at least 50% over the past two decades, reports the Harvard Business Review,¹ and up to 80% of workers' time is spent on collaborative activities like meetings, calls, and responding to emails.

Unfortunately, though, many modern workplaces lack the tools to make collaboration efficient, effective, and enjoyable.

A work environment that doesn't encourage teamwork is one of the top 5 reasons people quit their jobs, according to research by Ernst & Young. Other top reasons are minimal wage growth, lack of opportunity to advance, excessive overtime hours, and a boss that doesn't allow employees to work flexibly.²

¹ "Collaborative Overload," 2016, Harvard Business Review

² "Study: Work-Life Challenges Across Generations," 2014–2015, Ernst & Young/Harris Poll

Many of today's enterprises are facing a perfect storm of aging technology and growing collaboration needs. Decision-makers are under pressure to find a solution that's secure, reliable, scalable, and cost-effective—and one that meets the needs of a mobile and global workforce.

The solution lies in strategically breaking down collaboration blockers so that teams can work together with ease.

To accomplish that, enterprises are turning to collaboration suites that allow employees to communicate and share through a single platform.

56%
of enterprises and 66% of SMB organizations plan to implement or upgrade to unified communications and collaboration solutions within the next year.³

³ "Unified Communications & Collaboration Study," 2015, IDG Enterprise Marketing

In **Patagonia's case**, the company decided to evaluate Microsoft Office 365, which includes the latest version of the Microsoft Office Professional Plus desktop suite. Based on a pilot test of Office 365, Patagonia expects employees to communicate more effectively and make better design decisions.

To understand how collaboration tools can work for your organization, let's examine how to overcome the five biggest blocks.





COLLABORATION BLOCK 01

Setting up team tools and access is a pain

Most projects spring up suddenly, and the team comes together organically over time. Along the way, someone must figure out where the team will communicate and store files, how they'll plan and track progress, and who will be in charge of ramping up new members and providing access to all the team assets as different people join and leave the group during the project's lifespan. Often, teams end up with a disparate set of tools that rely on a single team member's access or knowledge.



THE SOLUTION

A chat-based workspace everyone can access

One of the biggest time-wasters for teams is looking for stuff: content, tools, contacts and conversation threads. Imagine how much more effective everyone would be if they had instant access to everything they need, right in [Office 365](#).

Help them get it. With [Microsoft Teams](#), team members find what they're looking for, fast, using powerful, integrated search capabilities and built-in access to [SharePoint](#), [OneNote](#) and [Planner](#). Because every document shared in Teams is saved to the cloud, team members work off of the latest version. Decisions made are easily found in chat history, no searching.

Team members often get stuck in a holding pattern because they're waiting for the feedback and sign-off they need to drive a project forward. They try to set up conference calls, but to-and-fro scheduling burns up time. Even when they finally do get on a call, make edits to project documents and send out the revised versions, they're often stuck waiting again for sign-off. All of that changes when they can quickly get the decision-makers on team chat or private chat, or in an online meeting—and they can co-author and share files to secure approval right away. Integrated notifications plus side by side chat while viewing a document enables on-the-spot editing and finalizing of materials.

With communication tools like IM, voice and video calling at hand, team members are just a few clicks away. You can also better organize teamwork with the help of [Microsoft Planner](#). It makes it easy for your team to create new plans, organize and assign tasks, share files, chat about what you're working on, and get updates on progress. Built for Office 365, Planner ensures that all your team's discussions and deliverables stay with the plan and don't get locked away across disparate applications.





COLLABORATION BLOCK 02

Meeting inefficiencies

Doesn't it seem like certain technology mishaps should seriously be a thing of the past? Struggling to participate in virtual meetings is on that list. All too often, call connection is poor, someone gets stuck trying to log in, or another team member can't access a shared screen or see a key piece of content. Meetings are routinely interrupted and delayed.

Ideas developed by teams of 3 or more people have 156% greater appeal with consumers than those developed by teams where just 1 or 2 people have played a hands-on role.⁴

Not only do meeting inefficiencies discourage team members from working together, but they also present an unacceptable barrier for a workforce that's increasingly remote and on the go.

61%
of workers report working
outside the office at least part
of the time.⁵

⁴ "How Collaboration Drives Innovation Success," 2015, The Nielsen Company

⁵ "7 Enterprise Mobility Statistics You Should Know," 2015, Citrix



THE SOLUTION

Reliable online meetings with screen sharing on any device

Empower employees to have better meetings with a single meeting application that plays nice with the rest of your productivity software.

With Skype for Business in Office 365, your team can communicate via shared screens, messaging, voice calling, and video. They're free to work from anywhere, on their desktops or mobile devices, simply with an [Internet connection](#).

With everything in one platform, workers can worry less about technology complications and focus on being productive.

With Skype for Business, your teams can:

- Text, meet virtually, and call across devices, with VoIP and PSTN.
- Reduce travel using audio, HD video, and web conferencing.
- Reach out to team members with Skype Meeting Broadcast.
- Engage your customers using Skype in your web pages and apps.

Skype for Business

Office 365 helps make meetings more efficient by equipping teams with Skype for Business so they can hold rich video calls, share content, collaborate in real time on files, and record meetings if needed.

“[More employees] are adopting Skype for Business Online as they see how easy it is to use and how much faster they can solve problems. One quick call can clear up an issue that otherwise would take dozens of email messages.”

Kevin Griffie,
Applied Information Sciences,
Practice Manager, Commercial Management



COLLABORATION BLOCK 03

Working in silos

All too often, team members are heads-down in their work and not always aware of the knowledge and best practices in other parts of the organization. Picture this: A colleague spent months brainstorming and preparing a project for kick-off, only to realize another team in the organization has been working on something similar. Each team could have leveraged the other's work.

