

# Team Collaboration: The Foundation for a Digital-First Workplace

*Success comes from a platform-centric approach*

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## Executive Summary

Successfully supporting the future of work requires providing employees with the ability to communicate and collaborate internally and externally, regardless of location, in the context of work activities. Team collaboration platforms help meet these needs by enabling application and data integrations to optimize internal, business-to-business, and customer-facing workflows. This approach lets organizations realize quantifiable benefits by adopting team collaboration as a hub for work, rather than as a standalone messaging app.

The end result is that successful team collaboration adopters are able to achieve demonstrable Return-on-Investment (ROI) from collaboration. Measurable benefits include productivity gains from improving workflows, cost savings via workforce optimization, and revenue increases from improved internal and partner sales support. Based on data Metrigy recently gathered from 476 end-user organizations, this report provides IT and business leaders with insight into how best to leverage a platform-based team collaboration approach to achieve quantifiable business benefit.

We recommend that IT leaders:

1. Embrace team collaboration as the new hub for work, extending team collaboration platforms to all employees, including frontline workers and customer service agents
2. Integrate applications and data into team spaces enabling contextual interaction around tasks, events, and information
3. Extend team collaboration capabilities, via federation, beyond company boundaries to optimize Business-to-Business (B2B) and Business-to-Consumer (B2C) workflows
4. Take advantage of emerging capabilities to secure team spaces and to meet governance, compliance, and security requirements
5. Enable employees to automate and optimize their own workflows via low-code and no-code tools within team collaboration platforms
6. Leverage team collaboration platforms to enable employee interaction to support community building and maintenance of culture.

## Meeting the Next Generation Digital Work Requirements

The global COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in permanent changes to how and where people work. Of the 476 participants in Metrigy’s global *Workplace Collaboration 2021-22* research study, based on data gathered in December of 2020 and January of 2021, 87% of employees now work from home either full or part-time. More importantly, just 12.4% of participating organizations plan to bring employees back to the office on a full-time basis once it is safe to do so: More than 83% expect that employees will either work fully at home, or will split their time between home and office.

This new reality has created an imperative for business and IT leaders to adopt tools that enable secure virtual collaboration, internally and externally, regardless of employee, partner, and customer location.

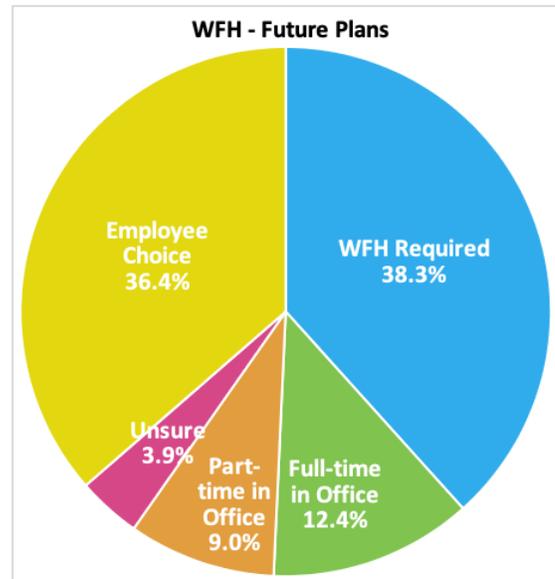


Figure 1: WFH - Future Plans

## Team Collaboration as the Platform for Work

Team collaboration platforms that integrate messaging, data, application access, and both off-the-shelf and custom integrations have emerged as a core requirement for supporting the future of work. When properly implemented, team collaboration platforms provide measurable ROI by reducing operational costs, increasing revenue, and improving productivity. Today, more than 60% of companies have adopted team collaboration applications, a number that will grow to nearly 68% by the end of 2021. (Please see Figure 2.)

