

External collaboration is critical for business success

Understanding the role of external collaboration in the future of work



03 /

Importance of external collaboration

04 /

Types of external collaboration

05 /

Challenges of external collaboration

- 5 Too many tools, apps, and processes
- 5 Remote working and geographic dispersion
- 5 Increased security risk

06 /

Vision of external collaboration

- 7 Trends and benefits

08 /

Microsoft Teams Connect: Collaboration without boundaries

- 8 Teams Connect – shared chat
- 9 Teams Connect – shared channel
- 9 Teams Connect – shared team

10 /

Summary



Importance of external collaboration

Boundaryless collaboration is a necessity for a business to adapt and thrive in today's rapidly changing, interconnected world. To maintain your competitive edge, you need to think beyond your usual way of working. Look for new, creative ways of operating to strengthen relationships with partners and get faster results.

According to Microsoft research,* companies are collaborating with more external entities across the globe with greater frequency and across multiple apps. Though we've seen these trends accelerate in the past year, the experience remains fragmented, insecure, and cumbersome.

"Ultimately, if you do everything in-house, obviously business could be good, but there's also potential to make things better. By utilizing more external resources, it just helps with those partnerships, it helps open up a lot of doors, and that's something that's more of our business model."

– Account Manager (Healthcare)

Our ability to respond to change and disruptions depends on collaboration outside the boundaries of our organization.



86 percent of business decision makers (BDMs) at enterprise businesses collaborate with external partners.*



BDMs at enterprise organizations collaborate on average with 11 different external organizations in a typical week.*



Beyond their immediate team, the most common collaborators for enterprise businesses are external business partners, followed by customers.*

Types of external collaboration

External collaboration refers to any interaction you have with business partners outside your organization, using tools, apps, and processes.

While external collaboration can take many forms, it usually falls into three general scenarios: transactional, sharing, and creative. These scenarios range from single transactional interactions to group collaborations, with every collaborative project potentially cycling through all three scenarios.



Transactional

- Coordinating on a specific process or plan
- Task-oriented, detail-centric
- Examples: paying a vendor, co-completing a checklist



Sharing

- Exchanging information to establish or grow relationships
- Situational, trust-building
- Examples: conducting a demo, swapping best practices



Creative

- Generating ideas and content together
- Often iterative, with multiple check-ins
- Examples: coauthoring a presentation, joining a brainstorming session

Challenges of external collaboration

To drive productivity and innovation, it's essential to remove roadblocks to working with external teams.

Too many tools, apps, and processes

Disjointed tools, apps, and processes introduce friction in how you collaborate.

"We generally use a different set of tools for collaboration with different teams. It would be great if we could align on a small set of collaboration tools."

– Digital Marketing Lead (Retail)

Remote working and geographic dispersion

Trust and collaboration suffer when external teams are siloed.

"[I want] a way to send documents and create them like you do internally and have the ability to call [a] group together really quickly. It would be nice to do that externally."

– Human Resources Director
(Manufacturing)



BDMs use an average of 4.2 apps for external collaboration, with 35% using at least one personal app.*

63% of BDMs collaborate with partners from locations different from their own.*



Increased security risk

External collaboration introduces more points of vulnerability, including security and compliance risks.

"When we're internally collaborating, we're a lot more open with sharing information ... If I'm externally collaborating, I'm going to be much more careful with what we can show and what we can send out [considering confidentiality]."

– Managing Director (Finance)

Vision of external collaboration

Overcoming the challenges of external collaboration can help your company become more successful and secure—much more quickly.

What are the requirements for a successful solution?



Speed and efficiency

Enable everyone to easily access content and collaborate in real time, using devices of their choice.



Transparency

Ensure everyone is clear about the purpose and end goal.



Accountability

Align everyone on responsibilities and next steps, along with all required security protocols.



Open communication

Provide everyone with proper access to required information and a clear line of communication to each other.

What does a successful solution look like?



Consolidated tools

Combine existing communication and collaboration tools into a single platform.



Simplified sharing

Make it easier to share files externally—all with appropriate levels of security.



Freedom to focus

Equip people with robust tools for holding meetings, sharing agendas, updating plans, and more.



Enhanced security

Strengthen governance over who's collaborating, what resources are shared, and how much access is needed.

Trends and benefits

Trends

Of the BDMs surveyed, compared to a year ago* ...



47%

Say that they're collaborating with more external partners.



