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PORTFOLIO: ENTERPRISE COLLABORATION TOOLS

Enterprise Collaboration Tools: 8 Ways to Achieve More Value

In Forrester's [introduction to their Enterprise Collaboration Playbook](#), it states, "Many of today's collaboration technology initiatives fall well short of their transformational potential." While many view collaboration as a critical tool, most enterprises are at the early stage of learning how to implement it effectively. Here are eight tips you can use to achieve more value from your collaboration initiatives.

Putting Collaboration into Perspective

If collaboration requires such careful implementation, why bother? [Consider the following statistics](#):

- Employees spend 38 percent of their time duplicating work
- Over half of workers (58 percent) waste approximately one hour per day looking for information
- Over 80 percent of workers, educators and executives blame workplace failures on a lack of collaboration
- In an average 40-hour work week, workers spend 28 hours writing emails, searching and coordinating with others within their organization
- On average workers waste six weeks per year looking for lost documents

These frightening statistics make it obvious that acquiring and ensuring the adoption of collaboration tools is a vital part of maintaining your enterprise's competitive advantage. The issues discussed below will help you get the most from collaboration tools.

1. Design Collaboration Tools around Real World Requirements

Start by finding out how collaboration can streamline business processes in your enterprise. When you can communicate how collaboration will reduce effort and increase access to information, you'll be able to [pinpoint the specific collaboration strategies](#) you'll need to develop. Make sure that you align proposed collaboration tools with your business needs.

2. Communicate Your Strategies

Employees need to understand the strategy around business goals such as collaboration. With that information, they [feel more comfortable about using the collaboration tools](#) and know what level of information they can share using the tools.



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3. Communicate Appropriate Collaboration Behavior

When management defines their expectations about how collaboration will work, employees will follow their lead. Provide examples of successful collaborations. If you're not sure how to do that, take the time to create those scenarios.

Keep in mind that collaboration isn't just about new technology. Collaboration will change the way that employees work and who they work with. Without a vision of what collaboration means, individual employees must go through their own learning curve. Not only that, but they may come to different conclusions about how to use collaboration tools, which will cause frustration and reduce productivity.

4. Get Employee Input

As IT rolls out collaboration tools, get input from employees. Find out if the tools are helping them, making their work easier, helping them to reduce wasted time, and more. A great initial use of collaboration tools is to use them to collaborate with employees to fine tune a collaboration landscape.

5. Make Collaboration Tools Part of Business Processes

This is another way to help your employees incorporate communication tools into their workflow. Employees set adrift with collaboration tools are typically too close to their workflow to identify accurately all the places where collaboration would be a benefit.

Your collaboration strategy needs to include [updating processes and procedures to include use of collaboration tools](#). Especially in the early stages, this will give employees the roadmap they need to integrate those tools into their daily activities.

6. Promote Closer Team Relationships

Your employees coordinate their activities now, even if they aren't using technology to do it. However, that [doesn't necessarily mean that they're functioning as a team of collaborators](#). During implementation, arrange for people who will be collaborating using the technology to meet. Have each person explain their role in the process.

Meetings like that usually experience one or more situations where someone says something like, "Ah, so *that's* why you're always bugging me for the status update report." When team members appreciate the role each person plays, they're much more likely to come together as collaborators.

7. Rethink Departmental Boundaries

Collaboration technology will make it possible to [accomplish goals in different ways](#), in addition to streamlining existing processes. As your enterprise moves toward a new mindset about the best way to



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get things done, you may find that you need new ways to locate talent internally. You may also find that you're using that talent in different ways.

For example, an analyst in accounting traditionally spends their time working within the accounting department. However, if there is a large call for that type of expertise to get projects completed more quickly, you may need to change your mindset.

Perhaps you need to assign an analyst as a corporate resource, which will free them to contribute to a variety of teams as part of their process. It may end up making more sense to do that rather than having the core team bring the project to a specific level of completion, and then "turn it over" to the accounting department for their input.

8. Monitor Adoption and Results

Monitoring adoption and results needs to happen at an enterprise level. You need to know:

- If employees are using the collaboration technology effectively
- If the results you predicted in your business case are realized

Reaching a seamless integration of collaboration technology into your work environment will require continuous improvement. You'll need regular feedback on the results of the project in order to drive that improvement.

Final Thoughts

Corporate agility is a crucial component of remaining competitive in today's business environment. Enterprise collaboration can help your organization keep or improve that competitive edge, which should put collaboration technology and its use at the top of your priorities list.