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WHITE PAPER

Driving Productivity and Business Outcomes by Bridging Enterprise-wide Collaboration

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September 2024

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Abstract

Accomplishing big organizational goals—from launching a new product, to enhancing customer retention and growth, to identifying and exploiting new market opportunities—requires effective coordination from many teams across the organization. But cross-functional collaboration is challenging, and its complexity is only increasing with today's dynamic, distributed work environment. A major reason for those challenges: Organizations continue to amass more project management and collaboration tools to solve specific problems. But these tools aren't designed to work together. Instead of improving collaboration, this proliferation of tools creates more silos and results in inefficiencies, including constant context switching, limited visibility, lost information, increased workload, and, ultimately, reduced team effectiveness.

Adopting one project management solution across the organization with the breadth of capabilities to support requirements of each department eliminates the friction that hinders cross-functional collaboration and productivity. It also solves many of the critical challenges of organizational misalignment, siloed execution, and operational inefficiencies that delay time to market, increase costs, expand risks, and lead to poor productivity and financial performance.

Introduction: Cross-functional Collaboration Is Critical to Enterprise-wide Success

An organization's performance is fundamentally linked to the effectiveness of its people, specifically in how well multiple, diverse teams come together to deliver on critical strategic goals. As the business environment and competitive pressures grow, collaboration between and among disparate teams now is a critical competitive differentiator, and an increasingly accurate predictor of organizational success.

When collaboration is effective and projects are tightly aligned with overarching goals, organizations benefit from enhanced alignment and visibility across functions and levels. This not only leads to operational efficiencies, such as saving employees time by eliminating manual reporting, status meetings, and other tasks, but also promotes executional effectiveness and greater innovation that leads to more predictable achievement of shared organizational goals. Such organizations benefit from enhanced employee productivity, employee engagement, digital workflows, and data security and privacy, according to research on collaboration from TechTarget's Enterprise Strategy Group (see Figure 1).[1]

However, many organizations struggle with cross-functional collaboration. According to research from Atlassian, a leading supplier of collaboration solutions for software, IT, and business teams, 93% of executives said their teams could deliver similar outcomes in half the time if they collaborated more effectively.[2] This makes investing in people, processes, culture, and technical solutions that improve collaboration across the enterprise a top priority for leadership.

[1] Source: Enterprise Strategy Group Complete Survey Results, *UCaaS Platform Requirements of Hyperconnected Enterprises*, March 2023.
[2] Source: Report: "State of Teams 2024," Atlassian.com, 2024.

