

Ten signs your organisation is under-utilising Microsoft Teams

Introduction



2020 has sure been quite the year! Definitely one for the record books.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid changes for organisations caught in its path has forced a reassessment of many facets of the workplace environment.

Roy Morgan's research into the growing necessity of remote work found 32%, or 4.2 million Australians, are currently working from home¹.

For better and worse, the #WFH is no longer a trend. It is here to stay. The tools most organisations had on hand, pre-pandemic, became the obvious choice to enable staff to collaborate and continue their roles away from the office.

Microsoft being a longstanding provider in the workplace collaboration space with its Teams application, has been a tremendously popular option for organisations wanting to empower their people to be effective and efficient working remotely.

While most business collaboration tools have seen a surge in popularity and usage, Microsoft Teams in particular, has exploded in popularity, surpassing Slack, Zoom, and Skype for Business with a reported 894% growth between February 17 and June 14 this year².



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Hasty Consequences

The rapid, and at scale digital transformation of so many organisations worldwide into remote workplaces is akin to a hastily constructed Jenga tower, en masse. The gaps in the towers structure leave it vulnerable to security fractures with potentially disastrous consequences. Think about how many home-based unsecured end-points are frequently accessing your organisations corporate data and systems currently, that were not doing so pre COVID-19.

This new remote workplace at scale is not necessarily all doom and gloom. Various technologies, new and existing, have been adopted over this period. One such application is Microsoft Teams. Over the COVID-19 period it has been widely deployed and adopted.

Although Microsoft Teams was around prior to COVID-19, it was not as widely deployed or adopted. Even now, Teams offers extremely useful features that are frequently overlooked or underutilised. This eBook indicates nine signs you are underutilising Microsoft Teams.

01 Still juggling multiple tools for conference calls, instant messaging, and file-sharing?

One of the most frequent challenges in the remote working world is application juggling. Juggling has always been a common aspect of the circus, because it is a frustratingly difficult skill to perform. The average work day can be complicated enough without juggling the many applications necessary to get through the daily to-do list.

Juggling Is Dangerous

Application juggling is not just annoying or cumbersome, it can be dangerous with major cyber security implications arising from the variety of different data sharing platforms.

When staff are forced to venture from one application to the next to respond to managers, colleagues, clients, and customers via text, email, voice, and video, it generates a lot of access points within the organisation, and hackers know this better than anyone. A remote office can potentially leave your organisation vulnerable to malicious access from anywhere!

Costly Cluttered Chaos

Not only is juggling a cybersecurity risk, it increases the chances of misplacing and forgetting where you saved that important note or document that is now needed for the upcoming client meeting.

The other concern with all these applications is the associated licensing costs. Paying for so many licenses to have access to an infinite array of collaboration software is not only inefficient and complicated, but expensive.

This is where our favourite co-worker, Microsoft Teams, comes in. Teams allows you to unify all these channels, content, and collaboration needs under the one roof - A very effective and efficient co-worker indeed!

Implementing Microsoft Teams as the primary source of your multi-channel communication and collaboration at work will immediately eliminate your excess licensing and costs while freeing your organisation from the unsecured dangers and chaos of application juggling.

"Teams as the primary source of your multi-channel communication...."



02 Need to get your Teams on the (literal) same page?

Microsoft Teams is not limited to multi-channel communication amongst colleagues; although this is indubitably a wonderful feature. Teams, allows you to work on the same office document with colleagues and partners, in real time, regardless of where the collaborators are located.

Microsoft Teams allows you to manage who can access and edit O365 documents, so as to enable appropriate collaboration. Additionally, it also allows you to amend the accessibility and permissions to the collaboration team, as the project progresses. This helps you stay in control of collaboration projects by allowing visibility to those who need to be in the loop, and restricting access for those who must not have it.

As a bonus, you can re-experience the passionate debates about a document's wording or design choices with your project team just like you did in your traditional workplace!

