Crushing Collaboration Clouds in the Work-From-Home Era

Cloud-enabled collaboration offers unique advantages. Here's how to get collaboration clouds right.

Chris Driggers
Pivot Collaboration
Practice Director

In the months following the emergence of the coronavirus, use of workplace collaboration tools exploded: Cisco Webex® by 600%, Zoom by 350%, Microsoft® Teams™ by 300%, and Slack® by 200%.[1]

But for many workers, digital collaboration has already become a way of life. In fact, 58% use real-time messaging tools daily, and 45% are on social media every day.[2] It's no wonder investment in collaboration clouds is surging. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1: Investing in Collaboration Clouds

Cloud collaboration market, projected compund annual growth rate, 2019 - 2025[3] — **13%**

Workplace collaboration applications, projected spending growth, 2018 - 2023[4] — **2X**

Cloud-based web conferencing, projected spending growth, 2020[5] — **25%**

Enterprises traditionally managed collaboration tools in their data center. But this on-premises approach involves the high overhead of upfront licensing, configuration, and ongoing management of security and upgrades.

What's more, "it fails to keep up with the changing way people work," says Chris Driggers, Collaboration Practice director for Pivot. "Employees are no longer tethered to their desks. They need to work on mobile devices and away from the office."

These drivers have organizations looking to collaboration clouds. The potential advantages are twofold:

1. Reduced cost, time, and effort for hardware, software, and infrastructure management

2. Better collaboration experiences for employees and customers

But to succeed, you should understand how cloud-enabled collaboration can benefit your unique business environment. You also need the right strategy to achieve positive collaboration-cloud return on investment.

PIVOT
Powering the Digital Journey

Cloud-Centered Teamwork Gets the Job Done

Collaboration tools first and foremost benefit employee teams. "Human connection is a big part of daily work life," Driggers points out. "If employees are working remotely and don't have a way of connecting personally, they aren't as effective." In fact, collaboration promises better business results across several measures. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 2: Collaboration Outcomes

Enterprises with collaborative and intelligent work environments are projected to achieve...

⬆ 30% Higher productivity

⬆ 30% Higher revenue per employee

⬇ 30% Lower staff turnover

...than their peers by 2024.[6]

The easiest-to-consume cloud-based collaboration tool is videoconferencing. It gives workers face-to-face interactions with one another and with customers. That can be crucial to teamwork, problem-solving, and innovation. And it's an imperative for salespeople interacting with clients. "Talk to anyone in sales, and they'll tell you that being able to interpret a prospect's facial expressions and body language is huge," Driggers says.

Other collaborative-cloud solutions include productivity suites such as Microsoft 365® and Google G Suite™. These tools enable document sharing and collaborative content creation. And because they're consumed in the cloud, they offer a consistent experience across devices and locations.

Collaboration clouds can also leverage emerging technology such as artificial intelligence (AI). Facial recognition, for example, can identify participants in a teleconference and display relevant information. Bots can take notes, identify action items, and make recommendations. "Collaboration AI requires heavy compute power that would be cost-prohibitive for most companies to maintain on-prem," Driggers points out. "The cloud makes AI viable."

All Together Now

The key is simplicity and ease of use, Driggers believes. "Cloud-enabled consistency across devices is less frustrating and more productive for employees," he says. "It also eases the burden of administration. You can do away with legacy connections like virtual desktops and VPN connections."

The healthcare industry offers a good example. Healthcare providers tend to be conservative when it comes to technology changes, Driggers says. They focus on their mission of serving patients, need to meet the requirements of many stakeholders, and need to comply with stringent regulations.

But when COVID-19 hit, the cloud enabled them to respond fast. "Pivot worked with several hospital systems to implement cloud-based telemedicine solutions," Driggers reports. "The solutions are allowing providers not only to see more patients but also to enable easier staff collaboration, quickly bring in remote medical expertise, and securely share patient information." Results include better customer experiences that can extend to better patient outcomes.

Collaboration clouds can benefit customers across industries. Consumers can interact with your contact center through voice, email, chat, bots, callback options, and self-service options. Those tools are enabled by the cloud, which also ties together the various applications agents use to provide customer service. The software recognizes the customer across channels, because it's all integrated in the cloud.

Combine and Conquer

For organizations that want to transition to collaboration clouds, Driggers recommends beginning with a thorough examination of existing software. "If you've already invested heavily in on-prem tools, you don't want to throw that investment away," he says.

That could mean starting with a smaller cloud-based implementation that augments existing capabilities with cloud-only features. "The focus in that case would be on close integration with your current functionality," Driggers notes.

Next, create a road map to future cloud capabilities. "Plan where you want to be in six, 12, and 18 months," Driggers advises. "Your goal should be to move progressively toward the cloud's advantages." The good news, he says, is that collaboration providers recognize the trend toward the cloud, so they've enabled integrations that smooth the path.

Recent research suggests that one-quarter of organizations now plan to move at least 20% of their workforce offsite permanently.[7] Says Driggers: "With a remote workforce of that size, collaboration clouds are here to stay."

> ## Collaboration AI requires heavy compute power that would be cost-prohibitive for most companies to maintain on-prem.

Learn more about collaboration clouds and digital operations.

Pivot delivers best-in-class information technology services and solutions to help leading organizations optimize infrastructures, improve business processes, lower costs, and achieve strategic objectives. Our client-first approach combines leading-edge technology with expert design, rapid implementation and integration, and best-practice methodologies, powering digital transformation from the cloud to the edge to the workplace. To learn how Pivot can help you drive results, visit www.pivotts.com.

1 "Use of Cloud Collaboration Tools Surges, and So Do Attacks," CSO, May 2020.
2 "Gartner Says Worldwide Social Software and Collaboration Revenue to Nearly Double by 2023," Gartner, September 2019
3 "Cloud Collaboration; Market Analysis, Trends, and Forecasts," Research and Markets, February 2020
4,5 "Gartner Says Worldwide Social Software and Collaboration Revenue to Nearly Double by 2023," Gartner, September 2019
6 "Collaboration Takes on New Importance as COVID-19 Pandemic Underlines Critical Need for Robust Connectivity," IDC, April 2020
7 "Gartner CFO Survey Reveals 74% Intend to Shift Some Employees to Remote Work Permanently," Gartner, April 2020

PIVOT

Powering the Digital Journey

www.pivotts.com | 866.477.6797