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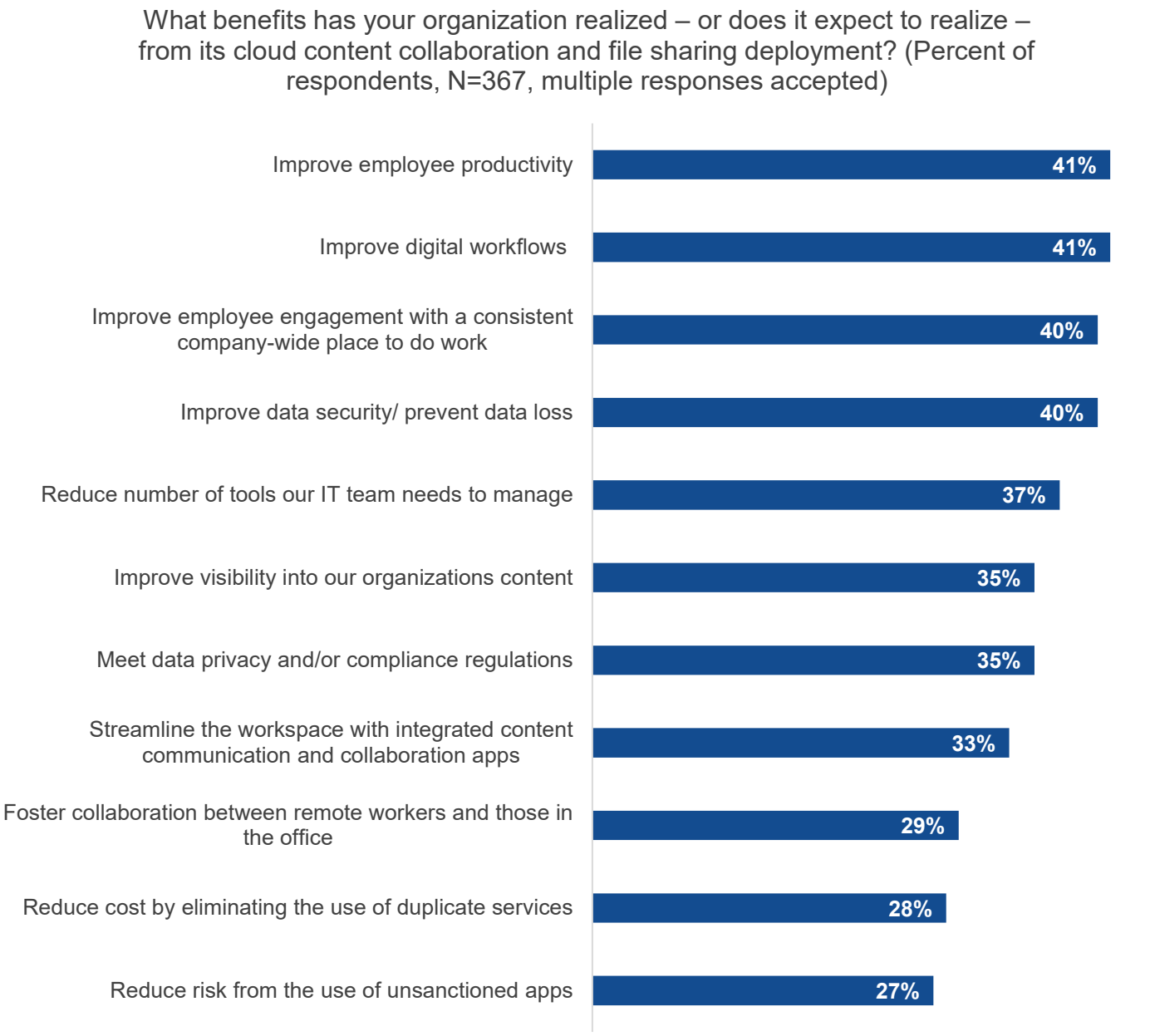
Figure 1. Content Collaboration and File Sharing Have Wide-ranging Benefits

