

# MICROSOFT TEAMS: THE PERFECT FIT FOR COLLABORATION AND PRODUCTIVITY

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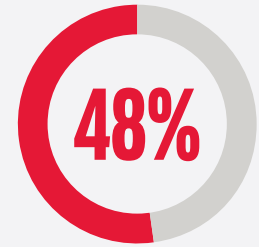
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We've all experienced huge changes in the way we work lately. Many of us have gone from commuting to an office or other physical premises every day, to working from home, full-time. For some organisations however, this simply isn't an option.

This means employees today have different requirements and expectations of their workplace. But they all rely on technology to bridge any gaps and enable them to work from anywhere. Collaboration has never been more important.

New capabilities in Microsoft Teams ensure that all employees, whether working from home or in the office, can continue to collaborate seamlessly, securely – and safely. This guide will look at how CDW and Microsoft are providing reassurance to organisations that their employees can remain as productive as ever, providing the perfect fit for software and employees so that businesses can continue to thrive.



According to Gartner<sup>1</sup>, 48 percent of employees will likely work remotely at least part of the time after COVID-19, versus 30 percent before the pandemic.

## Working from home

Many organisations increasingly recognise the value of having a working-from-home policy and the importance of engaging, communicating with, and enabling remote workforces. It is also important to pay attention to employees' health and wellbeing and engage task workers in team culture.

As part of Microsoft 365, Microsoft Teams promotes collaboration and inclusiveness – regardless of your location. It combines comprehensive calling and meeting capabilities, bringing together conversations, video, meetings, files, Office apps, and third-party integrations into a single hub.

**“When we talk about the benefits of Microsoft Teams, we talk from experience. Teams has supported our own workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic, enable us to seamlessly connect and collaborate with colleagues, partners and customers. It's so much more powerful than a video platform – it enables us to exchange ideas and share information as easily as if we were in the office.”**

– Head of Technology Solutions, CDW

The pandemic has sparked a cultural shift in the expectations of workers.

- **83 percent** of UK managers expect to have more flexible work from home policies post-pandemic.<sup>2</sup>
- **72 percent** of UK employees and managers want to continue working from home at least part-time.<sup>2</sup>
- Yet, **62 percent** felt less connected to their team working from home.<sup>2</sup>



## Health and wellbeing

The latest updates to Teams include new personal wellbeing insights and features. With personal productivity insights in Teams for MyAnalytics users, employees can strengthen relationships with people in their networks, schedule time for 1:1s, stay caught up with key communications, and carve out time for important tasks and uninterrupted work.

In addition, new features available next year aim to allow you to schedule a virtual commute in the morning and mindfully disconnect in the evening. They will also help you create dedicated moments of mindfulness with apps like Headspace and tune into how you and your team are feeling with check-ins.

Plus, key personal productivity insights, such as suggested tasks for the day, can now be delivered to your Outlook inbox at the start of the day with a daily briefing email from Cortana.

- **More than 30 percent** of workers said the pandemic has increased their sense of burnout at work.<sup>3</sup>
- **Twice as many** Teams users are sending after hours chats.<sup>3</sup>
- **48 percent** increase in Teams chats per person overall.<sup>3</sup>
- **55 percent** increase in number of meetings and calls per week.<sup>3</sup>

# Organisational insights

Also new to Teams are a range of Insights, designed to help business and IT leaders continue to understand what is going on within the organisation, leverage valuable data and stay connected to the workforce.

For example, managing a new remote workforce can be a daunting task. Manager Insights in Teams gives managers line of sight into their team's activity. They can view things like after-hours collaboration, focus time, meeting effectiveness, and cross-company connections, comparing them to teams of similar size and function. These insights can also help ensure employees aren't pushing themselves too hard or working too many hours.

Meanwhile, Organisational Insights as part of Workplace Analytics in Teams helps leaders to stay on top of the business. They can track indicators of employee wellbeing and effectiveness and respond to any changes with research-backed recommendations for improvement.

We know that Teams is a great driver and enabler of productivity within organisations. Now leaders can measure that productivity more easily, despite a distributed workforce. As part of Microsoft Productivity Score, a business continuity report gives visibility at an organisational level into any changes. Using data from the Microsoft Graph, the report complements information in Microsoft Productivity Score and Microsoft 365 Usage Analytics with insights into collaboration and work patterns.

Leaders can also plan for the future with Workplace Analytics Power BI dashboards. The dashboard highlights opportunities to improve remote work effectiveness. For example, using a data-driven approach to soft-opening decisions and collaboration and network insights, business leaders can decide which teams should return first and how to optimise capacity in physical premises.