OK, but how is it done?

Within the Teams app itself, users can divide their contacts into individual teams. These can be used to segment and organise your work life and your life outside work. For instance; one channel can be used for a client, a second for the internal team collaborating on a project, and maybe even a third for your local footy tipping comp. These channels are isolated from each other so they do not introduce the risk of footy mates in the client's channel.

The folder structure allows users to simply drag and drop desired files into a specific channel, within the chat window.

This allows the team immediate access to desired files, thus enabling real-time collaboration.

Access can also be granted on an individual level. If you need some input or editing from a colleague, simply add them to the group and give them editing privileges on the document. Teams allows granular level of control. So if you prefer that Ralph in HR has read-only access to the footy tipping comp, but not editing privileges (so that he cannot amend his win figures), Teams enables this.



Within your Teams app there are channels, these can be used to segment and organise your work life.



03 Often wonder where the workday went at COB?

Unnecessary workplace interruptions and delays can be more than an office buzzkill; they can steal away your focus and get you behind schedule. But it is not the most noticeable interruptions in the office (looking at you Ralph) that can cause the most disruption to an organisation, it's the little things that carry the most weight.

Gloria Mark, a professor in the Department of Informatics at the University of California, conducted a study into information workers' interruptions each day and found they were switching between tasks on average every three minutes. She concluded that while not all interruptions were bad, it was this rapid switching of topics and tasks that caused the most stress. Not the Ralphs of the world.

Bringing all your communication and collaboration applications under the Teams umbrella helps eliminate confusion. It also increases productivity and limits interruption.

Microsoft Teams integrates seamlessly with the O365 suite and many other leading applications to ensure all the tools needed are in the one Teams basket.

Block out distractions when you need it most

Teams can help when it comes to mitigating self-interrupting and application switching, but what about interruptions of the human variety? Teams can be your part-time bouncer, keeping you free from distractions when you need it most.

By syncing up with your Outlook calendar, Teams automatically knows your day better than you do. It helps set your status to 'busy' during meetings or during scheduled 'do not disturb' periods. This feature ensures staff and co-workers see you are busy without interrupting you. This avoids embarrassing messages popping up on the screen during your big presentations! Once your meeting ends, Teams will automatically return you to your previously available status.

Still, need more time? By manually setting your status as 'Do not disturb' only those with VIP access (that you can choose in settings) will be able to get your attention with an alert appearing on your screen.

Alternatively, if you want to save time chasing a busy coworker, tag the contact for Teams status alerts and select "Notify when available." When the co-worker returns to their device or finishes their meeting, you will be instantly alerted to their availability, getting you first in line to get their attention.



By syncing up with your Outlook calendar, Teams automatically knows your day better than you do.

04 Worried Ralph is still gambling when it comes to sharing sensitive files? (Seriously Ralph?)

Hacker heaven

The ever-growing threat of cyber attacks, breaches, and hacking continues to grow in sophistication and frequency. The traditional processes of collaboration, like the aforementioned thumb drive, are very popular in the hacking world because it makes their job easy and yours a potential nightmare.

A 2019 study⁴ found that a new company fell victim to a ransomware attack, on average, every 14 seconds.

What's worse? According to an article published by The Guardian in May 2020, attacks have continued to steadily increase, culminating with a terrifying rise in 2020 as the remote workforce revolution made many organisations susceptible to potential attacks.

According to IBM's 2020 Cost of a Data Breach Report, the average cost of a breach was AUD 5.34 million (USD 3.86 million) which is a figure most organisations literally cannot afford to risk.



How Teams Can Help Keep You Safe

The good news? By utilising Teams for your organisation, you are already on your way to mitigating cyber risk. Incorporating Teams across your organisation reduces your organisation's susceptibility to an attack by actively reducing the total number of access points and locations for your data to reside. Fewer access points equals less potential entryways for a hacker to let themselves in to the corporate information grid.