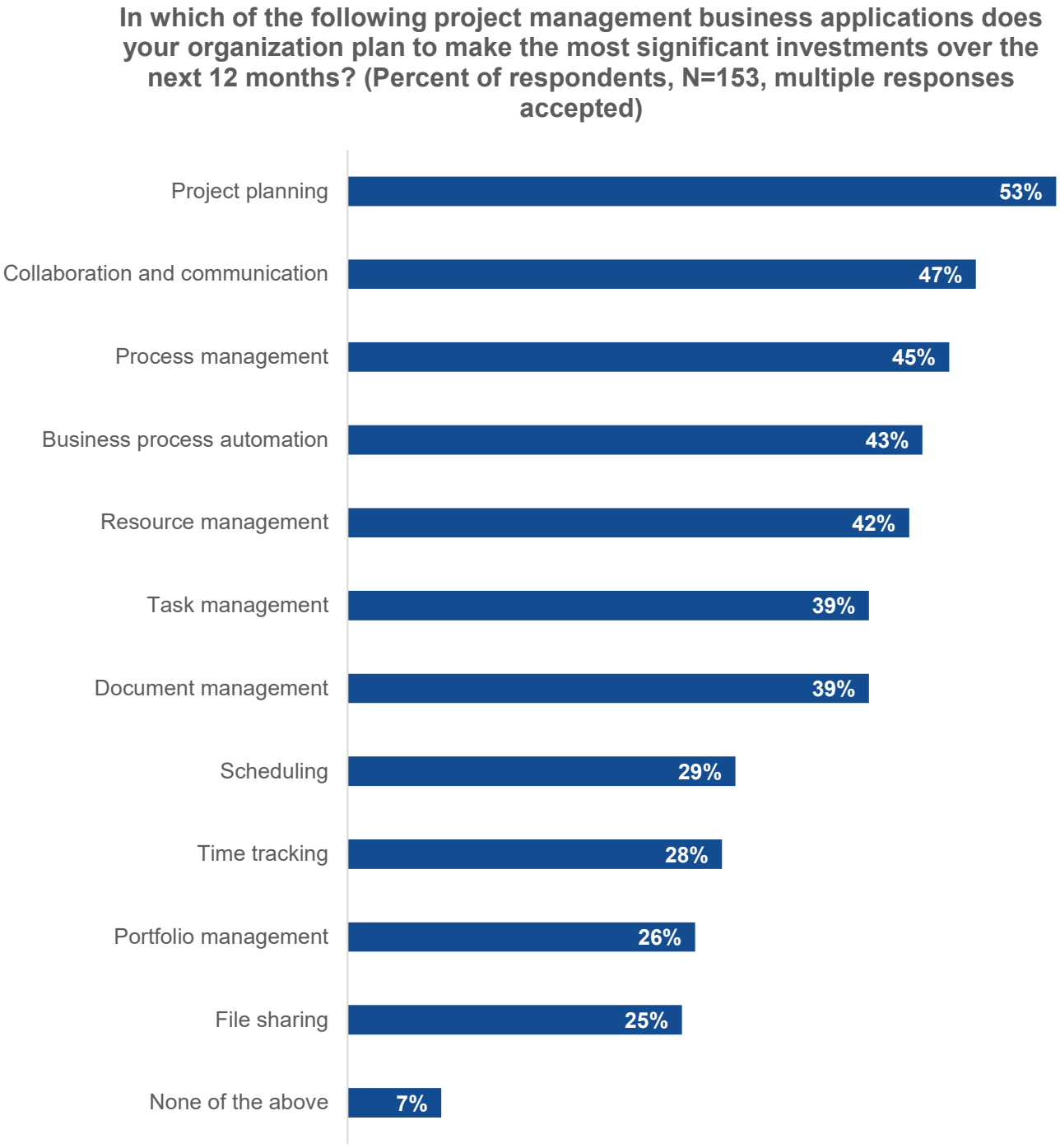


Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, a division of TechTarget, Inc.

With organizational success highly dependent upon effective cross-functional collaboration, research from Enterprise Strategy Group noted that 53% of organizations intend to make significant investments in project management applications in 2024, and 47% intend to make similar investments in collaboration and communication. As companies continue to invest in transforming their workforces, respondents also noted that collaboration technology strategy is heavily influenced by incorporating line-of-business stakeholders' involvement into decision-making (see Figure 2).[3]

[3] Source: Enterprise Strategy Group Complete Survey Results, *2024 Technology Spending Intentions Survey*, February 2024.

Figure 2. Project Planning and Communication are Among the Largest Project Management Investments in 2024



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, a division of TechTarget, Inc.

The Problem: Collaboration Is Becoming Increasingly Complex and Disconnected

Traditional collaboration approaches and technologies are lacking for today's cross-functional execution and project management demands. These challenges are especially prominent in larger, complex organizations where collaboration is hindered by conflicting departmental priorities, a lack of the proper incentives for open teamwork, an over-reliance on meetings, and rigid, top-down approaches to decision-making.

Now, in the face of significant changes in how teams work, such as remote/hybrid work arrangements, the increasingly global nature of collaboration, and the growing need for more customized, real-time information, collaboration is more complicated and work cultures and departmental processes are more disconnected.

"Probably the single biggest impediment to effective cross-functional collaboration is the prolific expansion of collaboration and work management tools that aren't designed to work together."

