

eBook:

The buyer's guide to collaboration software

Cisco Webex



Contents

Choosing wisely: A blueprint for finding the right collaboration tools	1	Pricing: Is your collaboration software a good investment?	5
Functionality: What features should collaboration software include?	2	Hosting: Is cloud or on-premises infrastructure a better fit for your collaboration processes?	6
Usability: How easily can everyone learn how to use the collaboration software?	3	Ecosystem: What other apps and services can I connect to my collaboration software?	7
Security: How safe are your communications and information?	4	A collaboration solution with everything your teams need	8

Choosing wisely:
A blueprint
for finding
the right
collaboration
tools

Business collaboration software has come a long way since the heyday of the landline phone. Today's organizations have many options for bringing their teams together, from Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) calling to lifelike video conferencing.

Choosing between solutions with these features might feel overwhelming. Plus, the stakes for making an informed choice are high—a study of 1,100 companies from i4cp found that firms emphasizing collaborative work were five times more likely to be high-performing.

Taking collaboration processes to the next level requires careful consideration of the functionality, usability, security, pricing, hosting, and overall ecosystem of a solution. Determining how these six traits align with your own requirements will help point you in the right direction—let's take a look at each one.



Functionality



Usability



Security



Pricing



Hosting



Ecosystem



Functionality:

What features should collaboration software include?

Collaboration is a process, not a specific set of tools. At the same time, its tools determine how far it can be extended across your organization. The best collaboration software empowers your teams to meet anytime, anywhere, and over their preferred communications channels. It doesn't limit them to a few features that don't fit naturally into their workflows.

The rise of messaging illustrates the importance of modern functionality in a collaboration suite. According to 451 Research, messaging apps are more widely utilized than email and voice calling by mobile business users, to such a degree that they will often rely on unapproved apps. Platforms such as Cisco Webex provide everything they need in one secure offering, including:

- ▶ Lifelike video conferencing
- ▶ Messaging and file-sharing from any device.
- ▶ Calling capabilities from the cloud.
- ▶ Easy meeting controls, including web browser support.



Usability:

How easily can everyone learn how to use the collaboration software?

Any new system will have its own learning curve. Indeed, implementing collaboration software itself is only the beginning of a transformation: You also have to onboard teams and ensure their members can use features for everything from simpler meeting scheduling to enhanced video conferencing.

Not all collaboration solutions are equally easy to learn and master, though. As a result, many individuals shun them for alternatives they understand better, resulting in app sprawl and data silos. IDC estimated 61 percent of knowledge workers accessed at least four systems daily and that 36 percent of their time was spent consolidating information from disparate applications.

In Cisco Webex Meetings, you have one platform for all of your meetings. Plus, you can reliably search your messages, calls, files, drawings, and calendar from the same place.



36% of knowledge workers' time was spent consolidating information for disparate application.



Security:

How safe are your communications and information?

Collaboration processes—often involving sensitive company data—now stretch over great distances and across multiple devices. Accordingly, they are particularly vulnerable to cyberattacks designed to intercept communications by exploiting even the smallest openings in physical, network, platform, or device security.

Your collaboration software must be secure at every point, since the costs of a breach can be substantial. The Ponemon Institute estimated the average price tag of a data breach in 2017 was \$3.6 million.

Look for enterprise collaboration tools with multilayered protections, including:

- ▶ Secure data center sites with strict access controls.
- ▶ Support for multiple encryption ciphers and setups, including end-to-end encryption.
- ▶ Advanced administrator options for enabling/disabling specific accounts.

The average price tag of a data breach in 2017 was \$3.6 million.



Pricing:

Is your collaboration software a good investment?

Shopping for a business collaboration solution should be straightforward. Unfortunately, it's still easy to get lost in the weeds looking at pricing plans and specification sheets, resulting in a selection that doesn't fit your teams' needs. Some collaboration products don't even offer free trials to let you evaluate the potential fit beforehand.

With so many options for sharing content and messages—VoIP, persistent chats, video, company intranets, etc.—there's also the issue of the paradox of choice, which can further slow down your decision-making. Finding a consolidated collaboration suite, with flexible pricing and a free trial, is your best bet for a trustworthy solution with long-term ROI.

Webex Meetings is now included alongside multifaceted features for video, messaging, file sharing and more. A trial is available and pricing can be done either annually or monthly.





Hosting:

Is cloud or on-premises infrastructure a better fit for your collaboration processes?

Cloud computing has leveled the playing field for small and medium-sized organizations by giving them access to affordable, scalable resources on-demand. For collaboration in particular, the cloud enables seamless interactions across time zone and locations.

Instead of needing to invest in servers and IT staff at each site, you can rely on cloud-based applications that only require an internet connection. Laptop, smartphone, or tablet: Any approved device can effortlessly connect to shared workspaces in the cloud for continuous collaboration.

The flexibility and savings of the cloud quickly add up, and more organizations are noticing. The 2018 State of IT survey from Spiceworks found that cloud and hosted services were closing in on software as the second largest average budget allocation, at over one-fifth of annual IT expenditures.

A circular inset image showing a person from the back, wearing a grey hat and a white shirt, pointing with a white marker at a green 'Join' button on a computer monitor. The monitor displays a web interface with a purple pin icon and the word 'Dashboard' in the bottom left corner. The person is sitting at a desk with a keyboard visible in the foreground.

Cloud and hosted services account for over one-fifth of annual IT expenditures.



Ecosystem:

What other apps and services can I connect to my collaboration software?

Getting teams to buy into a new collaboration solution is much easier if it integrates with other tools they already use, such as calendars, mobile operating systems, and chat clients. Integrations also help prevent the formation of organizational silos, in which decisions are often made with isolated information spread across multiple disconnected systems.

With collaboration software that has a broad ecosystem of integrations as well as ongoing vendor support, you can unlock many collaborative use cases, including:

- ▶ Coordinating online events.
- ▶ Providing customer support.
- ▶ Conducting trainings in a private meeting room.
- ▶ Sharing content across different apps.

The possibilities are vast, so check if the collaboration software you're considering works in tandem with your other deployed applications.

A collaboration solution with everything your teams need

Collaboration can be one of the biggest sources of competitive advantages for companies today, but it remains something many of them find challenging to sustain. According to Nielsen, collaboration among large marketing teams usually results in concepts that test better with consumers than ones generated by smaller groups—yet the majority of collaborations (54 percent) were between only two individuals.

Enabling broader collaboration requires better tools. With Cisco Webex, you can see the difference through the easy-to-use interfaces, comprehensive security measures, and seamless integrations that support anytime-anywhere collaboration. Your teams have high expectations of collaboration software and **Webex Meetings** helps you meet them en route to greater engagement and productivity across the organization.



Cisco Webex

The more intuitive way to work.

© Copyright 2018 Cisco Systems and/or its affiliates. All rights reserved.

