

Minding the Gap

By Kelly Forrister, Senior Consultant

Teams is the fastest growing application in Microsoft history. In March 2020 there were 44 million active users. Just one month later, as companies around the world went virtual, it jumped to 75 million. By October 2020 it shot up to 115 million. At McGhee, we've done more productivity training focused on Teams in the past six months than in all previous years combined.

Teams is more than just a new app—it's a disrupter. It's forcing people who have worked in Outlook for many years to rethink how and where they work. More and more it will become the primary portal and collaboration space for working in the Microsoft Suite.

What we're finding is many clients are stuck in a gap of unclarity between using legacy tools that have worked well for years and a goal to move more fully into Teams because of the investment and opportunity. Many employees aren't clear which tools to use, and their responses range from "why are they breaking what's been working well?" to "Teams is the future and why are we still using other tools?" That gap can hinder productivity.

If you've adopted or are planning on adopting Teams, here are five strategies to navigate the complexities of the gap:

1. Take Inventory

Take an inventory of what tools your organization is currently using to get a clear idea of your choices. Map that against which ones Teams can replace. For example, do you want to maintain an external file storage or migrate those to the SharePoint sites created for each Team? Do you still plan to use other meeting platforms like Zoom, or move entirely into Teams? Are you moving fully into Teams Chat or still using Skype for Business?

2. Define Use

Do use cases to see what make sense to migrate to Teams and what should stay where it is. Teams is not one size fits all. Different roles will have different needs. For example, you may have sensitive data that needs to stay in certain drives and not be moved to Teams. Specific roles may have tools that aren't accessible through Teams or may need to stay external to Teams for some reason.

3. Identify Issues

Capture the key issues you are trying to solve. What are you wanting employees to be doing different differently by letting go of any legacy tools and moving to Teams?

Knowing and communicating this will give employees more motivation for what the end game is and aligning with that. For example, is the goal is to move conversations out of email and into Teams Channels to improve productivity and transparency?

4. Share Value

Share the value of moving to Teams with your staff. Simply installing Teams won't motivate many, except the early adopters, because it's disrupting what's already working for them. Demonstrate that Teams is not a replacement for many apps, but a portal. It can aggregate workflows and integrate apps they use every day, saving them time and effort.

5. Provide Training

Train your staff on how to get the most out of Teams. The power of Teams is in collaboration, and as a portal to other apps, yet most end-users are still only using it for virtual meetings and chat. Invest in training to teach them how to embrace what's possible for more productive and effective communication and collaboration.

Wherever you are in your journey with Teams, slow down to identify the gaps for a more successful roll-out for the long term.