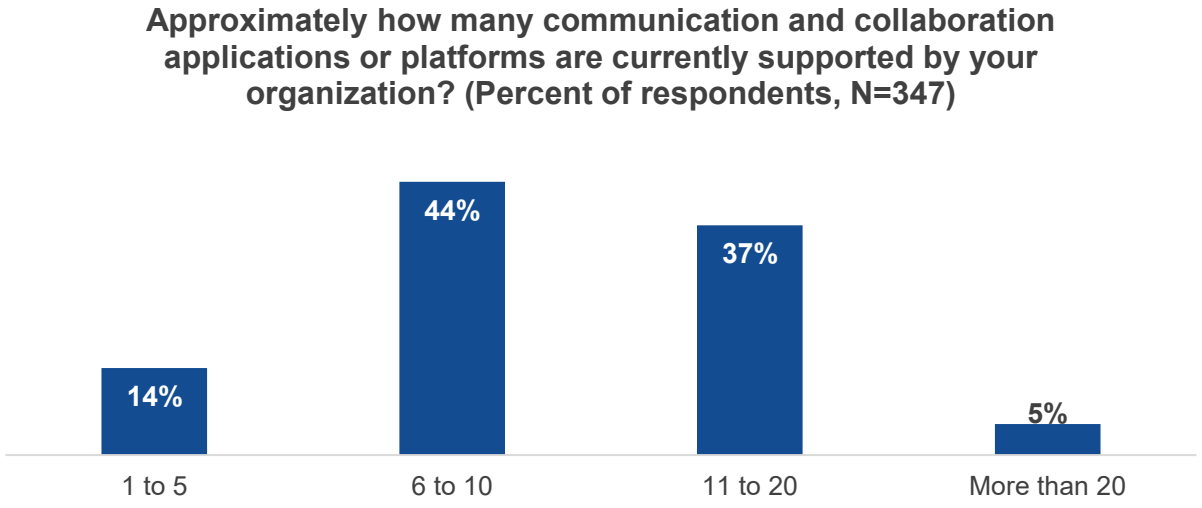
But probably the single biggest impediment to effective cross-functional collaboration is the prolific expansion of collaboration and work management tools that aren't designed to work together. Despite these productivity tools and suites being designed to increase and ease collaboration, these tools often create what they were intended to solve: silos and friction across teams, which hinder the ability to effectively collaborate at scale. With different departments working across distinct applications, employees find that the constant translation of work and information across tools and teams causes inconsistent contexts, lost information, fragmented views of projects, and increased workloads.

Managing teams, projects, tasks, and information in separate spaces introduces collaboration complexity, inhibits decision-making, and makes it more difficult and inefficient for cross-functional teams to achieve their goals. Not only does this impact workforce productivity, but it also leads to higher technology costs, administrative overhead, and security risks.

Research from Enterprise Strategy Group highlighted the problem of tools proliferation in a stark light. According to the research data, 86% of organizations reported there are more than six collaboration tools supported for use in their organization, and 42% of organizations acknowledged they support between more than 11 tools (see Figure 3).[4] Undoubtedly, the actual number of collaboration tools is likely to be even higher, given the hard-to-quantify but undebatable presence of "rogue IT" resulting in the use of unsanctioned tools on an ad hoc basis.

[4] Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, *Unified Communication and Collaboration Integrations for Modern Business Workflows*, February 2023.

Figure 3. 86% of Companies Have 6 or More Communication and Collaboration Platforms



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, a division of TechTarget, Inc.

The pain of poor collaboration is vast among organizations. According to research from Atlassian, 56% of knowledge workers and their organizations' teams plan and track work in different ways. As a consequence of the disconnected workflows and lack of alignment, only 24% of executives said their teams are doing mission-critical work.[5]

Without a central digital workspace to manage all projects and work, collaboration is harder, not easier. Lacking a clear view of the status of different projects and tasks, coordination and delivering work efficiently become challenging at best, and extremely hard to achieve at worst. Teams lack visibility into organizational work and cross-team dependencies, leading to poor handoffs, missed deadlines, and duplicated efforts. The lack of visibility often leads to major communications problems, making it difficult and inefficient in key areas such as identifying risks, addressing bottlenecks, and improving outcomes in a proactive, rather than reactive, manner.

Use of disparate tools also results in teams not working off the same knowledge base, and they might lack essential context for decision-making and effective delivery of work as a result. Furthermore, as data about work, teams, and knowledge lives across different tools, data quality and governance decline. This hinders companies' ability to utilize emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), further undermining their business performance and market competitiveness.

Due to these significant and escalating challenges, cross-functional teams are staring into the face of business complexity marked by lower efficiency, diminished productivity, more confusion, longer time to market, and wasteful spending on multiple, incompatible tools. The lack of visibility between teams and tools is a major source of friction and inefficiency. Team members are overworked and busier than ever—often without commensurate improvements in productivity and business outcomes. The natural conclusions—missed revenue opportunities, escalating costs, and slower market response—not only degrades financial performance, but also demoralizes the workforce. This must be addressed.

[5] Source: Report: "State of Teams 2024," Atlassian.com, 2024.

