

SWOOP ANALYTICS'

# Microsoft 365

BENCHMARKING  
REPORT 2022



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# Executive Summary

As we write SWOOP Analytics' inaugural M365 benchmarking report it has been more than two years since the world was forced into lockdown and working from home (WFH). During this time, we have learned a lot about remote working habits. SWOOP has published comprehensive analysis reports for [Microsoft Teams](#), [Yammer](#) and [Workplace by Meta](#). We learned what practices were working well and which practices could be comfortably left behind. During 2021 we collated that knowledge to form a position on what practices to avoid while WFH. We published an article titled [The Seven Deadly Sins of Digital Working](#). We later took those "sins" and rephrased them into positive, actionable habits. This is what you now see in [SWOOP for M365](#); an analytics platform that analyzes and nudges you on building positive collaboration habits, personally, in your teams and across your organization.

The early adopters of [SWOOP for M365](#) have provided us with the opportunity to conduct a unique and distinctive benchmarking analysis of digital working as it is happening now; when organizations are making decisions about returning to the office and undertaking hybrid working patterns. As with all our benchmarking studies, we do not rely on surveys. We passively analyze everyone in the organizations we study. We include those staff who you will never find responding to surveys. **We analyze what people actually do, rather than what they might think they do.**

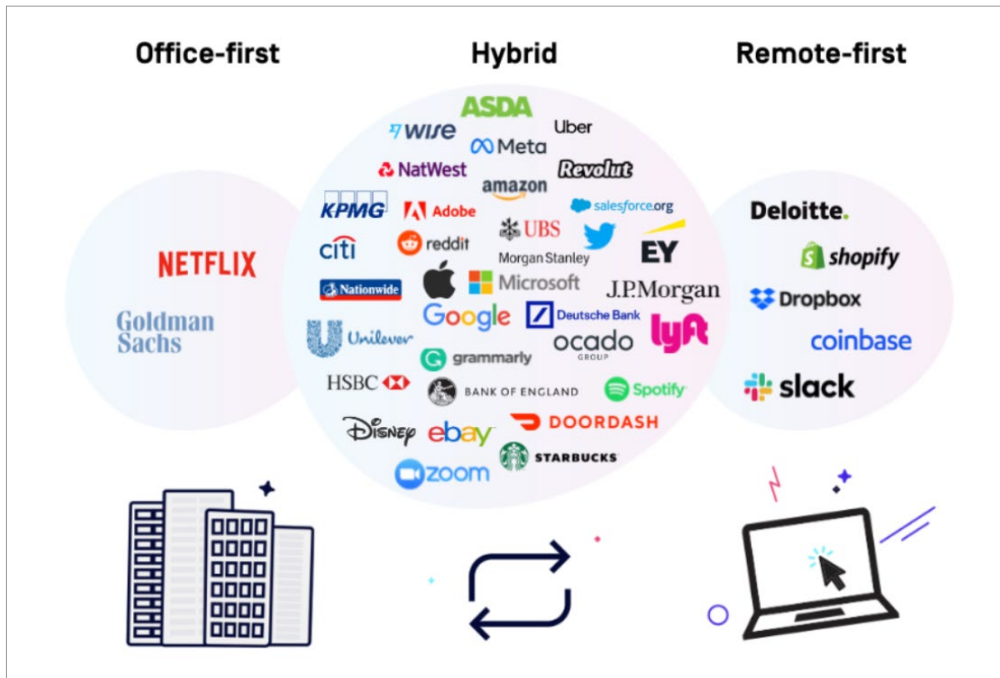
Our form of analysis has therefore been referred to as "[reality mining](#)" by MIT professor [Sandy Pentland](#), the author of "[Social Physics](#)". Collectively we analyzed 18 globally distributed organizations, 113,655 active M365 accounts (grew to 213,411 when guest account are included), and 3,773 groups/departments. Our data was drawn from a six-month period between October 2021 and March 2022; a period that encompassed many attempts to return to the office, but largely where most staff were working from home.



Figure 1 - Organizational design dilemma?

