Software Development Teams and Slack

A Handbook

slack

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A primer on streamlining your work, resolving incidents, and iterating faster with Slack

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The average company loses more than 20% of its productive power to "organizational drag."[1] That includes all the time teams spend digging up requirements, or coordinating on the status of designs, updates, and everything else needed to bring a product to market and keep improving on it in the long run.

This handbook will show you and your team how you can use Slack to keep the development cycle agile and efficient. Work in channels, integrate apps and services you already use, and deploy various Slack features so that everyone can come together quickly, stay on the same page, and spend more time focused on what matters: shipping code and squashing bugs.

[1] Michael Mankins and Eric Garton, Bain & Company, "Time, Talent, Energy," March 7, 2017. http://www.bain.com/publications/business-insights/time-talent-energy.aspx

Use this handbook to learn how to:

01 Get access to key information, experts, and specialists company-wide

02 Review and deploy code from one place

03 Track real-time performance data from multiple systems to resolve issues faster

04 Streamline and automate workflows by connecting to services and platforms you regularly use

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"Development teams using Slack deliver

5% more output overall, *with*

23% faster time to market,

27% less time needed to test and iterate, and

22% faster identification and resolution of engineering-related bugs."

IDC research, sponsored by Slack, The Business Value of Slack, 2017

Get access to information and specialists company-wide

More than just a place to organize conversations, **public channels** automatically create an archive of knowledge that's searchable by everyone in your organization. If you commit to doing most of your work in public channels, when someone needs more information to move forward—like the details of the last release—that information is readily accessible.

It's best to reserve private channels for conversations that are sensitive or confidential and direct messages for quick back-and-forths.
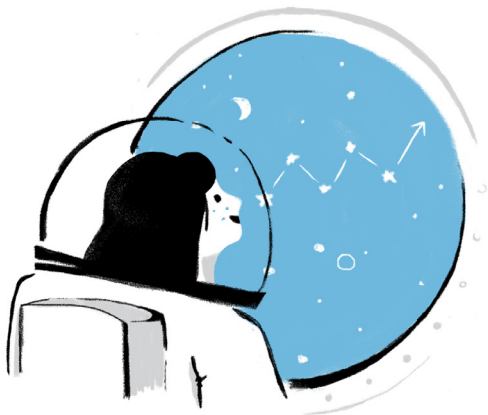
Channel Tips:

- Organize channels by team (**#eng-team** or **#dev-team**); projects, products, and services (**#feat-new-website**); and function (**#jira-notifications, #dev-announcements,** or **#triage-ios**) to keep conversations focused. Start with a few and add more as you go.

- Name channels in a predictable way so they're easier to find, like an index. Prefixes help!

- Keep tabs on conversations by starring important channels so that they're pinned to the top of your sidebar.

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"We have what we like to call an 'end-to-end delivery pipeline' that starts with source code and goes all the way through to production deployment. And now we have Slack integrated into all the key milestones in that process."

Thomas Lawless,
Senior Software Engineer at IBM

Turn alerts into action lickety-split:
Manage code reviews, quash outages, and more in Slack

Whether you need to hash out a set of changes to a pull request or huddle around an urgent alert, with Slack apps and integrations teams can pull notifications from a variety of systems into channels where their discussions are already happening, so everyone can identify potential issues and work through solutions.

Not only does piping system alerts into public channels make it easier for managers and people from other teams to stay updated on progress, but resolving issues as a team in channels creates an automatic, time-stamped audit trail that can be useful in reviews and postmortems. And less juggling between multiple apps and logins means fewer lags in your work day.

Integrating development tools with Slack

Connect these apps and services to your Slack workspace to manage all your build and deploy processes in one place.

GitHub: Post commits, pull requests, and comments on GitHub Issues to a channel in Slack and automatically notify team members when requests have been submitted.

JIRA: Receive notifications on JIRA issue status in Slack, assign work, and follow the team's progress.

Heroku: Post deployment notification to a Slack channel and organize the team around incidents.

PagerDuty: Reduce incident resolution times by aggregating Pagerduty events and getting actionable alerts posted to a Slack channel. Team members can work with one another on triggering, viewing, acknowledging, and resolving incidents right from Slack.

New Relic: Pull web, transaction, server, and mobile alerts from New Relic into a Slack channel.

Bitbucket: Get notified in a Slack channel when code is committed to a repository.

Discover more in the [Developer Tools](#) category of the Slack app directory.

Explore Developer Tools

Tip: Something amiss? [Launch a Slack call](#) and [share control of your screen](#), or add your favorite [video conferencing app](#) to Slack, to work through bug fixes and code reviews together.

Keep teams aligned and processes agile:
Working together in Slack

Now that you've seen how channels, apps and integrations connect you with the people and tools important to your team, let's take a look at how you can bring more of your daily operations into Slack so that team members can support each other in delivering their highest quality work and spotting potential issues before they bubble up.

Create and share code using snippets

Share code, configuration files, and log files by sharing snippets, which works with a variety of programming languages. Team members can download them, view the raw file, and leave comments.
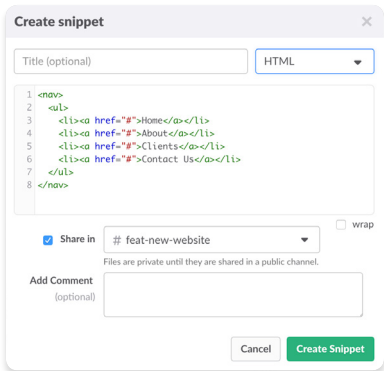
Tip: Launch snippets in a snap by typing ⌘ **+ Shift + Enter (Mac)** or **Ctrl + Shift + Enter (Windows)** and a pop-up window will open right in Slack.