The Solution: Unify Project Management for Effective Cross-functional Collaboration

Organizations cannot achieve efficient, frictionless cross-functional collaboration when teams use different tools, many of which literally can't talk to each other. That's why foundational to successful collaboration across departments is having a central platform that integrates team members, departments, work, goals, and processes.

One solution is bringing teams together on a single project management platform. This provides a shared space to facilitate seamless, cross-functional collaboration for team members and leaders across departments to plan and track work in connection to each other—something "walled" applications and tools struggle to achieve. This helps teams stay connected to all goals, work, and context, while also providing every team and every team member with the flexibility to work in their preferred manner. With a single project management solution, organizations can promote alignment, efficiency, faster decision-making, and greater performance through:

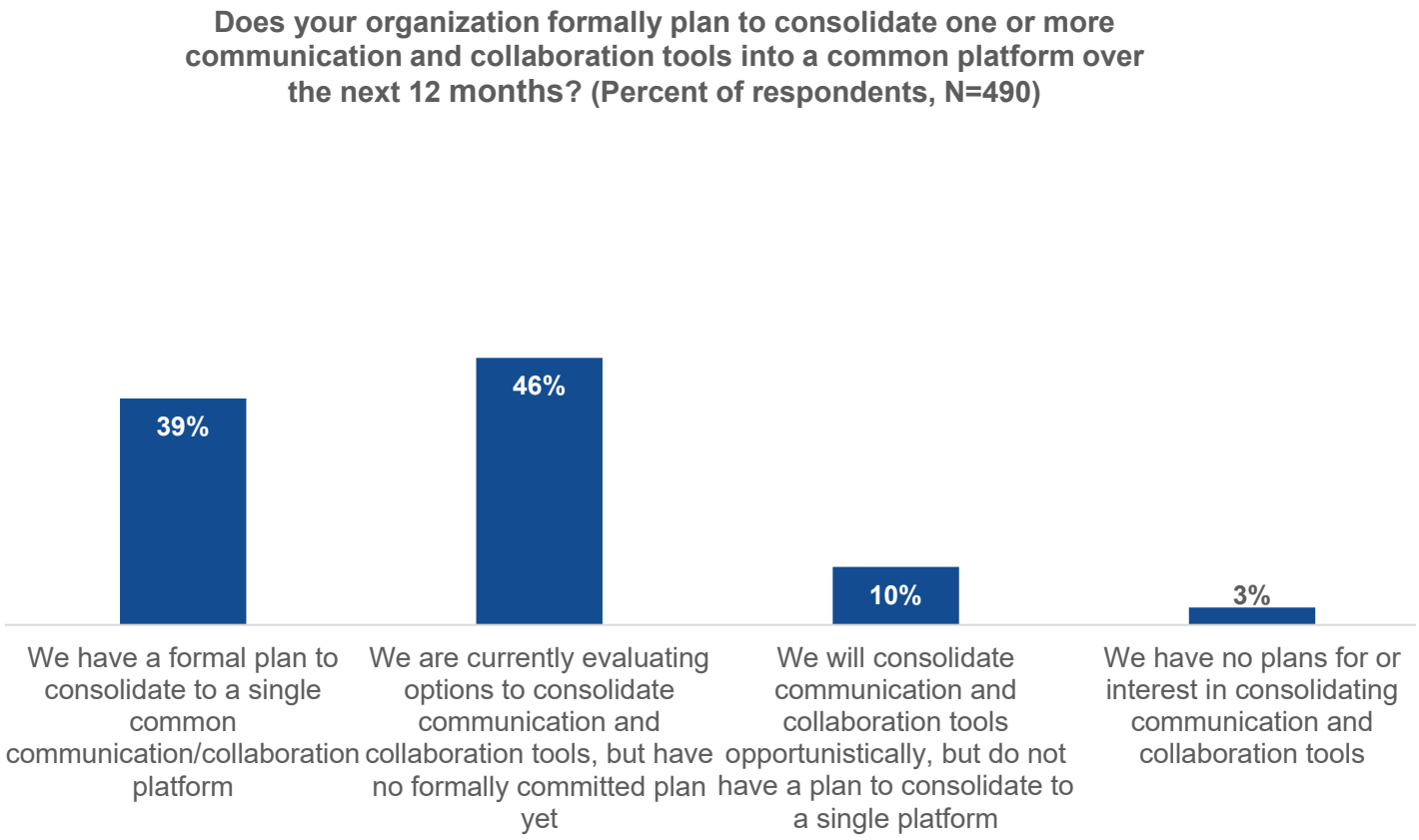
- Greater visibility into all relevant projects, tasks, content, and insights.
- The ability to streamline operations in order to reduce time-to-completion, risks, and bottlenecks.
- Increased cross-functional alignment to improve chances for successful projects.
- End-user productivity, reduced complexity, and a more satisfying user experience.