Successfully adopting team collaboration applications isn’t as simple as just rolling them out and hoping for positive results. Rather, a successful approach requires that team collaboration deployments support work locations and styles, enable benefits beyond simply improving internal collaboration, and meet or exceed requirements for security, governance, and compliance, and that users are empowered to leverage team collaboration features to optimize their workflows.

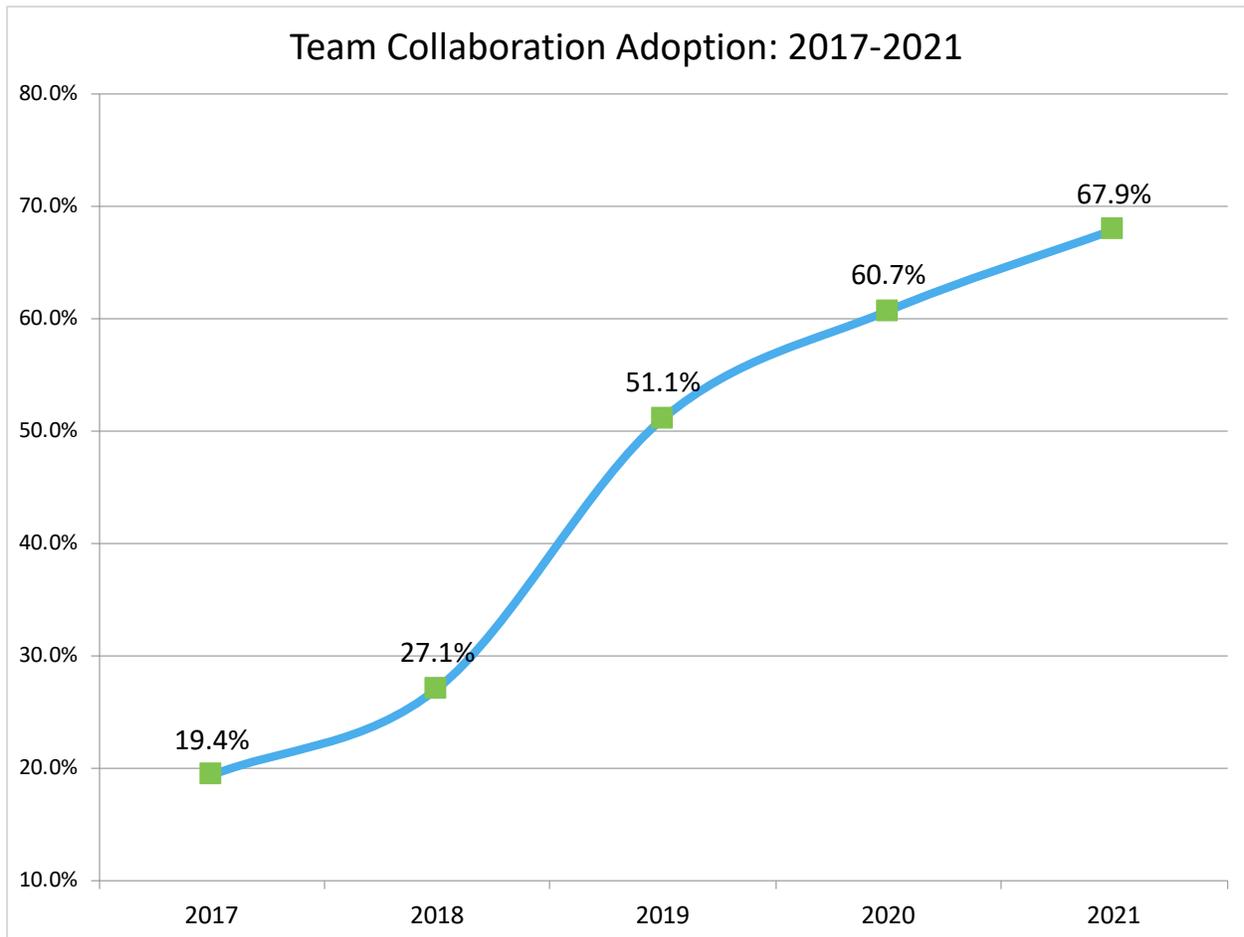


Figure 2: Team Collaboration Adoption: 2017-2021

## Team Collaboration Benefits

Team collaboration platforms break down the silos that separate applications as well as departmental workflows. Key features and their benefits include:

1. Contextual channels or workspaces established to support specific activities, such as projects, teams, or initiatives. Channels enable employees to know the topic of conversation and associated information, easily get up to speed on past discussions when joining a channel, and consolidate all communications into a single place, eliminating the need for frequent app switching.
2. Integrations enabling convergence of data and applications. For example, a sales channel could receive automated notifications from the CRM platform related to an opportunity, allowing all individuals involved with a sales process to collaborate around the next steps required to advance the proposal, with easy access to relevant documents, history, and customer data. Integrations may be off-the-shelf, allowing administrators to easily add frequently used tools or vital capabilities to team spaces, or they may be implemented via APIs.

- Automation of workflows via low- or no-code capabilities. End-users can create their own optimized and automated workflows via simply drag-and-drop tools. For example, a manager who must approve an expense report can use a graphical workflow builder, without any coding, to automate the process to check to see if the expense is within company guidelines, that it has been pre-approved, and that it is for a specific allowable item and then automatically approve the expense without having to go through a manual process. All workflow takes place in a channel specific for expense approval.

Beyond these core capabilities, team collaboration platforms enable consistent enforcement of governance policies to ensure security and compliance, the ability to extend team collaboration channels beyond company boundaries, and increasingly, the ability to leverage platform knowledge to enable individuals to search and out build connections with coworkers in similar roles or with similar interests.

### Achieving Team Collaboration Success

A key way of measuring the benefit of team collaboration applications is in evaluating their return on investment, and their ability to provide demonstrable improvements in productivity. About 35% of organizations have already measured some benefit from their team collaboration investments, with the biggest gains being reduction in meetings, cost savings, and revenue increases. Figure 3 below shows average measured benefits for those who have analyzed their ROI or productivity improvements associated with their team collaboration investment.

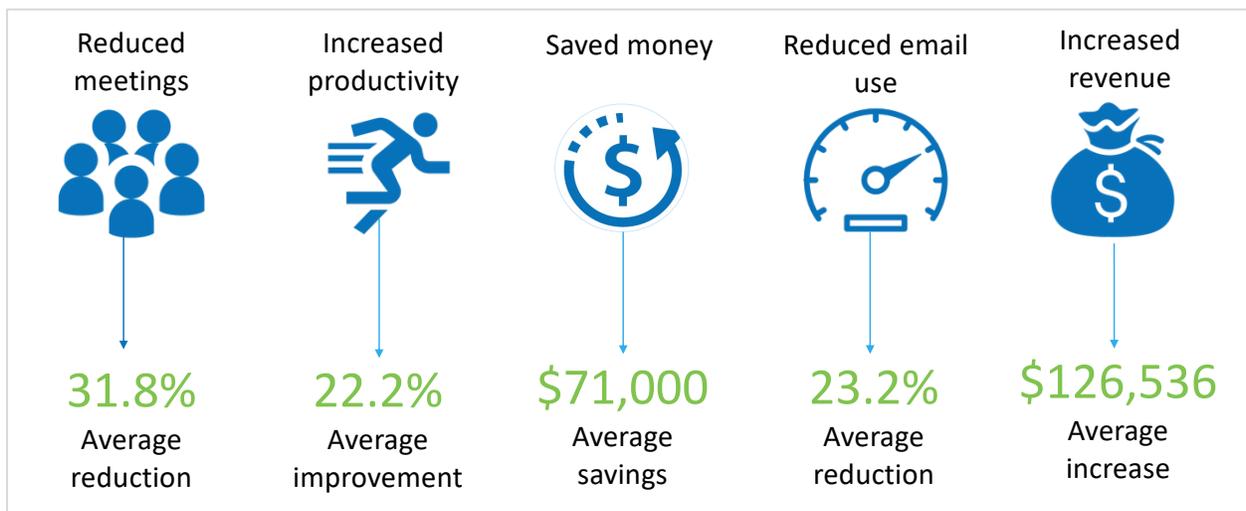


Figure 3: Team Collaboration Benefits

Those with the highest realized benefit shared several similar characteristics, including the following:

### Enterprise-Wide Roll-outs

Among companies in Metrigy’s success group (defined as those with the highest ROI and/or productivity gains for their team collaboration investment), 65% of employees are actively using team collaboration now compared to 50% of employees in those with no, or low, ROI or productivity gain. By the end of 2021, we project that 76% of employees in successful organizations will actively use team collaboration, compared to just 60% in the non-success group.

Adoption varies by primary team collaboration platform in use. Slack customers typically see the largest percentage of employees actively using team collaboration, while Google Chat users see the most limited.

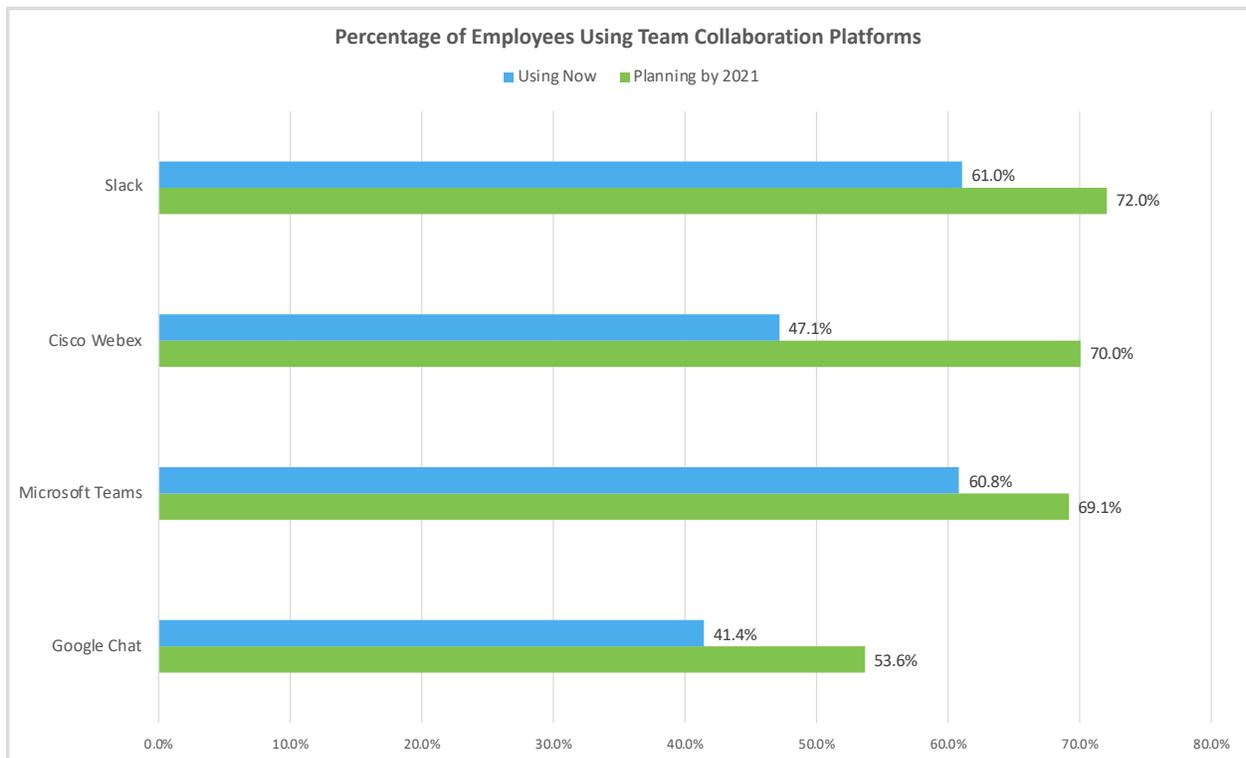


Figure 4: Percentage of Employees Using Team Apps

Ensuring company-wide adoption of team collaboration platforms provides potential benefits to the widest possible audience and enables scenarios including field workers using team collaboration to communicate as necessary with back-office individuals, as well as customer service agents having immediate access to subject matter experts to improve customer responsiveness.

### Viewing Team Collaboration as a Work-Hub

Among our success group, 63% view team collaboration as a work-hub. The work-hub approach means centering on team collaboration as the primary user interface to access all company-

provided collaboration capabilities. In addition, it means integrating team collaboration with other apps and information flows, providing a single place where individuals can interact with each other as well as with data.

For example, integrating project management tools into team collaboration enables project managers and participants working on projects to monitor task completion, and communicate in the context of relevant activities within a team space. Project management tools push updates into team spaces, and employees can provide status updates that are then pushed back into the project management app, eliminating the need for employees to switch between apps. More than 55% of successful companies integrate apps into team collaboration platforms. The most widely integrated apps are shown in Figure 5.