The integrated centralisation ability of Teams also limits the opportunity for duplication by providing a single source of truth for your files and documents to reside in. Duplicating files across applications is an easy way to lose track of the latest version of a file and is an unnecessary additional security risk with links left floating around online unmanaged.



VIP Data

Teams allows you to share files with a specific group under a particular channel, ensuring untrusting eyes never have an opportunity to take a look at your hard work early (get your own ideas, Ralph). It also provides further security management options beyond access privileges. You can select and edit a files security features through utilising the three security tiers integrated into Office 365



BASELINE TIER

This tier enables you to make organisation-wide security decisions regarding your data. Utilise this tier if you need to restrict access for those outside the organisation or want to dictate a session time-out policy to ensure nobody leaves a laptop unattended near prying eyes. This is where you make your broad protection decisions.



SENSITIVE TIER

Want to limit what your remote workforce can take off their remote desktop, reduce system access to web-only or block access by unmanaged and unsecured devices? This is the tier for you. Mitigate the chance of human error being the cause of a data breach by making these decisions for your organisation in the Sensitive Tier in the Microsoft 365 Compliance Centre.



HIGHLY SENSITIVE TIER

For your VIP+ data, cyber-attack mitigation cannot be left up to chance... or Ralph! In addition to the Baseline and Sensitive tiers' features, the main feature is the ability to encrypt your files. To enable this tier, access the Microsoft 365 Compliance Centre page for encryption and select 'apply to' in the dropdown to enable.



05 Still getting help from your neighbour Pierre to translate messages from the Paris office?

Microsoft Teams is the app for the job when it comes to collaborating and communicating with the team. But what if the geographical reach of the team is global? Increasingly, as businesses expand their reach across borders, and access global talent pools, language barriers become an impediment.

A 2011 study by Forbes⁷ found that without having a multilingual organisation you potentially marginalise global talent and ultimately leave your organisation 'ill-equipped to compete effectively in a globalised environment'. Australia, while renowned as a diverse and multicultural country, is still heavily reliant on English as its primary language. Only 21% of Australians were recorded as speaking a second language in the 2016 Australian Census⁸. This means for any Australian organisation trying to expand offshore, the likelihood of running into language barriers is high.

Thankfully, language barriers can become less of a challenge with the help of your well-travelled sidekick, Microsoft Teams.

Inline Message Translation

This popular instrument from science fictions films is a present-day feature in Teams called Inline Message Translation. It allows users to instantly translate their Teams messages into any language they need just by clicking translate in the actions menu. You can go from being the annoying neighbour who seeks translation in real-time to a multilingual expert by merely hitting a button in your Teams channel.



06 Relying on your memory and notes for important meetings? That is so 2019...

Stuck trying to remember who precisely said what during this morning's team catch-up?

Tired of being allocated the task of typing up meeting notes for the team?

Confused trying to translate the hieroglyphresembling notes you quickly took down during that important meeting?

The answer to all of these scenarios lies with the Teams transcription function. When combined with video-sharing service Microsoft Stream, Teams becomes your organisation's personal full time transcriber, taking notes as they are said, verbatim, for future reference.

In the Teams admin centre, select the Allow Transcription and Allow Cloud Recording options to enable this feature. Your recordings are then stored for 21 days in your account in Microsoft Stream cloud storage. Ralph has no chance of taking credit for that idea you came up with during last week's meeting now that Teams is on your side, holding the receipts.

If you want an off the record meeting, have compliance or privacy concerns, or need to limit who can take a transcription, Teams ensures you can easily manage the transcription and recording privileges. Modify these in the Stream options and dictate who can transcribe what and when.

07 Is onboarding still an ordeal?

Every company has a unique mix of people, processes and technology. This mix yields particular quirks, character and personality. These organisational traits and experiences are passed down to each new hire, whether wilfully on the organisation's behalf, or otherwise.