There's nothing worse for employees than feeling like their time isn't being spent wisely, and there's a material cost for the organization when opportunities are lost or work is duplicated.





THE SOLUTION

A social network for work

Bring the open, conversational nature of a social network into the office and put it to work. With an enterprise social tool, employees across the organization can find and leverage collective intelligence on topics of interest and importance. Workers are familiar with social networking in their personal lives, and bringing the tool to the workplace is a powerful and efficient way to enable collaboration.

With Yammer, the social network for work, colleagues can use their preferred device to share best practices, discuss ideas, and even crowdsource answers from coworkers around the globe.

With Yammer, you can:

- Foster open discussions with the group feed.
- Tap into collective knowledge with search and discovery.
- Crowdsource ideas and share best practices across the organization.
- Get the pulse of your company using polls, praise, and follows.

85%
of Fortune 500
companies collaborate
with Yammer.

OneDrive + Skype for Business + SharePoint + Yammer

Yammer is designed to enhance teamwork across your integrated Office 365 suite. So, no matter what your employees are working on, whether they're on a call or on the road, they can always reach each other and share and find files instantly.

“We’ve found that Yammer facilitates spontaneous conversations among employees—sparking innovative ideas that help us operate more efficiently and improve customer service.”

Adrian Steel,
Global Head of IT Operations, International
Airlines Group



COLLABORATION BLOCK 04

Lack of version control

Imagine you've captured your big idea in a draft presentation and are ready to get feedback from the rest of the team. The hard part—bringing the idea to life—should be over. But, more often than not, it's the feedback and revision process that is the most painful since emailing the file and waiting for revisions makes the process inefficient. It takes too much time, and you end up with multiple edited versions of the same document. And, after several revision rounds, it might not even be clear which document is the final version.

Without real-time file-sharing, employees' workflows are compromised.

- Sharing attachments via email wastes time.
- Multiple revision rounds lead to endless versioning of a document.
- Files are easily misplaced, lost, or overwritten.



THE SOLUTION

Secure cloud-based file collaboration

It's time to take your collaboration to the cloud. Cloud-based tools from Office 365 empower workers to collaborate efficiently, from mobile devices, web or desktops. Working in Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, or Excel, you can easily co-author in real time with the rest of the team—all from a single version of the file saved to the cloud. You can easily store and share your files in OneDrive for Business which is included in Office 365 so you and your team can always work from one central file that's accessible to everyone and always up to date. Multiple team members can add comments and revisions in a single file with peace of mind since, if needed, you can always access or revert back to earlier versions that are automatically saved in the cloud. No more version control and no more merging edits.

With Office 365, you and your employees can:

- Access documents anywhere, whether online or offline.
- Collaborate in a single document that's always up to date.
- Seamlessly share large files.
- Use built-in chat functionality to discuss edits within a document.
- Control permissions of contacts inside and outside the company.

“The traditional style of communication through email messages and phone calls is not enough anymore. Employees want the ability to chat and work together instantly from their PCs, and they want to do this from virtually anywhere.”

Michael Busch,
Director of Technology, Patagonia



COLLABORATION BLOCK 05

A disorganized, inconsistent set of apps

People are accustomed to downloading apps on their phones, and many take the same approach in the office—resulting in a hodge-podge of applications that all do different things, have different sign-ins, and may not deliver the security and compliance the organization requires.

Organizations use an average of 730 cloud-based applications.

But, these apps may come with security or productivity risks. An estimated 90.8% of apps in use aren't enterprise-ready.⁶

7. "April 2015 Cloud Report", 2015, Netskope





THE SOLUTION

A productivity suite

Office 365 delivers a holistic collaboration solution that meets the needs of diverse teams with a full range of applications. With the right tools at their fingertips, workers can collaborate in the different ways they choose throughout the day. Whether you need an answer to a quick question over chat, or to tap into the collective knowledge of the organization with Yammer, Office 365 has the tools to meet the task at hand.

With Office 365, you and your colleagues can:

- Bring the team together for real-time collaboration with Microsoft Teams.
- Call and meet with Skype for Business.
- Connect with Yammer, the social network for work.
- Create, share, and find content with Office and OneDrive.
- Know your assets are backed by Office 365's security and compliance standards (regardless of which application they use).
- Run applications with ease with Office 365's 99.9% uptime guarantee.
- Easily move across applications with a single sign-on approach.

OneDrive + Microsoft Teams + Skype for Business +
SharePoint + Yammer

When it comes to collaboration, one size doesn't fit all—workers need the flexibility and solutions of an all-in-one suite.

“When you look at the capabilities, the price per user, and the opportunity costs of supporting on-premises servers internally, we are confident Office 365 is the right decision for our business.”

Casey Stoops,
Network Operations Manager, Patagonia

Clear away your employees' collaboration blocks with the power of Office 365

From modern email to co-authoring in files to chat, voice, or social, Office 365 delivers a powerful, integrated experience to meet employees' diverse needs and work styles. All off the collaboration tools in the suite integrate seamlessly so your employees have the flexibility and confidence to work in the ways that are best for them. It's an all-in-one solution—and it's backed by Microsoft's enterprise-grade security and reliability.

With Office 365, you'll have the confidence and peace of mind knowing your employees have the tools they need for superior collaboration.



88%

of Fortune 500 companies have at least 1 Microsoft cloud enterprise service.⁷

⁸ "Microsoft by the Numbers," 2016, Microsoft

If you think your team may be struggling with any of these blockers, it's time to take action.

Take a guided tour of Office 365 and see what it can do for your organization's collaboration efforts:

<https://resources.office.com/en-us-landing-guided-tour-test-drive.html>