

Building a collaborative environment – why it's important to IT



Getting ahead with collaboration

With more companies embracing digital workspaces, medium and mid-size organizations are finding it easier to compete with their larger counterparts. Company size doesn't matter nearly as much as the ability to swiftly respond to market conditions and customers' expectations for personalized, on-demand products and services 24/7. Organizations are continuing to fine-tune their business models – adjusting for a greater reliance on external partners as well as geographically dispersed teams. As a result, they are placing a high value on collaboration and knowledge sharing.

According to a *2017 Harvard Business Review Analytic Services Report* sponsored by Citrix, 81% of survey respondents said that internal and external collaboration was important to their company's current success. When asked to list specific outcomes from collaboration, organizations listed the following benefits:

- Improved customer experience
- A more engaged workforce
- Higher productivity
- Greater operational efficiency

Respondents also realized faster, more agile decisions and accelerated product development—both of which help companies outpace their competition.

Obstacles to building a secure, collaborative environment

As companies embrace collaboration, they freely adopt cloud-based tools including file sharing, video conferencing, and remote access—often without waiting for their IT teams to provide corporate-sanctioned versions of these tools. As a result, IT organizations don't have the bandwidth, visibility, or control to support complex and disparate systems. This can lead to inefficient and non-secure workflows, cost overruns, and security and compliance issues. IT resources are also diverted from focusing on more strategic initiatives that help achieve business outcomes and grow revenues.

Leveraging leadership and technology for successful collaboration

Building and maintaining a collaborative organization comes down to two essential elements – executive leadership support and participation, and a culture that promotes interaction among departments and virtual teams.

Leadership must support and actively participate in a culture that fosters decision-making input from their workforce in a flatter, more open organizational structure. Employers take their cues from their executive leadership. Therefore, management must realize and act upon the knowledge that they are responsible not only for the company, but also for promoting a culture of collaboration.

68%

of companies who prioritize collaboration said they were ahead of competitors.

– Harvard Business Review Analytics Services Survey, 2017

A collaborative organization must also promote interaction among departments as well as virtual teams. Thanks to technology innovations such as document sharing, instant messaging/chat, and web/video conferencing, workforces have developed a propensity for collaborating. However, IT organizations need to provide the right mix of tools that can be easily adopted and allow for seamless, remote access to information and teams without burdening the workforce. According to the HBR study, 27% of respondents cited a lack of workforce time as a barrier to collaboration. Too many different tools or a poor user experience will slow down adoption and limit collaboration.

5 IT essentials for building a collaborative work environment

In order to realize the benefits of a collaborative environment, IT organizations must balance end-user demands for access to data and files from any device or virtual environment with data security and compliance. Unencrypted email, network drives, consumer-grade cloud storage, and outdated file sharing methods are not secure, or are too cumbersome to be widely adopted. The ideal solution enables the entire business to work efficiently from anywhere, secure data everywhere, and control costs over time. Following are some of essential elements to building a secure, collaborative environment.

1. A complete content collaboration solution

This provides users with true connectivity across all corporate and personal mobile devices, while allowing the business to meet strict corporate security and compliance requirements. Users can access and sync all of their files and folders from any device and securely share them with people both inside and outside the organization.

2. Flexible data storage access to multiple data repositories from a single location

In order to meet their organization's specific needs for data security, compliance, and performance while managing costs, IT must be able to store their data on-premises, in the public cloud, or a combination of both. They must also have a single secure data access point without expensive and time-consuming data migration.

3. Advanced security and compliance features

IT must be able to determine how sensitive data is stored, accessed, and shared—including how and where the encryption keys are stored and managed. The solution must include two-factor authentication, role-based access control, secure workflows, device security, remote wipe, device lock, passcode protection, white/black listings, and data expiration policies. IT should also be able to log user activity in real-time and create custom reports to meet corporate data policies and compliance requirements.

4. Built-in electronic signatures and version control

A collaborative workspace enables authorized team members to securely exchange, track, edit, and e-sign content. File-versioning ensures everyone is working from the latest document and helps eliminate data sprawl. Custom-branded client portals can simplify and secure how files are sent and received, eliminating unnecessary emails and steps.

5. Easy integration of mobile apps, desktops, data, and services into the digital workspace

A collaborative environment should facilitate seamless transitions from physical to virtual desktops and future OS migrations. Not only does this allow teams to work from anywhere on any device, it also enables organizations to future-proof their investments.

Take the next step toward building a secure, collaborative environment

Organizations that collaborate internally and externally realize greater productivity and a more engaged workforce, helping them gain competitive advantages in a constantly evolving business landscape. Citrix ShareFile is the foundation of a secure, collaborative environment. It provides secure, intuitive, and seamless workflows that meet the demands of today's modern workforce while maintaining security and compliance.

[See if your approach to collaboration needs an upgrade.](#)



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