



Collaboration and Innovation: Driving Business Success

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Held on October 20, 2015, this webinar on collaboration and innovation was facilitated by Jim Love, CIO and Chief Digital Officer, ITWC, and Charlie Wade SVP, Enterprise, Products & Solutions, Rogers Communications. The following content comprises two articles written about the webinar (and published on ITBusiness.ca) together with poll questions asked of the participants during the live webinar and their responses.

Why collaboration is necessary for innovation

Workers have always collaborated, but thanks to an increasingly global workforce and a pressing need for innovation, collaboration is becoming ever more important — even critical — in today's economic environment.

By 2017, 25 per cent of organizations will lose their market position due to “digital business incompetence,” according to Gartner. The research firm blames this on the lack of a holistic response to consumerization trends in the digital workplace.

We've already seen this in Canada. The country received a C grade on its latest innovation report card from the Conference Board of Canada, an Ottawa-based think-tank. Canada isn't failing, but it's not an A+ student either. Enterprise collaboration tools and technologies can help, but only if employees actually use them. Gartner says organizations need to undertake a strategic rethinking of how people work and how tools help employees get their work done.

These tools — which include integrated voice, mobile, video, instant messaging, chat and presence — can foster increased knowledge sharing and teamwork. Multiple users can attend a meeting or work on a project

simultaneously, even if they're based in different cities or countries. Where lack of personal contact (and cultural differences) can hinder collaboration — and therefore innovation — tools such as video conferencing, virtual whiteboards and screen sharing can help bridge the divide.

We're seeing a glut of new ideas and activist customers, which necessitates innovation, according to Deloitte. But we're also seeing more dispersed workers. "In the digital age, collaboration tools are a significant enabler of openness," says Deloitte in *Digital Collaboration: Delivering Innovation, Productivity and Happiness*. "Openness correlates to engagement, to innovation and most significantly to the happiness of the workforce."

Innovation can mean identifying bottlenecks, reducing lead times or finding operational improvements to create better products or services.

Over the past year, we've seen an evolution toward a single, unified platform from unified communications (UC) providers, marrying voice, video, web conferencing and mobility. And managed cloud-based UC solutions are becoming attractive options, particularly as IT departments find themselves under pressure to lower costs or work with limited staff. Video conferencing has evolved to include screen sharing and interactive white boards, offering more opportunities for workers to engage and collaborate. And the technology has extended from the boardroom to personal desktops, tablets and even smartphones, making it even easier to jump on a video call — no telepresence room required. We're even seeing the potential of wearables among field workers and technicians to boost collaboration in the field among traditionally independent workers.

If implemented correctly, collaboration tools and technologies can provide a number of benefits, from accessing internal expertise to improving customer retention and boosting profits. Some of these benefits are easy to measure (such as lower travel costs or faster time-to-market). Others might be harder to quantify, such as breaking down silos and increasing innovation — but they're equally as important. Indeed, innovation could be the most important factor of success moving forward to prevent that "digital business incompetence" trap.

Unified communications and collaboration can drive productivity gains

With workplaces becoming more mobile and, well, more millennial, there's an even greater need for unified communications and collaboration (UCC) technologies. And bonus – they can also drive important productivity gains.

“There's never been a time in history where we've needed productivity gains and innovation more than today,” said Love. This was echoed by Charlie Wade, senior vice-president of enterprise products and solutions with Rogers, who indicated that the changing ways of doing business are forcing the need for the adoption of new collaboration technologies. “We're seeing a shift in the evolution of the workplace,” said Wade. “The old tools and way of doing it just aren't cutting it anymore.”

Two factors are driving this evolution, according to Wade. The first is that the makeup of the workforce is changing; a new generation of workers is entering, and they have different expectations. “We're seeing more millennials that are expecting a different environment in terms of the way they work. Today we use email, but for millennials email doesn't cut it,” said Wade. “They're looking for real-time collaboration tools that allow them to get work done. They want to storm problems, and ask 20 people at a time a question.”

The second trend shaping the modern workplace is mobility. Some 75 per cent of employed Canadians will be mobile workers by 2018, and by 2017 some 80 per cent of consumer engagement will occur on mobile devices. With 60 per cent of Canadians making job choices based on the ability to work flexibly and employees that are able to work flexibly proving to be 20 per cent more engaged, it's a trend businesses can't ignore.

“The place of work is no longer in the office, it's on the street,” said Wade. “The office should be a place of collaboration, not a place where I have to go hide in my cubicle and do my work there.”

What is emerging is a modern worker who works any hours instead of from nine to five, from anywhere instead of always in a corporate office, from any device instead of a standard corporate-issued device and who relies on collaboration technologies instead of email and is measured by output instead of his or her mere presence in the office. “IT organizations must be a strategic driving force in enabling this change,” said Wade. “There’s increasing demand from the top down and from the bottom up.” The challenge is that much of the energy and budget for the IT department is focused on merely keeping the lights on, and this tactical focus makes it difficult for IT to drive the strategic change needed.

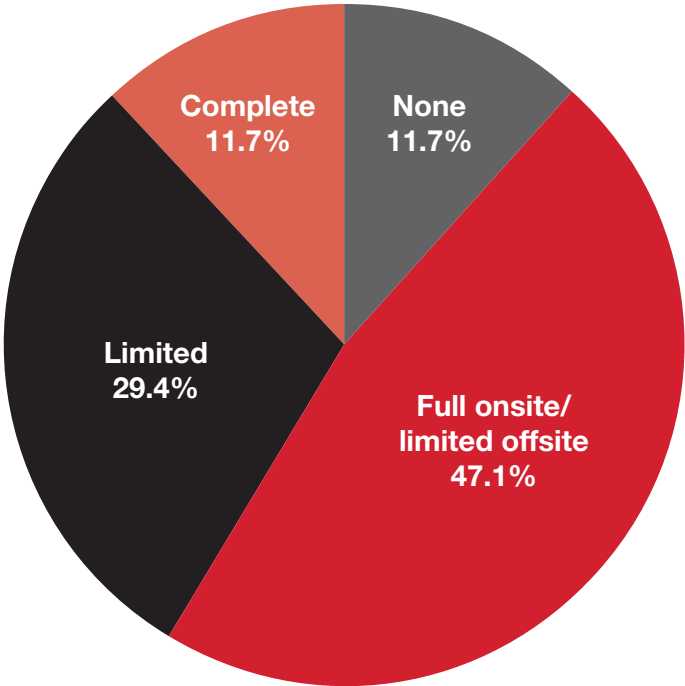
Love said CIOs today are buried in tactical work and when business needs aren’t met, shadow IT can grow, costing the organization in the long run. “You’ve got to get out from under the infrastructure. If you’re going to be Mr. Infrastructure, you’re not going to make it in this new world,” said Love. “And you need to speak a new language with business. It’s not the language of IT, it’s the language of business.”

Rogers’ vision is to implement a flexible work place of collaboration (applications), inside the office (Wi-Fi), communications foundation (access) and outside the office (mobility). “This isn’t an IT play of just throwing a lot of technology at the problem. That’s part of it, but really it’s about the environment in which you set up your business,” said Wade. “Are you structuring your business on classic meeting rooms and office space/ cubicles, or are you thinking about creative collaboration spaces where you can throw people together to really innovate?”

Poll Question

The following charts reveal participants` responses to the poll questions asked during the live webinar:

Poll:
To what extent have you enabled collaboration through information technology in your workplace through mobility and workplace flexibility?



[View the full webinar here.](#)

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