The Dangers of Using Multiple Collaboration Apps (And How to Avoid Them)

Juggling multiple collaboration apps at the office? You're not alone!

According to research, 91% of companies use at least two messaging apps for internal communications. This goes against the advice of IT managers, who typically want to consolidate platforms for security and UX purposes. So why the disconnect?

In this post, we're going to explore the challenges of using multiple collaboration tools and suggest solutions that will keep both employees AND IT pro's happy. (Spoiler alert: it's not about ditching all your platforms, it's about making them work together).

Let's get started:

The Rise of User-Centric Collaboration

user centered

You might be wondering how your organization ended up using five chat platforms when you only formally endorse one (and pay the subscription fee!).

The rise in user-centric collaboration means it’s now easier than ever for employees and teams to choose the platform that lets them work most effectively. In theory, this is a positive move. We’re all different and we all have our own communications style. As each platform has a distinct UX, it’s natural to gravitate towards a particular look and feel or towards the platform you perceive will make you most productive.

Until fairly recently, this wouldn’t have been possible. A “business-centric” model meant that access to communications tools required a corporate subscription (shout out to the good old days of Microsoft Lync!). Nowadays, platforms target users and teams directly, with free versions and cheap entry-level solutions.

Multiple Collaboration Apps = Multiple Challenges

> too many apps can be challenging

Using multiple collaboration apps, particularly free ones, create multiple challenges. (Check out this article for more on the risks of free communications.) Here are the four issues most commonly raised by 3CX partners:

1. Supporting Multiple Apps is Costly

If teams within your organization prefer using different channels you could wind up paying multiple subscriptions and wasting money that could be invested elsewhere. Whilst communication tools

are becoming more affordable generally, no one wants to be paying more than they need to be.

So if your marketing team wants a different channel to your developers, it’s time to dig in and understand which features matter most, so that you can identify the platforms that perform well across the board.

2. Consumer Apps Pose a Security Risk

As the saying goes, if the product is free, then the product is you. The same goes for software. If your employees use consumer platforms to discuss business matters, you’re at risk of exposing sensitive information, particularly as employee accounts cannot be monitored centrally.

Keep personal and business matters separate: use a dedicated business collaboration platform for all corporate matters.

3. Information Gets Lost

Whilst the risk of accidentally exposing information is very real so is the risk of losing it altogether. When employees use multiple applications, information has a tendency to get lost. After all, it’s hard enough trying to find information stored in your own docs, let alone scour three different platforms.

Losing information disrupts meetings, hinders project progress and makes employees less productive. The fewer platforms they use, the less information is scattered, so they won’t waste time re-tracing their virtual footsteps.

4. Lack of Internal Alignment

When teams use separate collaboration apps, silos start to appear. Working in silos means working independently of other teams/ individuals within the organization, typically as a result of poor cross-functional communication.

This lack of internal alignment can be dangerous. If teams are not communicating, or are just plain difficult to contact, it can be easy to end up heading in different directions. This isn't good news for project work and it can inhibit growth,

What's the Solution?

communication solution

Despite the challenges of using multiple collaboration apps, it's unrealistic to expect total centralization. It's important to recognize that the various teams within your organization have different requirements and this needs to be taken into consideration.

The solution is two-fold. First, endorse a collaboration platform that combines multiple communication methods into one, easy to use interface. This will ensure that the vast majority of employees can communicate using their preferred method, be that video, chat, telephony or mobile, without needing to look to consumer solutions.

Secondly, look for a communications suite that offers interoperability. Open standards technology makes it possible to integrate applications so that they can communicate with each other, reducing the risk of losing information, and forming silos.

Conclusion

The more apps you use, the more challenging it becomes to achieve unified communication across your organization. IT partners must be prepared for mixed environments but try to consolidate where possible to minimize security risks, productivity lulls, and unnecessary costs.

By choosing a multi-channel communications tool such as 3CX, you can avoid the trappings of multiple collaboration apps. Instead, you'll enjoy integrated conferencing, calling, chat, and external communication. 3CX's open standards approach also makes integrating 3rd party applications simple. Have one communications hub for all staff.

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