Organisations must take special care to onboard employees in a premeditated and purposeful way. Now, with remote work being the norm, onboarding becomes an even more important organisational prerogative. Teams helps with onboarding by getting new starters up to speed, acquainting them with different faces in the team, and making them feel at home faster.

Even better, no more repeating yourself! Once you record yourself imparting some wisdom, simply drag and drop the video file (or a transcribed text document) into an onboarding channel in Teams for future use whenever needed. Do the future-you a favour and document all your training and onboarding processes with Teams today, and save yourself a lot of time onboarding tomorrow

Combine your wisdom

Teams is a great tool for providing a single location to store and edit digital assets, particularly when collaborating with the whole team (or even numerous global bilingual teams).

Teams provides a secure and centralised location for different business groups to pool together their combined business intelligence and know-how. This progressively enriches the entire team with additional insights, templates and general business knowledge from co-workers, past and present.

The first step is sorting your organisations into segmented Teams channels. For example, Payroll, B2B Sales, Marketing, Engineering, IT Customer Service etc. can be grouped into their own exclusive channels to collaborate on projects that are only relevant to their specialised roles.

Once these new channels are initiated, the teams should be encouraged to store their individual collections of useful content into their team's channel.

Ultimately, this will accumulate years of past and present team members' learnings into a centralised knowledge resource for the entire team and IP gold for the organisation.

Teams helps with onboarding by getting new starters up to speed...



08 Bringing FUN into Remote Work

Backgrounds

Owing to the pandemic, overseas travel plans are on an indefinite holding pattern. For most of us working from home, visiting our colleagues via a video chat is the closest thing we will get to travel or socialising with our professional friends, for quite a while still. And for some businesses it is the new norm, the new reality, the new way of being. Fortunately, Microsoft realises the value of fun and creativity to give the meetings some vibrancy and flare. Teams allows us to approach work meetings with a global visual perspective.

Teams allows you options on how you represent yourself in meetings. You can give your morning updates from the Grand Canyon, report live from a news desk or even take the meeting intergalactic for those space fanatics. The options are entirely up to your imagination. It is important to note that this background change is now your default until you change back, so keep in mind your next Teams meeting audience and what background is suitable before joining!

To reconnect with your inner travel bug, find an image you would like as your background and then select Add New in the Background effects options to teleport you there.

Maybe you are not feeling very worldwide and are more concerned about your boss judging the state of your home office. Microsoft comes through with the goods here, too, with background effects, including a useful 'blur' feature. However, be aware that this only blurs your background; it does not eliminate piles of old pizza boxes behind you!

Emojis, stickers, and gifs

Liven up your Monday chat with some colour and fun into your communications. Say more with less by acknowledging a brief update with a simple thumbs up or smile and getting back to business without ruminating over the right sentence to respond with.

Even messages between the best of friends can be commonly misinterpreted or taken out of context due to the tone not being evident (nobody could tell you were being sarcastic, Ralph!). Don't risk being misinterpreted and let your feelings easily be understood by incorporating this personalisation into your less formal communications.

Teams also open the door to the world of animated GIFs and stickers when emojis don't quite hit the mark in what you wish to communicate. These can be customised with your own memes or files you've found online. Teams even allows you to search a database for the right gif or sticker to convey any mood. You just need to search for what you are looking for in the Teams window itself or use the 'Popular' tab to find the trendiest animations to impress your cool younger coworker.

09 Switch Connect Microsoft Direct Routing

Microsoft Teams Direct Routing at a glance


Manage multiple projects at once with real-time progress visibility and keep all actions, deliverables and conversations in one place.

What can Switch Connect do for your business?

Switch Connect offers telephony integration into Microsoft Teams with a superior service, complete flexibility and a robust, secure voice platform.

- Reduce costs by consolidating your communication platforms
- Increase control and collaboration
- Access additional features for your voice platform


Step 1
User Licence



Choose your licence combination.
Can be provided by Switch Connect or
deployed on existing O365/M365 licence.