40%

Say that their external collaborators are more geographically dispersed.



44%

Say that they're using more apps to collaborate with external partners.

Benefits

According to respondents, better external collaboration would* ...



65%

Help them meet their company targets.



63%

Make it easier to get more work done in a timely manner.



56%

Help their company trust partners and the security processes in place.

Microsoft Teams Connect: Collaboration without boundaries

Teams Connect enables boundaryless collaboration with external teams through shared chat, channel, and team capabilities. The trust fabric created by [Microsoft Azure Active Directory](#) (Azure AD) enables secure and trusted collaboration in real time.

Teams Connect – shared chat

Chat with external partners without worrying about security and compliance.

Work faster with partners

Have a one-on-one or group chat with any Teams user—right from your native Teams environment.

Express Yourself

Add GIFs or @mentions to messages and use formatting and editing features to bring yourself into the conversation.

Securely connect with external teams

Only have your partner's phone or personal email information? Simply enter an exact phone number or personal email connected to their Microsoft account and collaborate in real time.

Granular admin controls

Enable admins to disable/allow shared chat per user, group, and organization.



Teams Connect – shared channel

Collaborate as one extended team across multiple companies, without switching tenants.

Bring the team together

Get the right experts together, regardless of whether they're internal or external to the organization. Learn more about our [trusted identity fabric](#).

Support all your collaboration needs

Chat, call, meet, share and coauthor files, and collaborate in apps in real time.

Safeguard security and privacy

Rely on granular IT controls to govern how external users access data and information.

Teams Connect – shared team

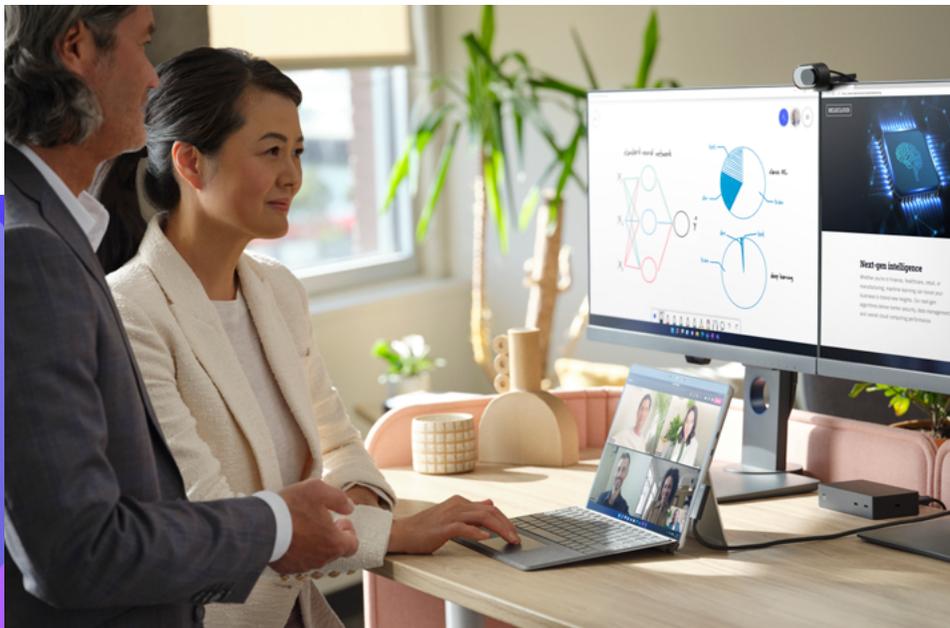
Share a Teams site with high-trust external individuals, giving broad access to chat, calling, and meeting capabilities for easier collaboration.

Invite guests to join Teams

With [Azure AD B2B collaboration](#), invite external partners to join Teams using a guest account—or have them request access.

Connect guests across Microsoft 365

Connect external partners to your SharePoint Online and Office 365 apps, other software as a service (SaaS) apps, or on-premises line-of-business apps.



Summary

With new ways of working and geographically dispersed collaborators, improving your external collaboration is critical to the success of your business. To move your business forward, you need to address inefficiencies and security risks, increasing productivity and deepening trust in external collaborators.

Adopting Microsoft Teams Connect can help your organization stay ahead of the curve. Working in the same environment, your employees and external business partners can find the information they need to complete tasks, securely share files, and unleash their creativity across time zones.

Great things are possible when a team—both internal and external—works together.

To learn more, visit the [Microsoft Teams](#) page.