Standardizing on a single project management solution provides several benefits, including increased end-user productivity, reduced complexity, improved communication and coordination, and a more satisfying user experience. This is done while also enhancing security and eliminating technical and administrative costs. As a result, organizations simplify their processes and workflows by dramatically reducing the need for multiple tools, each with its own dependencies, technical issues, and costs to acquire and manage the tools. It also helps reduce the chances for security breaches that often occur when teams use multiple, disparate tools without a common security framework.

According to Enterprise Strategy Group, 39% of organizations have already consolidated collaboration and communication tools into a single platform, while another 46% are evaluating options to do so (see Figure 4).[6]

[6] Source: Enterprise Strategy Group Research Report, *Challenges in Securing an Overabundance of Communication and Collaboration Tools*, July 2023.

Figure 4. Consolidation of Communication and Collaboration Tools Is Top of Mind for Many Organizations



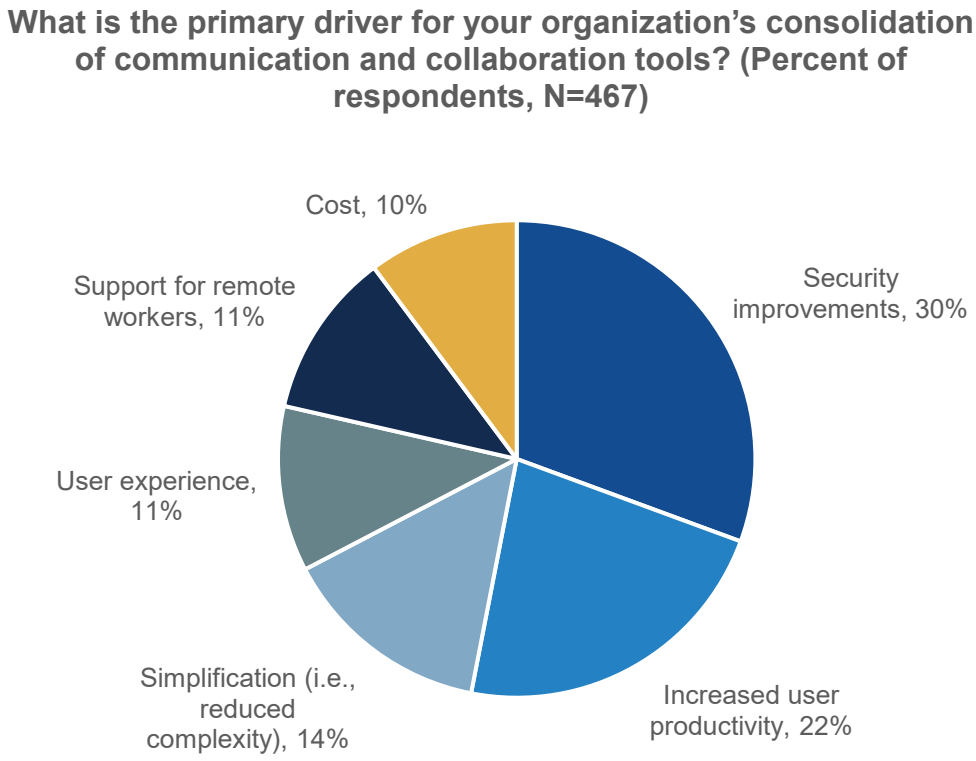
Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, a division of TechTarget, Inc.

The key drivers for this approach included improving security (30%) and increasing user productivity (22%), and this trend is expected to continue (see Figure 5).[7] It's also important to point out that more than one in seven respondents (14%) cited simplification as an essential factor for tools collaboration, a figure that undoubtedly is shaped by the collaboration tools proliferation mentioned earlier in this report.