O365/M365 Licence	MS Phone Licence
Business Essentials	Business Voice*
Business Premium	Business Voice*
E1/A1	Phone System
E3/A3	Phone System
E5/A5	Includes Phone System

Step 2
Call Integration




Switch Connect

Telephony
integration into



Microsoft Teams

Step 3
Pricing




Select call minutes
per user packages
over 36 months

Bundles

OR

Pay As Your Go

Step 4
Optional Extras



Create a more bespoke
solution by adding features

- Call Recording
- International numbering
- Contact Centre
integration services

Microsoft Teams
certified phones
and headsets

The benefits to your business

- Enables internal and external phone calls through Microsoft Teams
- Latest cloud-based telephony
- User based licensing
- Flexible and competitive call bundles to suit different user types
- Australia and International calling
- Scales with your business needs
- Enables and supports multi-national business growth
- Australia support and deployment team
- Keep your existing numbers
- Choice of international telephone numbers
- Works over multiple devices including, desktop, mobile and tablets
- Toll-fraud detection
- 99.95% SLA with 4-hour fix
- Hybrid integrations with legacy systems and platforms
- Secure SIP & RTP as standard



10 But wait there's more!

To be candid, Microsoft Teams offers many features and functions that can be customised and optimised for every organisation's setup and structure. We went with "9 signs..." as a title cause it just sounded right. We could have just as easily written 18 signs or 26 signs. Microsoft Teams really is 'that' capable.

So here are another half a dozen ways in which Teams can be utilised to help your organisation:

Having whiteboard nostalgia?

Sometimes an idea needs more than mere words to be illustrated well to a team. Sadly, the beloved office whiteboard is a thing of the past for many now working from home. Enter Microsoft Whiteboard - a free-form, digital canvas where people, content, and ideas come together seamlessly. Whiteboard integration in Microsoft Teams meetings is powered by the Whiteboard web app, which lets Teams meeting participants draw, sketch, and write together just like in a traditional meeting (except without squabbling over whiteboard markers).

Losing messages amongst all the noise?

Been given an important message you will need to find later? Hit the ellipse in the top left of the VIP message and select save this message. Now it is bookmarked and quickly accessible at all times. Alternatively, you can mark it as unread, just like an email.

Using third-party tools to run surveys and polls?

Declutter your desktop from the baggage of third-party apps by integrating your polls and survey tools directly into Teams. Once integrated with Teams, your organisation can quickly incorporate polls and surveys into the very application your audience is likely using throughout their workday.

Integrating polls and surveys with Teams makes the development and distribution components a simple streamlined one-app process. It also leads to an increase in response rates and reduced response times. This is owing to the CX-friendly delivery of the feedback request.

Schedule your next Teams meeting In Teams

Yes, you read that right, avoid your inbox and organise your meetings from the comfort and convenience of your Teams application. To do so, select the channel of people you would like to invite to your future meeting, and select the small camera icon. Then simply fill out and submit the meeting details as you would traditionally in Outlook, without having to leave the Teams environment. Alternatively, whichever icon you typically would click in Outlook to schedule a meeting will also work in Teams, so you can safely stick to your former routine.

Leaving team members out of communications?

If you need to send a message out to a group who do not have an exclusive channel, Teams allows you to assign and address team members under a grouped title.

Rather than spending time remembering each team member to tag into a message, simply address them all with the one @. For example, a message for payroll staff could be addressed to @payroll or geographically specific information could be tagged @NSWTeam to ensure only those who need to know are alerted, saving you time filtering who should be informed one-by-one.

Keyboard shortcuts

Last but not least, the crowd favourite 'keyboard shortcuts' have not been overlooked by the Teams team. Rather than detailing the many handy shortcuts Teams provides, simply hit CTRL and . to bring up the available shortcuts menu in Teams.