In 2009 we shared this cartoon to highlight the hidden organization behind the formal one. Ironically, now in 2022 the situation is reversed, as staff are now tentatively [considering senior management pleas to return to the office](#). Senior management were the most disenfranchised when WFH commenced; forced to move out of their comfort zone, and for many, having to learn new ways of working with their

staff. Bold statements from CEOs about returning to the office have had to be deferred and sometimes totally reversed. The situation is currently so dynamic that research firm [Hubble](#) has been maintaining a running score of policy changes of the major firms on a day-to-day basis:



Source: <https://hubblehq.com/blog/famous-companies-workplace-strategies>

In this current environment, and into the foreseeable future, the best we can do is analyze intensely, looking for positive patterns we can quickly amplify. The digital working landscape is the new “wild west”. Opportunities abound for those agile enough to exploit them. Hybrid working is appearing as the most popular choice for moving forward. But just what is “hybrid working”? Isn’t it the worst of the two worlds of “all in the office” or “all remote”? But that’s what staff want, isn’t it?

In this report you will be exposed to the type and detail of digital analysis required to effectively identify and exploit opportunities emerging from a new way of working. Traditional analytics approaches that focus on technology consumption are no longer sufficient. What we have learned from the pandemic so far is that people have to be properly placed at the center of our analytics endeavors.

## Key findings from SWOOP’s inaugural M365 benchmarking study:

- The largest opportunity for improving collaboration habits is at the lower end of the spectrum; helping the many more non-adopters make just a small number of improvements. The top 10% of M365 users were responsible for 42% of total meeting time spent, whilst **the bottom 50% were responsible for only 6%**. The good news is, there are a sufficient proportion of M365 early adopters to help influence the M365 adoption laggards.
- Making just small changes to collaboration habits across the entire organization will result in huge improvements and significant time and money savings. We calculated that by posting in Microsoft Teams channels or Yammer instead of email and/or meetings, **staff could save, on average, 26 minutes a day by becoming more**

**Email Liberated or working more asynchronously.** May sound modest, but for an average 10,000-strong organization, this is equivalent to more than \$USD30 million in annual staff costs.

- **Microsoft Teams channel messages and Yammer posts are woefully under-utilized.** Only 14% of staff made a Yammer post or reply and 27% processed a Teams channel message over the six-month period analyzed. This is a huge lost opportunity for becoming [Email and Chat Liberated](#), working more asynchronously and benefiting from enterprise community participation.
- **More than 82% of staff are reading Yammer, making it a compelling internal communications platform.** Passive use of Yammer (many more readers than writers) is reflective of its growing use as an internal communication channel. Having non-work related communities has been a way to keep connected socially during WFH. Yammer, however, has a far more important role to play. Hosting more radical innovation efforts and building and reinforcing core competencies through social learning will become critical as we move into more hybrid work.
- **The constant interruptions from Microsoft Teams chat are significant.** Staff, on average, are sending 65 Microsoft Teams chat messages per week (compared with 29 emails per week), with the busiest sending more than 2,000 chat messages a week. Chat messages and notifications can be very disruptive, demanding immediate attention.
- **Leaders, on average, are demonstrating better collaboration habits than non-leaders.** Far from being digital laggards, they are leading by example. The average collaboration performance for leaders was 66% compared with 53% for non-leaders. Somewhat concerning, however, is that almost 40% of non-leader staff had not participated in a one-on-one call with either leaders or colleagues over the six-month period. This finding reinforces concerns about health and wellbeing of staff during the pandemic. Moving into hybrid working, there is a need to prioritize face-to-face one-on-one interactions, if digital one-on-ones have become problematic for some reason.
- Analysis of “guest” accounts identified **the most collaborative organizations in our sample made strong use of guest accounts to better engage with their clients and partners.** Our case study analysis identified these organizations were reaping the rewards from enhanced levels of inter-organizational trust by opening up their M365 digital environments to external guests. For consulting organizations in particular, this mode of operation was necessitated by no longer being able to be physically present on their client’s premises.
- The largest predictor of collaborative performance was the level of variation in digital habits that exists within the team. **Developing team norms of digital behavior is critical to the collaborative performance of the group/team.** Mismatched collaboration habits within close working teams can be disastrous for collaboration.
- **All the above benefits from employing better collaboration habits can only happen when individuals change their own behaviors.** Once individuals can clearly see their own collaboration habits through SWOOP’s analytics, and where they need to make improvements, change can happen quickly.

