Microsoft Teams Connects, Engages, and Empowers Frontline Workers in the Healthcare Industry

Healthcare—an industry facing unprecedented challenges, new and complex expectations, and remarkable opportunities for innovation—is continuously transforming. At the heart of this transformation are frontline healthcare workers --the doctors, nurses, and care team providers who touch nearly every step of the patient journey. Healthcare workers require the latest tools to stay engaged, connected, and empowered to provide the best care possible. However, according to Forrester Research, 91% of healthcare organizations are not equipping these essential workers with those necessary tools.[1] Healthcare providers need access to the right data and effective communication channels to coordinate care across a continuously evolving environment.

Microsoft Teams for frontline workers, with its customizable range of apps to improve engagement, efficiency, and productivity, serves as a modern, intuitive, and security-enhancing solution addressing the needs of frontline workers in healthcare organizations. Employees can access Teams on a wide range of devices, including smartphones, tablets, and other mobile devices, facilitating collaborative work within frontline teams as well as between frontline employees and the rest of the organization. Teams helps to close the long-standing technology gap that often separates frontline workers from the tools, resources, and expertise they need to do their best work.

To better understand the benefits, costs, and risks associated with deploying Teams for frontline workers, Microsoft commissioned Forrester Consulting to interview decision-makers from seven

Return on investment (ROI)
345%

Net present value (NPV)
$14.79M

organizations and conduct a Total Economic Impact™ (TEI) study.[2]

This abstract will focus on two interviewees from the healthcare industry— the head of infectious disease at a European hospital and an attending physician at a major US teaching hospital— and the value Microsoft Teams has brought to their frontline workers and organizations overall.

INVESTMENT DRIVERS

The interviewee's organizations adopted Microsoft Teams to optimize the workforce experience for their frontline. Their organizations struggled with several challenges in their legacy environment, including:

- **Lack of an optimized solution for a shifting healthcare environment.** Frontline workers in the healthcare industry are constantly moving around their environment, both to interact with

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and serve patients and to communicate and collaborate with other healthcare professionals. With the onset of the COIVD-19 pandemic, the healthcare environment changed in two ways:

1) There was an increased workload within the healthcare delivery system, especially for those in hospitals on the front line.

2) There was growth in telehealth/virtual care.

A solution to optimize productivity and save time that also facilitated real-time communication and collaboration for these employees was vital. An attending physician said, "We needed a secure solution that allowed us to get together without needing us to be physically together."

- **Limited access to the data and resources needed to operate.** Frontline healthcare workers faced a gap between the information and personnel they needed to perform their jobs and what they could access. The head of infectious disease at a hospital recalled: "We used to do our communications through our desktops at the hospital, and the documents and data we needed for these communications were stored in the hospital's servers. If we wanted to check them, we had to get in the computers at the hospital. We couldn't check them remotely." An attending physician at a teaching hospital stated: "It was hard to get the right medical staff in key meetings affecting treatment and trials when they were physically dispersed and busy. We didn't have the right tool to reach them."

> **"We wanted the team to work the way we all agree is best. With all this content and easy access, it's easy to get the whole team working together the best way."**
>
> *Head of infectious disease, healthcare*

- **Difficulty relaying information from shift to shift.** Healthcare organizations, especially hospitals, tend to operate around the clock. However, they lacked a designated system for shift employees to leave instructions for the incoming shift regarding unfinished tasks, changes in priorities, or new instructions. In the healthcare setting, in particular, this could result in life-threatening errors.

- **Poor user experience.** Interviewed healthcare organizations used a myriad of communication and collaboration tools in their environments. However, these tended to pose technology and user problems in the frontline setting, negatively affecting user satisfaction. "We had to make multiple phone calls just to actually set up a conference call or in-person meeting. It wasn't an easy process, and everyone involved would get frustrated," said the attending physician at a teaching hospital.

SOLUTION REQUIREMENTS

The interviewees' organizations chose to invest in Teams for the following reasons:

- **One tool, multiple capabilities.** Teams serves as an all-in-one solution for fostering productivity, collaboration, and communication across frontline workers, housing tools such as Secure Messaging with smart camera capabilities, Virtual Appointments, Walkie Talkie, and Shifts. Users also have access to multiple communication channels including secure chat messaging, voice calling, video calls, and online meetings. Additionally, Teams ~~plugins and integrations~~ can be used to further promote operational efficiency. The head of infectious disease stated, "If we're editing or discussing a document, we can do it through SharePoint in Teams and, chat about it in Teams. We can edit them and collaborate on them, all in real time, and all in one place."

- **Consistency across all users.** Teams could support the business and technical needs across all care teams within the healthcare organization and serve as a platform for real-time interaction and data sharing among all its users. "We have a lot of different providers, between physicians, nurses, social workers, and others. Getting them on one platform was key," said the attending physician.

- **Access from anywhere.** Teams enables users to access data and communicate and collaborate from anywhere, an aspect that was a huge priority with the rise in telehealth and remote work. "We had to have a solution in which clinicians could check the documents they needed wherever they were, at any time," said the head of infectious disease.

KEY RESULTS

Healthcare interviewees reported the following benefits:

Enhanced frontline productivity. Teams enabled faster, easier, and more secure communication among care teams and healthcare professionals in the interviewees' organizations. With one digital workspace across the organization, frontline workers could collaborate and relay instructions or requests in real time, without interrupting their work in progress.