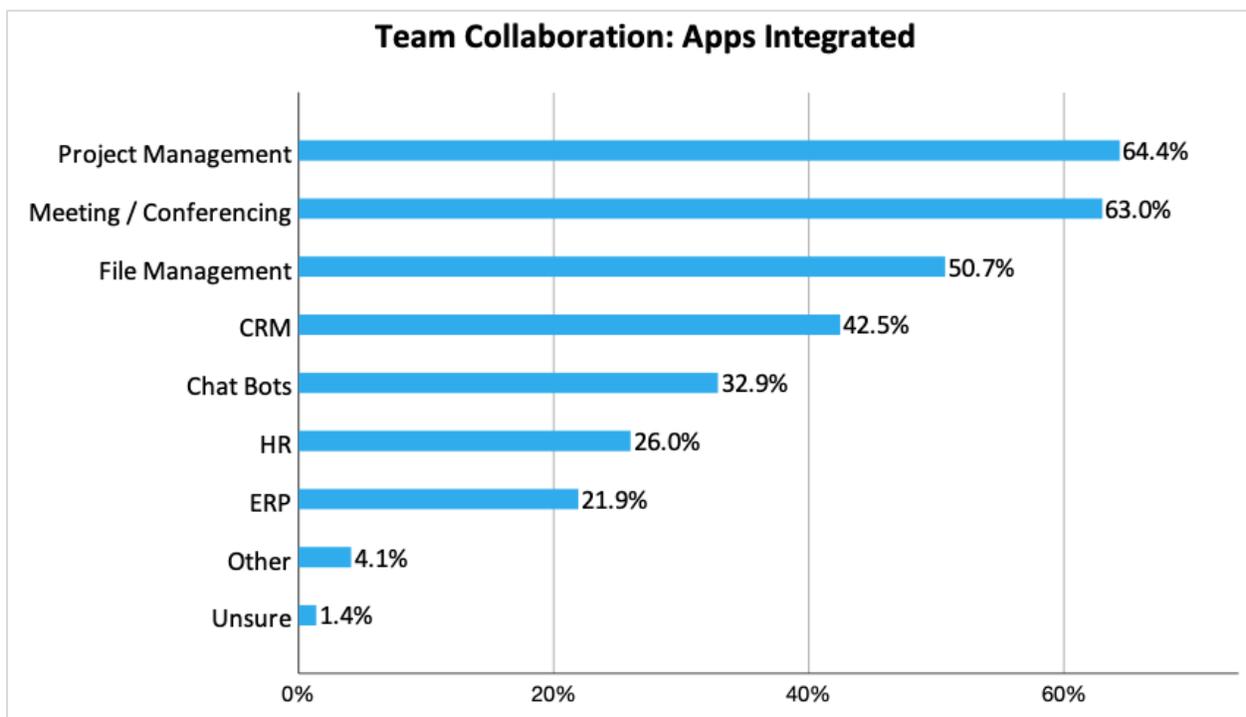


Figure 5: Team Collaboration: Apps Integrated

### Extending Team Collaboration Beyond Company Boundaries

Given the growing nature of distributed work, much of the benefit of team collaboration is lost if companies must resort to email for collaborating with partners, suppliers, and customers. By the end of 2021 more than half of all companies (and 57.1% of our success group) will extend their team collaboration channels externally, either via direct federation or by providing guest access.

Example use cases include creation of shared team spaces for B2B projects, such as construction and supply chain management and software development, as well as persistent customer-facing activities such as financial advising. By leveraging team collaboration platforms for B2B and B2C

collaboration, IT and business leaders can minimize cost and complexity associated with procuring and maintaining separate software applications for these use cases.

Enabling outside individuals to participate in team spaces raises security and data protection requirements. Guest accounts are difficult to manage and may not allow organizations to know if a person with guest access has left the organization that they were in when the guest access was granted. A safer and more secure way to extend team collaboration to external participants is through the federation of team collaboration platforms, allowing each company to control its own data and access. Nearly 62% of successful companies utilize the federation model versus just 14.3% of those with no or low ROI or productivity gain for their team collaboration investment.

### Addressing Security and Governance Needs

Successful companies are more proactive in addressing team collaboration security; almost 66% have a proactive collaboration security strategy compared with 27.6% of those with no or low measured benefit. (Please see Figure 6.)