Other factors also are important catalysts for consolidation, many of which—such as user experience, remote worker support, and cost—also are negatively impacted by the increased usage of disparate, disconnected tools.

[7] Ibid.

Figure 5. Drivers of Consolidation Are Varied, but Mostly Focused on Security and Productivity



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, a division of TechTarget, Inc.

Centralizing teams on a shared project management solution is vital in today's changing and dynamic work environments for several reasons, starting with ensuring that team members have real-time, common access to all relevant and contextually appropriate work data. It also enables integrated workflows that increase the team's ability to work together effectively, and it ensures alignment with organizational goals and priorities while improving information and process transparency essential to build trust and confidence.

With shared project management solutions, organizations support their employees by enabling capabilities that:

- **Align work to goals.** By clarifying organizational goals and connecting those goals to all contributing work, teams prioritize the most important work in alignment with cross-functional colleagues. When work and goals are in alignment, teams become motivated to proactively communicate progress within and outside of the group because communication is seamless and part of organizational workflows.
- **Continuously plan and track work in a single environment across all participating teams.** With a central place where all work is broken down into tasks, timelines, and is connected to goals, teams, and individuals, everyone can see and be notified when milestones, dates, or goals change. It's far easier to understand roles and responsibilities, dependencies, and risks across workflows, projects, and programs without additional status updates and meetings. With tasks and workflows centralized, repetitive activities can be automated to further improve operational efficiencies.

- **Have all information on hand.** When everyone has access to the required information, documentation, and context, and is operating with the same knowledge, team members can deliver on their work more effectively and with less need for rework. With shared understanding, teams can focus on their core work by eliminating context-switching and wasted time searching for and sharing information.
- **Make decisions with a full view of work.** Having end-to-end visibility into the status of projects, the group's priorities, and all relevant work and documentation is key to helping teams plan and act in lockstep. It also provides leaders and team members with insights to navigate strategic decisions, proactively mitigate operational risks across teams and functions, promote accountability, and recalibrate to optimize outcomes.

When teams benefit from each of these capabilities, they achieve the critical goal of process excellence. By standardizing ways of working together, teams become more efficient, operate in a frictionless manner, and save the organization time and money. Also, by improving and modernizing processes, cross-functional teams are set up not only to deliver short-term improvements, but also to scale those improvements over the long haul.

Empower Enterprise-wide Collaboration and High-performing Teams With Jira From Atlassian

Atlassian's Jira is a leader in project management solutions, empowering teams to collaboratively plan and track work with greater coordination, visibility, and insights. Jira was a widely used agile project management tool among software teams before it was increasingly adopted by additional business teams such as marketing, legal, program management, operations, and finance. Atlassian has continued to invest in Jira's goal and project management capabilities in order to support business team use cases, and it is powered by the Atlassian platform's automation, intelligence, and analytics. Its cross-functional collaboration capabilities are further enhanced by native integrations with Atlassian's Confluence for content collaboration and knowledge management, Loom for asynchronous video collaboration, and is extensible by thousands of applications from the Atlassian Marketplace. This makes it a single platform configurable for a wide range of use cases.

Through its breadth and depth of work planning and tracking features, async and multiplayer collaboration, automation, and reporting, Jira enables teams to properly align the solution with their own unique organizational requirements across job function, company size, and organizational complexity. It supports simple projects to complex, enterprise-wide programs, while remaining flexible enough to support unique customizations.

Jira's unified project management collaboration capabilities include:

- **Streamlining work planning and tracking at multiple levels**. Jira helps align work to goals across all teams and levels of the organization. It provides multiple ways to customize, structure, and standardize work data across global and local custom fields, task types, and work hierarchy. With structured workflows tied to work items and aggregate views of multiple projects, it supports better cross-team planning at all levels. Its AI capabilities drive further efficiencies by helping transition unstructured work into structured plans.
- **Cross-team collaboration and alignment.** Jira acts as a central hub for collaboration across teams and functions. Common user profiles make it easy to identify, tag, or assign work to a team or specific members. Shared timelines connect projects across functions, and multi-player collaboration in project views and cross-project sharing make it easy to collaborate and align project work across teams. Async collaboration and content collaboration are embedded into workflows, powered by Loom and Confluence. This makes it easy to share and communicate work updates, and then bring actions back into Jira using AI.
- **Automation.** Jira offers nearly limitless no-code or natural language workflow automations across the platform; it uses third-party tools to auto-assign tasks, create pre-filled sub-tasks and send updates in messaging applications to inform stakeholders. It can use AI to create automated rules with natural language, provide templates for project and plan setup, and assist in reassigning work as it progresses through workflows.