# 1 Introduction

This is SWOOP Analytics' 10th comprehensive benchmarking report on Microsoft platforms, but in some ways it feels like a culmination of our previous nine reports. Previous reports focused on significant parts of the M365 suite, being Microsoft Teams and Yammer; but not the whole of the M365 suite. The development and release of our [SWOOP for M365](#) product in January 2022 was a direct response to our customers asking for a whole-of-suite analytics product, which takes in Outlook, SharePoint, Yammer, Teams, Viva and more. Our initial response was to go for the “umbrella product”; being SWOOP for M365, where we take a human-centered analytics view across the whole suite. Our analytics is centered on human collaboration habits, which you can read about in detail in section 2.

Later in 2022, we will be releasing our [SWOOP for SharePoint](#) product; providing some familiar SWOOP deep-dive analytics into the people and relationship-side of SharePoint intranet usage.

Why is M365 so important to the future ways of working? A little over a decade ago Microsoft commenced the migration of its office software to the cloud. In late 2015, the Microsoft Graph was announced; a unified architecture for connecting the breadth of people and content held within Microsoft's burgeoning office suite. These two key developments have set the foundation for Microsoft's current and future dominance in supporting work into the foreseeable future. M365 shares the overall market for office suite software with [Google's Workspace](#). M365 dominates the larger private and public company spaces with something like [87.5% market share](#). In the 1970s there was a popular saying amongst chief information officers that; *“no-one ever got fired for buying IBM hardware”*. The same could be said about Microsoft's Office software today.

We start this benchmarking report by celebrating those that have demonstrated exceptional digital working capabilities. For this inaugural report, we have dug deep into the departments within the 18 enterprise participants to identify those hidden gems. In section 3 we share the stories of their journeys to becoming excellent digital workers. Make no mistake, the variation in use of the M365 suite, even within single organizations, is vast. The potential for massive performance improvements through more orchestrated use of the individual toolsets could be compared with the taming of the wild west.

How did we assess collaboration performance? In section 4 we expose our measurement methodology. We have identified [Seven Collaboration Habits](#) we believe constitute excellent digital collaboration. They have emerged through years of in-depth benchmarking studies and collaboration with our global digital workplace specialist partners. We have benchmarked each of these habits across the full sample of 213,411 staff and guests across the 18 participating organizations. Our benchmarks provide quantitative comparisons at the enterprise, right down to the anonymized individual level. The measures relate to **what people actually do; not what they say they do**. Within these organizations we were able to identify 3,773 business departments we could compare to derive our M365 collaboration champions.

For a majority of organizations, the cloud based M365 platform is a relatively recent investment. As such, both IT and business leaders are keenly interested in how the platform is being adopted across the breadth of the organization. In section 5 we take a comprehensive look at adoption patterns. We begin our exploration of adoption by employing artificial intelligence machine learning methods to identify key user groups and usage patterns. We then drill down to explore group/department level collaboration patterns. We close this section by exploring the digital collaboration habits of organizational leaders; comparing their performances with the non-leaders.

Section 5 takes a deep dive into the detailed usage data. We share the demographics for our benchmarking participants. We then report in more detail on the measured collaboration habits and the usage patterns for each of the M365 component parts (Outlook, Yammer, Microsoft Teams, SharePoint and OneDrive). We complete this section with our assessment of “what good looks like” in numbers. We use ranking data to set performance thresholds typically at the top 20% level i.e. a level which is considered good and achievable. These benchmarks provide organizations with quantitative targets they can aim for; providing the confidence that when achieved, strong collaborative performance is also being achieved.