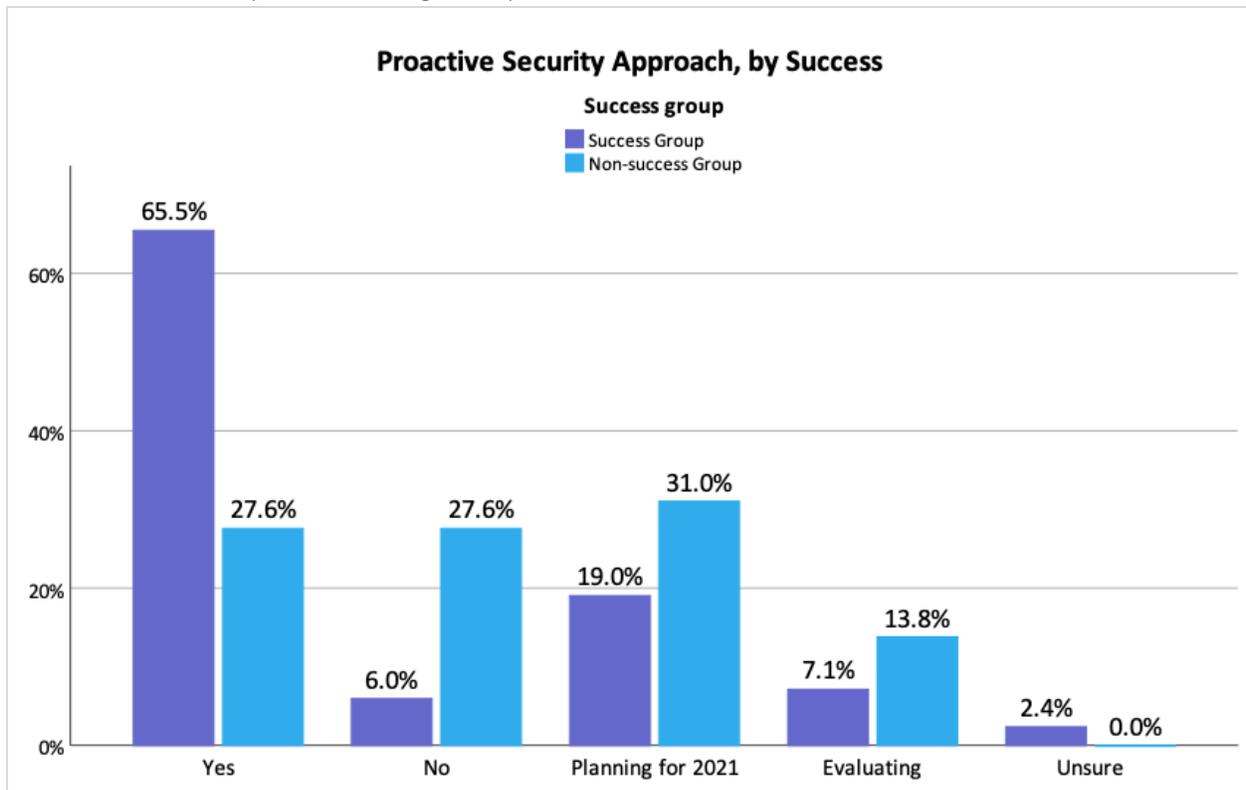


Figure 6: Proactive Security, by Success

A proactive security approach means defining appropriate policies in advance, and then taking advantage of capabilities provided by team collaboration vendors to protect data. These may include:

- End-to-end encryption with enterprise key management

- Mobile device management
- Data export and retention
- Single-sign on and access control
- The ability to set policies governing what can be shared within team collaboration channels.

Successful strategies may also leverage third-party tools for archiving, policy enforcement, and security management.

### *Training Users*

Successful approaches initially focus on teaching users how to manage their workflows within team spaces, how to optimize notifications, and how to take advantage of application integrations. Increasingly, as team collaboration vendors deliver capabilities to optimize and automate workflows, training should include instructing end-users in how to use low-code and no-code tools to build and automate their own specific workflows.

### *Creating Communities and Fostering Culture*

By enabling contextual workspaces, team collaboration platforms can bridge the physical divide associated with remote and hybrid work. Today, 32% of organizations, including 54% of those with the highest measured success for their collaboration investments, leverage their team and other collaboration apps to create communities of interest and hold virtual get-togethers. In the team collaboration space, examples include creation of channels dedicated to non-work activities such as travel, sports, prayer, exercise, and hobbies. These spaces provide a way for employees to engage with one another outside of work, contributing toward building and maintaining corporate culture, and allow individuals to discover others within their organization with similar interests.

