

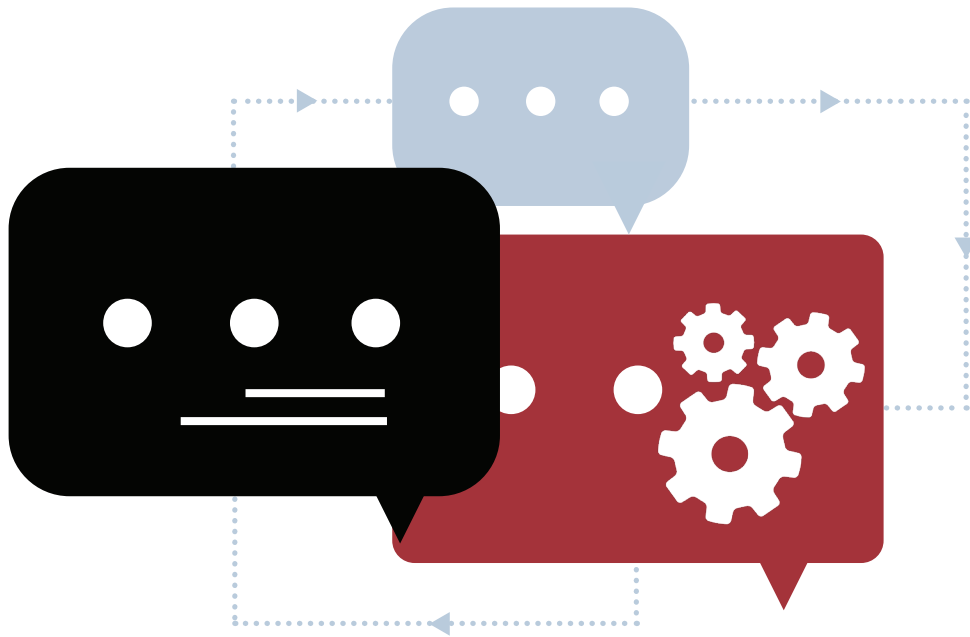


Red River

**A LOOK AT
THE FUTURE OF**

**BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION**

WITH MICROSOFT TEAMS



BUSINESSES NEED BETTER COMMUNICATION TOOLS

43% of American employees spend some time working remotely, while 70% of global employees report working out of the office at least once a week. It's believed that 50.9% of the American population will be freelancing within the next 10 years, and employers are now getting used to a world in which they can court employees from anywhere. All of this means large groups of culturally diverse, geographically separated team members.

In 2016, 92% of businesses surveyed by Deloitte were presently redesigning the way in which they worked. As of 2018, this has largely come into fruition, with many organizations restructuring themselves to better leverage their changing resources and the shifting global landscape. Companies are focusing on the strength of their teams, sometimes even over the strength of individual leadership – and are relying upon increased collaboration to bring their human resources together.





This is not just due to the globalized market and increased access to a distributed workforce, but new technologies as well. Cloud-based solutions have made the technological infrastructure of an organization less centralized in and of itself, making it easier for businesses to reach out overseas. Cloud-based platforms have also made it possible for many organizations to reduce their brick-and-mortar presence entirely, relying on remote workers rather than investing in overhead.

Of course, even when a team is in the same region – or in the same office – collaboration is critical. In-office teams may need to work with out-of-office freelancers, and organizations may find themselves creating inter-office and inter-department teams frequently. All of this reaffirms the importance of having a comprehensive, collaborative solution.

BUSINESSES NEED FLEXIBLE COMMUNICATION

Email, chat, voice calling, and audio calling - there are a number of ways employees can communicate with each other. And There is a reason why businesses haven't shifted to a single, default mode of communication: each communication type is useful in its own right. Employees must have the flexibility to choose their communication channels if they are to retain their productivity.