- **Organization-wide visibility, reporting, and dashboards**. Jira offers an intuitive, flexible interface for building custom dashboards and reports pulled from Jira projects and connecting to third-party databases like Amazon, Snowflake, and Google. Users can comment and tag others in dashboards, set up email subscriptions for custom feeds and reports, and embed dashboards across Atlassian products to better surface up-to-date insights across the organization.
- **Scaling operations.** Jira offers rich enterprise features and supports more than 50,000 users with unlimited work items, projects, storage, plans, and multiple instances under one license. It includes project archiving, IP allow-listing, admin insights for forecasting, release tracks for controlled updates, advanced dependency management, and project approvals. It provides granular customizations for complex workflows and out-of-the-box templates.

These and other capabilities were highlighted in Enterprise Strategy Group's analysis of Atlassian's work management solutions, including Jira. The analysis noted major economic benefits such as:

- Increase in project success rate by 31%, from an average of 57% to 75% using Atlassian's solutions.
- Gaining back time for high-impact work by cutting the time needed to search for information by about 50%.
- Increased completion time by 35%, leading to a 10% improvement in the number of projects supported annually.
- Faster time to value for new employees by 40%.
- Integrating with other relevant tools more seamlessly.

Specifically, Enterprise Strategy Group concluded that Jira and other work management applications in Atlassian's integrated platform delivered potential financial benefits of approximately $20 million for a hypothetical 2,500-person organization with an average of 700 employees involved in active project-based collaboration.[8]

In a real-world example, social media giant Reddit significantly enhanced enterprise-wide collaboration by moving away from multiple legacy tools to a more platform approach with Jira and Confluence, also a part of Atlassian's work management platform. "We're saving over $300,000 per year by moving from other tools to Jira and Confluence," noted Matt Chester, a Reddit system engineer involved in designing and delivering cross-functional solutions for the company. He added, "Disparate tooling takes a lot of extra work for both users and admins. So, by shifting people into the same tools with some of the same frameworks, it becomes a lot easier."

Finally, the Reddit team pointed out, "Teams love how all the tools are connected. Cross-functional teams have found it easier to work with developers and technical teams in Atlassian because they don't have to switch tools," he added. "By centralizing tooling, they can now work in one place, see metrics about their work, and make it easier for people to interface with them. It's driving a lot of the business, and it's just easier when everyone is in Atlassian."

[8] Source: Enterprise Strategy Group Economic Validation, *Analyzing the Economic Benefits of Improving Work Management With Atlassian*, January 2024.

Conclusion

Effective cross-functional collaboration has never been more important; it is a core competency nearly every kind of organizations needs to invest in. At the same time, cross-functional collaboration has become harder—not easier—with increasingly dynamic work environments and the dramatic expansion of different tools used for team collaboration and work management. But these tools have failed on a key requirement: helping teams across departments work efficiently, effectively, and in alignment with each other and organizational priorities.

Connecting teams and their work fosters collaboration, alignment, and visibility across the workforce, and can transform organizations. However, it cannot be achieved when teams are walled off in planning, tracking, and collaborating on their work using disconnected tools. In order to overcome the growing complexity and inefficiency in cross-functional collaboration, teams need processes and tools that drive end-to-end visibility, organic communications, and streamlined workflows.

By creating the systems for better enterprise-wide collaboration—facilitated by a single project management platform that supports departments across the entire organization—businesses can maximize productivity, project success, and business performance. Such a solution helps align work with goals, plan and track work across teams in a single environment, incorporate documentation and context into workflows, and achieve process excellence.

Atlassian's Jira solution is uniquely engineered to facilitate enterprise-wide collaboration by offering an integrated-platform approach for a shared project management solution across all departments. This helps organizations streamline project execution, while empowering all teams and team members across functions to contribute to successful projects and business performance.

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