The interviewed attending physician noted, "Here's a common scenario: Say you're the primary team responsible for a patient in the hospital and there are five other consulting teams, such as cardiology and endocrinology, working on the case as well. It's a complicated case that you want everybody's opinion

> **"Teams helps us deliver better care and a better patient experience."**
>
> *Head of infectious disease, healthcare*

on because you're getting mixed messages from different consultants and are not sure what to do. Instead of having to wait for a bedside meeting, which is almost impossible, we can now have a quick meeting on Teams. [Teams] is integrated into the electronic health record (EHR), so we can access the data and people we need to make an informed decision at our fingertips."

A 25% reduction in errors due to misinformation. For healthcare organizations, Teams gave employees easy access to best practices, standard operating procedures (SOPs), frequently asked questions (FAQs), and other documents. These resources, which they could refer to at any time, provided them with the most accurate information to respond to internal and patient needs.

The attending physician at a teaching hospital said, "Ultimately, everything we do comes down to communication, and when there are errors, it's often due to a failure of communication. For instance, there are protocols, SOPs, metrics, or certain algorithms related to how we operate at different sites. I think that now, instead of just communicating and saying, 'we need to place this order,' we can complete the full protocol in accordance with our standards. We can find the resources saying, 'Here is the full procedure, here is what you need to do next for this particular patient.' Having Teams as a guide ensures we can complete tasks efficiently and accurately. "

A 30% improvement in customer experience. Teams enabled the organizations of the interviewed healthcare professionals to provide quality care in a secure environment. Interviewees mentioned that HIPAA regulations can pose a challenge in sharing medical information to provide better care for patients. This information is safe in hospitals' or clinics' EHR systems, but not when shared with other medical professionals via consumer messaging apps. With Teams, health organizations can enable seamless virtual visits and collaboration experiences with a HIPAA business associate agreement (BAA)

automatically in place. As a result, medical team members are free to share critical information to improve patient outcomes without putting those patients' privacy at risk.

The head of infectious disease at a hospital told Forrester: "We also measure our patients' experience and make changes to improve it. In our travel vaccination clinic, we have cut 30 minutes off the average amount of time a patient spends here."

Avoided security breach costs. The need for faster communication and remote collaboration among frontline workers at the interviewed organizations had resulted in those employees using consumer messaging apps and other means of meeting those needs digitally. Since those tools were rarely managed within the organizations' security protocols, they introduced an increased level of vulnerability.

Within healthcare, the interviewee's organizations struggled with an additional set of security issues surrounding patient privacy under HIPAA regulations. An attending physician at a teaching hospital said: "We often have palliative care meetings with family, and it's quite a challenge to get the family and the whole care team all together. Sometimes, family [members] are not even in the country. Teams makes it possible to get them all on board at the same time in a HIPAA-protected clinical environment."

Increased meeting productivity. Teams enabled healthcare organizations to deliver an intuitive and consistent meeting experience across all workers from one central solution. Employees could now meet

> **"Teams makes it possible to share medical records and consult with physicians in our other locations in real time, all within a HIPAA-protected environment."**
>
> *Attending physician, healthcare*

from anywhere—an especially important facet for the COVID-19 pandemic—while staying engaged by seeing relevant materials, reading the faces and expressions of other participants, and asking questions. The interviewed attending physician described being able to avoid driving 25 minutes or more each way to attend meetings at urban and suburban locations of his hospital system with the implementation of Teams, stating "I can now basically have the same experience from home."

Additionally, joining and running virtual meetings was now a smooth process, saving organizations several minutes of wasted time per meeting. "Logging on is very fluid. There's really not much delay, and the organizational connectivity you feel using it is great," said the attending physician.

Team empowerment. According to the healthcare interviewees, frontline workers valued Teams' support for data democratization throughout their organizations. The ability to understand performance in real time, and to take control over their workday was something these frontline workers found very rewarding. "I can tell you, yes, we are doing a good job, because we have the numbers in real time, and the whole team has access. We don't have to ask IT or another department in the hospital. This is in our hands," said the head of infectious disease.

The opportunity to use relevant data, analytics and, eventually, machine learning to improve processes on the floor. Healthcare interviewees looked forward to leveraging Power BI or similar tools to better understand the data they had collected and used in Teams in the future. The head of infectious disease put it this way: "We fill in the forms, but we really don't use big data or artificial intelligence or automatic ways to extract the data from our data warehouse. All of this is manual right now."

TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

For more information, download the full study: "The Total Economic Impact™ of Microsoft Teams for Frontline Workers," a commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Microsoft, July 2022.

STUDY FINDINGS

Forrester interviewed seven decision-makers at organizations with experience using Microsoft Teams for frontline workers and combined the results into a three-year composite organization financial analysis. Risk-adjusted present value (PV) quantified benefits include:

- Enhanced supervisor productivity, $9.1M.

- Reduced errors due to misinformation, $6.1M.

- Increased revenue from better customer experience, $2.7M.

- Avoided security breach costs, $551.3K.

- Increased meeting productivity, $329.0K

- Retired legacy collaboration solutions, $211.4K.

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Appendix A: Endnotes

[1] Source: "Healthcare 2020: The State Of The Doctor-Patient Relationship In The US," Forrester Research, Inc., March 10th,2020.

[2] Total Economic Impact is a methodology developed by Forrester Research that enhances a company's technology decision-making processes and assists vendors in communicating the value proposition of their products and services to clients. The TEI methodology helps companies demonstrate, justify, and realize the tangible value of IT initiatives to both senior management and other key business stakeholders.

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