Here are the main ways teammates can communicate with one another:

-  Email. Email remains the most popular method of communication for many organizations, as it allows detailed information to be conveyed from employee to employee, along with links, media, and files. Email's primary advantage is the same as its primary disadvantage: emails are responded to when the recipient has time to respond. Email is also a major vector for security breaches and malicious attacks – securing email is essential to network protection.
-  Instant messaging and chat. Increasingly, organizations are turning to chat tools, such as Microsoft Teams, as a way to have flowing, interactive conversations with improved response times. Chat falls between emails and calling: while an employee is more likely to get an immediate response, they may not be able to connect with someone instantly. Ideally, employees should have the option of messaging their team as a whole or their team members one-on-one, depending on their communication needs.
-  Phone calling. Voice calls are still one of the primary methods of getting an immediate response from someone or having a more detailed discussion regarding what is needed. Voice calls may also be used to connect with individuals who are out of the office or not able to access a workstation. However, voice calls do make it difficult to log information for review later – consequently, voice calls are usually used to plan or to clarify information, while additional information is sent through other channels.
-  Video calling. When polled in early 2018, 68% of respondents believed that video chat usage would be increasing within the next 12 months. In the past, video calling was often prohibitively difficult to use: it was grainy, unpredictable, and full of delays. Modern technologies, such as those included in Microsoft Teams, make it possible to initiate video calling with multiple individuals easily. Video calling is easily the closest option to a face-to-face meeting or in-person conference.



Being able to select the communication channel that makes the most sense for the information that needs to be communicated is critical if you want to keep employees productive. This is one of the reasons why Microsoft Teams makes it so easy to select different communication channels – users need all of these tools on hand at all times.

Consider an employee who needs a question answered regarding product specifications. As there is no time pressure, the employee might at first send an email - only to get a response back that they don't quite understand. Using this email, the employee may send some clarifying questions through chat.

The employee's manager may then realize that the topic is quite complex, and initiate a video call so they can better explain. The employee may then leave a note directly on the product's documents so that any employee who has this question in the future doesn't need to follow the same chain of communication that they did.

Of course, flexible communication also introduces a logistical problem: it can make it a challenge to track information. An employee may know that they were sent a specific file, but may not remember whether it was sent through chat, attached to an email, or if they were told how to access it in a voicemail. – add why Microsoft's Teams and Channels are created to keep conversations and topics organized.

This is where consolidation becomes important. A consolidated system makes it possible for employees to easily search through a single, unified platform for the information they needed, rather than having to hunt down the information once again. Microsoft Teams provides a complete, robust communication solution that offers these features.

BUSINESSES NEED CENTRALIZED COMMUNICATION

As we have seen, employees have a need for multiple avenues of communication. However, the responsibility is then on the organization to provide these tools in an easy-to-use, consolidated platform. Employees who must use one application for chat, another application for meetings, and another application for voice calls are going to become quickly confused and may not be able to complete their work to desirable standards.

Without the right tools, employees may decline to communicate when necessary and may instead embark upon the time-consuming process of trying to find information on their own. Employees may also attempt to “self-service” — downloading their own tools for the purposes of communication, and potentially risking the organization’s security.

The ultimate cost of this is not only productivity but also customer satisfaction. Employees who cannot find the information they need may miss deadlines or find themselves repeatedly going back to customers for information that they have already received. Employees may make mistakes or not deliver products to specifications due to missed communications or communication failures.

In addition to this, centralized, open communication provides for better transparency throughout each team. Through team chat rooms, search functions, and the ability to host meetings with multiple individuals at once, team members can communicate ideas to the entirety of the team more effectively. In Microsoft Teams, employees can consult information without having to request it again, and there is a reduction in potential miscommunication as information moves from one person to another. With everyone on the same page, the team can work more effectively with fewer mistakes. Further, the ability to select specific team members for communications also means that individual team members are not flooded with information that they don’t need.

A consolidated platform is necessary for efficient operations — and this platform is available now. Microsoft has been hard at work developing its collaborative suite, Microsoft Teams, as a way to provide all of the communications tools an organization needs in a single, well-integrated hub.