### *Conclusions and Recommendations*

Thanks to their ability to integrate applications, data, and communications into contextual workspaces, team collaboration platforms have rapidly emerged as a core requirement for supporting the digital-first work experience. Going forward, team collaboration applications are increasingly enabling workflow automation and optimization. Successful implementations provide demonstrable ROI by reducing operating costs, increasing revenue, and improving productivity. To achieve success, IT leaders should:

1. Embrace team collaboration as the new hub for work, extending team collaboration platforms to all employees, including frontline workers and customer service agents
2. Integrate applications and data into team spaces enabling contextual interaction around tasks, events, and information
3. Extend team collaboration capabilities beyond company boundaries to optimize B2B and B2C workflows

4. Take advantage of emerging capabilities to secure team spaces and to meet governance and security requirements
5. Enable employees to optimize their own workflows via low-code and no-code capabilities within team collaboration platforms
6. Leverage team collaboration platforms for employee interaction, community building, and to foster culture.

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ABOUT METRIGY: Metrigy is an innovative research firm focusing on the rapidly changing areas of Unified Communications & Collaboration (UCC), digital workplace, digital transformation, and Customer Experience (CX)/contact center—along with several related technologies. Metrigy delivers strategic guidance and informative content, backed by primary research metrics and analysis, for technology providers and enterprise organizations.