Teams has released a series of other updates to help you collaborate easier from home.

- Custom backgrounds allow you to replace your background in Teams meetings, and upload your own custom images.
- A new 'raise hand' feature lets meeting participants indicate they have something to say.
- Meeting organisers can now end a meeting for all participants with the click of a button.
- Meeting organisers can now download a participant report that includes join and leave times for participants (great for teachers!)
- Real-time noise suppression, using artificial intelligence (AI), reduces distracting background noise.

## Getting back to the office

For some organisations, however, the entire workforce working from home isn't a practical or permanent solution. For these, the physical premises – whether that's an office, shop floor or factory – remains the lynchpin of the organisation.

However, that workplace may look a little different now; 30 percent of European firms are planning to invest in temperature sensing and other health monitoring technologies, while 27 percent are looking at touchless fixtures, seeking to eliminate frequent touchpoints within the building which could be hot spots for spreading germs. Another 25 percent are investing in smartphone apps to communicate with employees and capture feedback on health and wellbeing.

Here, Microsoft Teams, CDW and our trusted partners are working together to ensure employees can return to work, safely, securely and remain as productive as ever.

Leveraging Teams' open API approach, CDW has worked with some of its trusted partners on innovative solutions designed for the new office environment.

## Meeting rooms of the future

For example, we are enabling the meeting and collaboration rooms of the future. Working with Jabra and Intel, Teams can now see how far away people are sat from each other in a meeting room, to ensure social distancing is being observed. Organisations can also set a limit on the number of people in a meeting room by its size. Again, using a feed from a webcam and analysing the visual data, Teams will pause the meeting and notify users if the number of participants is being exceeded. We have even developed a machine learning algorithm that understands whether people are wearing masks in meeting rooms and are taking the essential safety precautions.

We can also enable contactless booking of meeting rooms. Team members can book a room in advance – or by walking into an unoccupied meeting space – and reserve the area without any physical contact with a keyboard or mouse. One way of doing this is by booking a Teams meeting where you will automatically be emailed a QR code. You simply walk into the room and show the code to the camera in the room (without touching anything apart from your own personal device.) Teams will recognise who you are and what meeting you're attending, before starting the meeting.

It is important to note from a security and data privacy perspective that none of the data can be used to identify any employees. In the case of the feature which can identify mask-wearers, for example, the solution has an image of what a mask looks like and then seeks a corresponding binary image on the video feed. In fact, all the algorithms run locally on the customers' device; all the data is locked down behind a firewall on the customer's network.



## More than meetings

Outside of meeting rooms, CDW has created functionality around Shift Groups in Teams. This feature allows you to put people who work the same shift patterns in the same group, to limit contact with others in the organisation.

There are Teams-certified headsets with an LED light that usually shows if an agent is available. CDW can allocate a colour to each Shift Group so their headset will automatically light up with the colour of their group to make it easier to monitor employees potentially mixing. Additionally, the indicator can be customised to reflect how employees might be feeling or if they are facing any challenges at that time.

## Designed for the future

As important as they are currently, these Teams solutions are designed to be so much more than an enabler of workplace safety. More effective use of meeting rooms is a huge productivity boost for employees and a cost saving for organisations at any time. The technology can produce a significant return on investment if costly working spaces are better utilised.

Elsewhere, some of the technology being deployed to recognise and remind workers of current guidelines can be used by facilities to detect objects like whiteboard markers and chairs – if there are any missing or if extra are required, they can use Teams for those notifications.

Another useful security application can be used to identify if a whiteboard has been used, and alert the meeting leader to ensure that any potentially sensitive information isn't left exposed.



## Conclusion

These are just a few examples of how CDW is providing truly integrated Microsoft Teams solutions, creating an immersive experience that ensures employees feel safe while continuing to collaborate. Our expertise, integrator relationships and status as a Microsoft global Gold Partner means we can take your investment in Teams to the next level.

**Email us here**, or speak to your CDW account manager about how we can work with you to provide the perfect fit solution to ensure your employees continue to collaborate effectively and safely, now and in the future.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2020-04-14-gartner-hr-survey-reveals-41-of-employees-likely-to->  
<sup>2</sup> <https://news.microsoft.com/en-gb/2020/09/08/for-remote-working-to-be-a-success-the-first-thing-we-need-to-change-is-how-we-think-about-it/>  
<sup>3</sup> <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/blog/2020/09/22/pulse-employees-wellbeing-six-months-pandemic/>  
<sup>4</sup> IDC's EMEA COVID-19 Impact Survey which ran at the beginning of August. The sample size was 531 and conducted across nine European countries, across varying company sizes and industries.

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