Microsoft Teams connects to the entirety of the Microsoft ecosystem, making it easier for employees to communicate the way they need when they need to. With Microsoft Teams, employees can send messages to specific group channels, to selected groups of individuals, and to individual employees — all in a single system.



BUSINESSES NEED COLLABORATION

It isn't enough for dispersed teams to be able to communicate with ease; they also need to be able to collaborate in real-time. True collaboration is about more than just communicating ideas. It's about being able to work together. Employees have to view, modify, and comment on documents simultaneously and need to show each other what they mean rather than just describing it.

Up until quite recently, this was a major barrier to global team productivity. Teams were unable to effectively work together remotely because they would not be able to work on the same files without fear of overwriting each other's work or would be unable to convey complex information. Microsoft Teams allows users to work on Word, Excel, and other files simultaneously. Through Microsoft Team meetings, users can share screens and show each other what they're working on - sometimes more effectively than they could if they were conducting an in-office meeting. Multiple versions make it possible for employees to roll back any changes that weren't satisfactory without fear of losing the data that was there before.

Microsoft Teams integrates into the entire Office 365 suite as well as a number of third-party solutions, all with the goal of making it possible for employees to interact with each other seamlessly. Together, all of these features benefit the team's ability to communicate and collaborate, improving overall productivity and outcomes.



BUSINESSES NEED SECURE COMMUNICATION

In addition to productivity, security is a major concern. With employees operating outside of a company's network, there are far more endpoints and access points at play. An organization is not able to improve upon the security of an employee's personal device: employees will use desktops, laptops, smartphones, and tablets to complete their work. However, an employer is able to improve upon the security of their platform.

Microsoft Teams pairs with Office 365 EM+S to secure communications without harming productivity. Within the Microsoft Office 365 ecosystem, a single authentication service can be used to secure all of the organization's documents. With a cloud-based platform, employees will never need to keep their documents or information natively: instead, it will all reside on the organization's servers and underneath the organization's control. As a consequence, even a breach of an employee's own security will not breach the organization's security.

Office 365 EM+S is a security suite specifically designed to secure against mobile and remote threats, protecting devices from security exploits and detecting potential threats. Not only can every security breach cost an organization millions, but significantly more damage is caused the longer the breach persists. A dedicated security suite can empower administrators and IT professionals to identify and mitigate threats quickly.



FINAL THOUGHTS

As the structure of an organization changes, so must its tools. Modern organizations are increasingly deploying an expansive remote, global workforce, and the resulting teams must rely upon their technology to remain productive and effective. Employees from across the globe must be able to communicate and connect effectively, through secured and flexible channels and with robust and scalable integration.

Microsoft Teams provides everything an organization needs to modernize its technology infrastructure - in a package that is already intuitive and familiar to employees. By integrating easily into an existing Office 365 ecosystem, Microsoft Teams can provide augmented functionality without drastically changing an organization's business processes and technological training. Further, MS Teams provides support for the applications that make MS Office 365 a reliable and robust office solution.

Through Microsoft Teams, organizations can acquire best-in-class video calling, audio calling, and instant chat technologies, in addition to the ability to organize their employees by teams and sort and organize team-related documents and data. Employees can access their data, collaborate on files, and communicate complex information with each other - as well as managing their projects and deadlines. If you feel your organization can benefit from the robust platform of Microsoft Teams, working with an expert partner can help. Upgrade your company's communication tools with [Red River](#).



ABOUT RED RIVER

Red River brings together the ideal combination of talent, partners and products to disrupt the status quo in technology and drive success for business and government in ways previously unattainable. Red River serves organizations well beyond traditional technology integration, bringing 25 years of experience and mission-critical expertise in security, networking, analytics, collaboration, mobility and cloud solutions. To learn more, visit [redriver.com](https://www.redriver.com).