

Small Business Solutions

How Free Technology Can Improve Teamwork

(NAPSA)—If you own or work for a small to midsize business, you're far from alone. Such companies represent 95 percent of all firms and 63 percent of total employment.

Now, many are improving their productivity and collaboration through digital technology.

Managing Growth

Consider this: Many small businesses start with a team of one or two. They experience growth, then change to help them scale. As the company grows in employees, locations or business functions, new challenges surface. No longer can you rely on one or two people to get work done. You need to unlock the power of your team to truly grow and scale.

At the same time, employee buy-in is important for small businesses in particular. With fewer employees, morale has an even greater impact. Ensuring that employees are happy and productive means communicating clearly and keeping everyone in the know. What's more, according to a recent Microsoft survey, new generations entering the workforce enjoy chat just as much, if not more than, in-person conversation. The survey also found that remote workers value video calling nearly two times more than does a nonremote worker.

Technology's Role

This is where technology can make or break a small business's success.

For example, chat, files, apps, voice and video meetings, and everything a small business needs can be brought into one hub for communication and collaboration with Microsoft Teams, a chat-based workspace within Microsoft 365. Here's a look at some of the problems such a system can solve:

- **Communication can be complicated:** Now, conversations can be organized simply into Teams and then channels, and organized by department or project.
- **New employees can feel a little lost:** It's easy for them to learn what the team is working on and ramp up quickly because past conversations, files and activity are in Teams.
- **If you step away for a moment, you can lose the thread of the conversation:** Get threaded, persistent chat that creates a platform for quick communication that's easy to catch up on.
- **Searching for a document can be time consuming and you may not even be sure you have the right ver-**



As small businesses continue to grow and scale, technology will be key to creating an engaged, highly functioning team across offices and time zones.

sion: Now you can have seamless document storage and collaboration with Office apps built in.

- **Coordinating all the technology for a group meetup can be challenging:** Start one up with just one click because voice and video calling are built in.
- **Business functions and conversations can be hard to juggle:** Integrate with third-party apps such as GitHub, Asana and Trello.
- **When you're a busy small-business owner, staying in the know and tracking deadlines while not in the office is important:** The Teams mobile experience is rich—letting you chat, video call, view documents and collaborate just as if you were in the office with your team.
- **Keeping workers (including yourself) engaged and excited can sometimes seem tough:** So create custom memes, emojis and GIFs to break down barriers and keep work fun.

Free Software

Perhaps the best news is that Microsoft just released a new, free version of Teams for up to 300 people, built to help small businesses grow, scale and engage their teams. It can solve communication troubles by providing seven significant services:

1. Unlimited chat messages and search
2. Guest access
3. Built-in audio and video calling for 1:1, group, and full team
4. 10GB of team file storage + 2GB/user of personal storage
5. Integrated Office Online—Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and OneNote
6. Unlimited app integrations with 140+ business apps
7. Built on top of Microsoft's secure, global infrastructure.

Learn More

For further facts, visit aka.ms/freeteams.