10 best practices to consider before purchasing and deploying collaboration technologies

Set up your organization for success. Help employees get the most out of company-approved devices.

On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is collaboration to your organization? Hopefully, you're making it a top priority.

Research indicates a strong correlation between employee well-being and employee engagement—and when people are engaged, they often go above and beyond for employers.

The good news is that you can raise that number by helping employees better connect with colleagues, managers and customers, using collaboration technology to strengthen important human relationships.

But technology isn't magic. You can't just give people tools and expect dramatic improvements without ensuring that they'll actually use them. The following tips can help you address the sometimes-overlooked keys to successful tech adoption as you research, select and deploy business communication and collaboration technology.
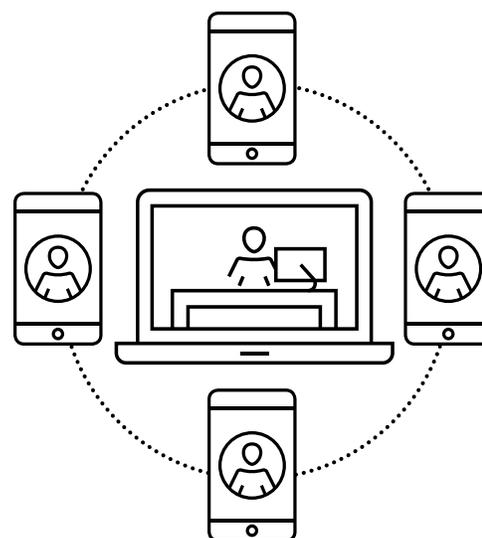
Choose solutions that are user relevant.

If IT is misaligned with the focus and the priorities that matter for the business, you will have a gap in the tech you're implementing, and you'll struggle with adoption. Get on the same page. Talk to leaders across departments to understand their unique goals and challenges. What do they need from collaboration tools?

For example, talent acquisition wants crystal-clear video and audio for screening candidates. Operations is looking for better ways to schedule calls and book meeting rooms. Marketing wants to include remote employees in spontaneous brainstorms. You might be surprised by the use cases you uncover. Consider all relevant applications to purchase the right solution for your organization.

Make it a group effort.

IT alone shouldn't be 100% responsible for widespread adoption. Recruit department leads to serve as tech evangelists. Inspire them to educate and encourage their teams to use the new tools. They might be more receptive to this approach than, say, a company-wide email directing everyone to get on board.

Prepare for outliers.

Once you understand the different business use cases to address, it's possible the tool isn't a good fit for certain scenarios. Fortunately, there are workarounds. For example, when Verizon introduced a new collaboration platform, employees who work with public sector customers couldn't

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use it to communicate sensitive information. Instead of purchasing an entirely different solution, IT customized the platform with heightened security to make it work for the team's unique needs.
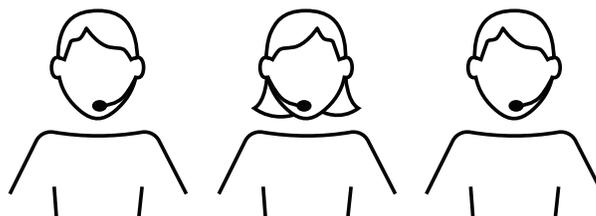
Get buy-in at the C level.

If senior leadership isn't on board, your efforts will likely fall short. Secure their approval—and that doesn't mean receiving a quick thumbs-up. Make sure they truly believe in and back the initiative. This is paramount for any successful product rollout.

And go beyond the C level.

You need a resounding "Yes" from executives—and their assistants. That's right: Your key VIPs are executive administrators. They're responsible for keeping things organized, juggling meetings and staying current on important company matters. They need reliable tools.

One bad experience could sour them on the whole platform. And they'll share their opinions with managers—maybe even the rest of the organization. So invite them to share their likes and dislikes, and find solutions to their concerns.

Jump ahead of the learning curve.

Make sure the tech isn't insanely complicated for the average employee. If it's tricky to understand, give employees a way to self-educate online. Use video tutorials and PDFs to guide people through onboarding and beyond. Anticipate common hurdles and deliver solutions that employees can access 24/7.

Deploy in phases.

After all the work you put into selecting a tool, it's tempting to roll it out all at once. But it can be a mistake to transform every aspect of your business from an IT collaboration standpoint. For example, a law firm decided to change from standard to cloud-based calling. The firm removed desk phones and replaced them with headsets, but also introduced new collaboration tools for internal communication at the same time. After several months, adoption rates were dismal. So the firm hit pause on the tools to focus on calling. People slowly warmed to the headsets, at which point the firm could resume phase two of the rollout. Think about how you might segment your approach for best results.

Mix it up with gamification.

Sometimes it takes a bit more effort to persuade everyone to use a tool—especially if it means giving up another tool that they've long preferred. Try taking a fun approach. Start a competition with relevant benchmarks and awards (who scheduled the most meetings with the platform? Who reached out to remote team members on a daily basis to help them feel included?) and award prizes. Create a leaderboard with incentives that make sense for your company.

Stick to one platform.

Change is hard, so remove the temptation to rely on tried-and-true tools. Be very clear about decommissioning deadlines and stick to them. If not, you might very well struggle with shadow IT. Most employees aren't malicious; they just don't understand the implications of using nonapproved devices. And when they can still choose between something they've always enjoyed and something that's encouraged but not enforced, they'll likely pick the familiar option. Make it clear that there's a single tool for everyone to use.

Measure your success.

Performance measurement is key to identifying adoption barriers—not to punish those who aren't complying, but to understand why they aren't using the tool. Consider partnering with a provider that can help run monthly house checks to highlight key usage trends. If you're focused on cost savings, together you can look for opportunities to drive savings with the user base. An ideal partner can work with you throughout the entire process, beyond initial onboarding and management.

Learn more:

See how Verizon helps teams achieve more with collaboration and communication at enterprise.verizon.com/en-gb/products/business-communications/