

# Microsoft Teams Empowers Frontline Workers and Drives Efficiency for Manufacturing Organizations

The manufacturing vertical—marked by unpredictable supply chain issues, labor shortages, complex regulatory and compliance threats, and heightened competition—is constantly under pressure. These forces are driving manufacturers to realize the importance of investing in their frontline workers (the employees who are producing and inspecting the manufactured products to ensure quality and/or who interact with customers purchasing the product). Frontline workers in manufacturing require the latest technological tools to improve communication and collaboration, boost productivity rates, optimize operational efficiency, and reduce costs across the ecosystem.

[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 at manufacturing 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 organizations and conduct a Total Economic Impact™ (TEI) study.<sup>1</sup>



Return on investment (ROI)  
**345%**



Net present value (NPV)  
**\$14.79M**

This abstract will focus on two interviewees from the manufacturing vertical— a head of global maintenance operations development based in Europe and a U.S.-based production engineer— 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 environments, including:

- **Lack of an efficient solution for real-time communication.** Frontline supervisors were constantly busy responding to the demands of the ever-changing manufacturing environment. The need to spend an additional 15-20 minutes searching for a specific employee or superior on the factory floor to respond to those evolving



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circumstances was an added burden. There was no channel for instant communication in place, causing frontline workers to feel siloed and disconnected.

- **Limited access to the data and resources needed to operate.** Frontline manufacturing workers often needed additional information or insight through company documents or supervisor input to determine the appropriate course of action for a task or procedure. Their inability to reach those resources easily hampered their ability to act. The production engineer stated, “If a frontline worker had some quick questions on the specs of a drawing and needed to ask an engineer, they had to go through a pretty labor-intensive process to make that happen. You would have to ping the engineer, get their availability for a meeting, send the drawing via email, and both look at the drawing on two different screens. It was an archaic process and super inefficient.”
- **Difficulty relaying information from shift to shift.** Interviewees told Forrester that their manufacturing organizations lacked a designated system for shift employees to leave instructions regarding unfinished tasks or changes in priorities for the incoming shift. This could cause unforeseen errors and inefficiencies.

**“Our old solution did not have the bandwidth or capability to hold a call with my global team of about a hundred frontline workers. We would have to break up the meeting and stage several smaller ones throughout the day, or just watch the software buffer the whole time.”**

*Production engineer, manufacturing*

- **Poor user experience.** Interviewees at manufacturing organizations described how the communication and collaboration tools in their legacy environment posed technology and user problems to those on the front line. This made real engagement difficult. “We had a system that was a bit more complicated to use. It was no big deal for people in HQ who did lots of meetings every day, but for a frontline employee who only uses it a couple times a month for department meetings, it meant they had to start setting up half an hour early, and even then, they might need help,” stated the production engineer.

## 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 Walkie Talkie, Tasks, 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 business efficiency. The head of global maintenance operations development said, “We can upload documents through SharePoint, edit them right in a meeting in Teams, the connectivity is great.”
- **Accessibility.** Teams enables users to access data and communicate and collaborate from anywhere, an aspect that was a huge priority with the need for skeleton crews early in the COVID-19 pandemic. “We needed to be able to decentralize the masses at our factories, and Teams is able to support that and make it a much easier transition,” explained the production engineer.

Interviewees also highlighted the fact that Teams supports collaboration with people outside of their direct organization, a necessity in the manufacturing industry. “Being able to use this solution internally and also to connect and speak directly with vendors and suppliers outside our domain is something that makes a big difference,” said the production engineer.

## KEY RESULTS

Manufacturing interviewees reported the following benefits:

**Enhanced frontline productivity.** Teams enabled faster, easier, and more secure communication among frontline manufacturing workers 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.

**Workforce optimization.** By adopting Teams, manufacturing organizations were able to improve efficiencies in a work-from-home environment. “We could now have one supervisor or manager working from home covering four or five manufacturing sites instead of having one head in each of those sites. This is because they could use Teams to stay in constant communication with the floor workers, and monitor the progress being made. That’s a 400% to 500% return, and those people with time back could reallocate that time to something else,” said the production engineer.

**“When it comes to instant communication and the sharing, transfer, or analysis of files, Teams is right there.”**

*Production engineer, manufacturing*

## **A 25% reduction in errors due to misinformation.**

For manufacturing organizations, frontline workers could now easily reach their supervisors, colleagues, or subject-matter experts regarding less routine questions with Teams. In the past, employees might not have bothered trying to find the right answer because they knew it would take too long. They would either use their own judgement (which could be wrong) or just not address the issue (which could cause other problems).

A production engineer said: “The people with the F1 licenses ... have quick questions for an engineer or they need to look at a drawing with an engineer. They may have a question about it and it’s not clear, and so they ping the engineer that’s responsible for it and they’ll look it up. They can look at the drawing together on Teams and [the engineer will] highlight and circle specifics and write notes on it for the worker and supervisor.”

## **An improvement in internal meeting productivity.**

Teams enabled manufacturing organizations to deliver an intuitive and consistent meeting experience across all workers from one central solution. Employees could now meet from any location while staying engaged by seeing meeting materials, reading the faces and expressions of other participants, and asking questions. Additionally, the head of global maintenance operations development commented on the usefulness of the breakout room function and said: “We have been making breakout rooms with Teams a lot recently. It makes the meetings better and more engaging for technicians.”

Additionally, joining and running virtual meetings was now a smooth process, saving the composite organization several minutes of wasted time per meeting. “For a meeting of 30 to 45 minutes, we were spending 5 to 10 of those minutes on technical issues and/or taking roll call. We can avoid issues like this now and our meetings are smoother. We can start on time, end on time, and achieve the desired outcome,

stated the head of global maintenance operations development.

**Retired legacy collaboration solutions.** The interviewed manufacturing executives relayed that their organizations used alternative platform(s) for communication with frontline workers that were not optimized for their organizational needs. The production engineer recalled: “We had a meeting platform that allowed us to share files and presentations in the meeting, but once we hit a threshold of about 25 people, problems would start to happen with the connection. It was so hit-or-miss that people came up with all kinds of workarounds for it.”

Manufacturing organizations were able to retire those tools once switching to Teams and save their organizations the cost of the suboptimal solution(s).

**Team empowerment.** According to the manufacturing interviewees, frontline workers valued Teams’ support for data democratization throughout their organizations. They were able to understand shifting priorities and the tasks at hand in real time, giving them more control over their workday.

## 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

### DISCLOSURES

The reader should be aware of the following:

- The study is commissioned by <Client> and delivered by Forrester Consulting. It is not meant to be a competitive analysis.
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- <Client> provided the customer names for the interview(s) but did not participate in the interviews.

### ABOUT TEI

Total Economic Impact™ (TEI) 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. The TEI methodology consists of four components to evaluate investment value: benefits, costs, risks, and flexibility.

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