Spare yourselves a meeting: Host standups in Slack

Find out about who's working on what, the status of a project, and any blockers by moving team standups into team channels in Slack where they can be searched for later on. Or why not let an app facilitate? **Busybot** and **Standuply** are both popular options.

> **slackbot** 11:00 AM
> Reminder: **iOS Team Standup**
> Hey @team-ios:
> 1. ◀️ What did you accomplish **yesterday**?
> 2. ▶️ What are you working on **today**?
> 3. 🛑 Do you have any **blockers** or design/decisions needs?
> 4. ⛏️ Are your **JIRA** tickets in the right state? With proper fix version, workflow state, resolution, etc? If not, please take a moment to fix them.

Tip: Set up daily or weekly reminders (**/remind**) for yourself, a user group (**@team-ios**, for example), or an entire channel to share their updates. To keep channels tidy, ask everyone to post their status in a thread. And to make sure everyone provides only the most useful information, be sure to outline a message format for everyone to follow.

Track issues and spot patterns with a triage channel (and emoji)

To maintain quality and stop worrisome trends in their tracks, create dedicated triage channels (like #triage-iosapp) where people from across the organization can report bugs, issues, and irregularities. We recommend assigning a team member as "triage captain" for the day to help field questions and route top-priority issues to the right teams.

Sending signals with emoji.
Emoji add a lot of helpful context to messages in Slack. In the case of triage channels, they can also serve as a diagnostic tool, helping you track trends and see patterns in behavior over time.

🔴 Issue is urgent

🔵 Denotes a question or problem

⚪ Sharing feedback, no immediate action necessary

👀 Looking into this/pending action

✅ Resolved

Build with your team, for your team:
Creating internal integrations

While there are lots of apps available to connect to your workspace, there may be cases where you need to tailor a workflow to your team's needs. And that might mean bringing even more of your tools and data into Slack. Internal integrations help you do just that.
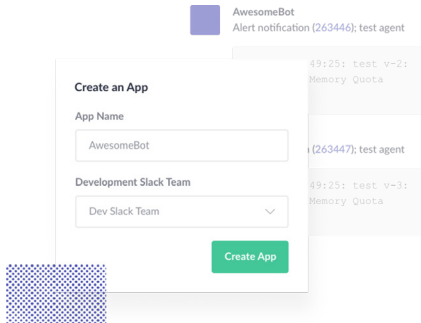
Use internal integrations to combine data from multiple resources into one message, so you can manage devops, deployments, CI, incidents, and even approve wireframes, without ever leaving Slack. Here are some other handy applications.

**A few things you can do with internal integrations:**

- Allow employees to create helpdesk tickets right from Slack.
- Send new employees helpful onboarding resources.
- Publish content to your intranet or website from Slack.
- Send out those TPS reports everyone loves.

Shopify's super Slack apps

The Canadian e-commerce platform operates more than 500,000 online shops. To keep the virtual doors of all these businesses open, their team has created more than 180 internal integrations for Slack. The most popular, "Spy," allows their team to run hundreds of custom commands, like query information about the most active shops, traffic volume and checkouts; inspect and operate servers across data centers; and create new GitHub repositories without ever leaving Slack.
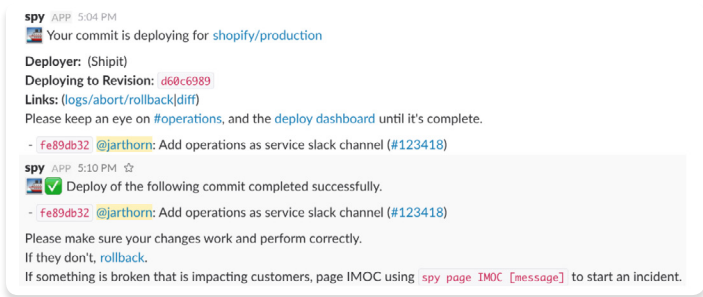
Ready to explore integrations?
Start building at **API.slack.com** and be sure to check out the **app blueprints** for detailed instructions, code samples, and helpful flow diagrams.

What's next?

There's lots to digest in this handbook, so here are a few things your team can do for starters to streamline your workflows, speed up your processes, and make information more accessible across teams.

Checklist:

☑ **Do a little channel clean-up:** Maintaining good channel hygiene is essential for keeping communication between teams and departments crystal clear. Make sure to periodically audit your channel list, archiving ones that are no longer relevant or useful. **Check out these tips for reducing noise in Slack.**

☑ **Rethink your channel names:** Is there a consistent naming convention across all your channels? Are they labelled in a way that makes their purpose obvious? Take some time to rename channels so that they're easy to find and follow. **Learn more about channel naming best practices.**

☑ **Give some apps a whirl:** Connect a few key services that you use often (like your go-to bug-tracking tool) to your team's workspace and try sharing and updating that data directly from Slack. **Explore development tools for Slack.**

For detailed tips and how-tos on organizing channels, working with apps, and more, visit our **Help Center**. Or if you prefer to talk to a human, reach out anytime at **feedback@slack.com** or find us on Twitter **@slackhq**, and we'd be happy to help.