People are not machines, so we acknowledge that peak collaborative performance is centrally a human, more so than technical, requirement. Human performance emerges from the habits we form. In the same way our physical health is dictated by our personal eating and exercise habits, so is our collaboration health. In section 6 we explore a collaboration habits performance framework based on award winning author James Clear’s “Atomic Habits”. We follow this in section 6.2 with a description of how the analytics within SWOOP for M365 works beside, and with, Microsoft M365 analytics within Microsoft Viva and the Microsoft Productivity Score.

Despite the market dominance of M365, continued investment in the platform as it evolves demands a similarly evolving business justification. In Section 7 we illustrate how analytics can be used to provide a Return on Investment (ROI) case for M365. We explore two collaboration habits (Email Liberation and Asynchronous Working) where we believe significant returns can be financially quantified. For the remaining five habits we offer qualitative evidence of the value available.

We typically close our benchmarking reports with a look to the future. In section 8 we indulge ourselves in some crystal ball gazing on the future of work, with special attention to the emerging hybrid working practice. It is an especially rich time for such speculations as most commentators admit uncertainty into how the post-pandemic world will play out. We are now on the cusp of perhaps the largest change in workplace practices since Henry Ford’s introduction of the assembly line. The only certainty is that it won’t go back to the way it was. As we mentioned earlier, we believe Microsoft is well placed to play a key role whichever way the future of work evolves.



## 2 Introduction to the SWOOP Collaboration Habits

SWOOP's Seven Collaboration Habits gives every employee insights into how to balance and improve their use of the M365 collaboration tools. We give each individual, department and organization a score against each of these seven habits.

In ranking the top departments in SWOOP's M365 benchmarking for 2022, all seven of SWOOP's Collaboration Habits - Email Liberated, Asynchronous Collaborator, Chat Liberated, File Sharer, Community Contributor, Screen Sharer and Camera Confident – are combined to give an overall collaboration score for every member of the department, which is then compared with the 3,773 departments benchmarked in the 2022 report.



### **Email Liberated**

Being Email Liberated means you have learned to reduce the volume of email by transitioning internal communications to Teams channels and Yammer conversations. Colleagues get the urgency of attention they deserve, reserving email for external interactions.

### **Asynchronous Collaborators**

Asynchronous Collaborators have learned to balance synchronous interactions with asynchronous interactions in Teams channels and Yammer discussions. Here people can respond at a time when it suits their flow of work. More flexible work patterns are therefore greatly enhanced.

### **Chat Liberated**

Being Chat Liberated means you have learned to use a mix of communication channels to maximize collaboration potential. Chat dominates our interactions but extending your interactions to Teams channels and Yammer communities can help you become inclusive as others can more easily follow your work.

### **Community Contributors**

Community Contributors make a point of taking time out from day-to-day work in Microsoft Teams to be active in communities on Yammer to connect with others. It's not only a virtual water-cooler, but also an investment in your broader reputation as a skilled practitioner.

### **File Sharers**

File Sharers have learned to work in the shared space. They and their co-authors make use of the excellent co-authoring toolsets now available in SharePoint to maximize shared content production.

### **Camera Confident**

Camera Confident people are biased towards having the camera on, but may also have times when they will turn it off. While sometimes controversial, the weight of expert opinion is that your camera should be on in online meetings. Human connection is always stronger when you can see who you are conversing with.

### **Screen Sharer**

Screen Sharers are quick to share their screens or encourage their colleagues to do so when communications get bogged down in complexities. Participating in screen sharing is an effective way of communicating with a virtual audience. It's also a good break from just talking heads.

The key to each of the [Seven Collaboration Habits](#) is that they focus on how you balance the use of the tools. For instance, it is not about how many emails you send, but how you balance the use of email with posting in Teams channels or on Yammer.

More case studies coming soon...

We will continue to add to our collection of M365 customer case studies: [swoopanalytics.com/case-studies](https://swoopanalytics.com/case-studies)

## 3 Case Studies

### Overall collaboration champions

#### 3.1 RealFoundations – Breaking the silos between service providers and clients

Gone are the days when it was an “us” and “them” relationship between service providers and clients.

Real estate management consulting and managed services firm [RealFoundations](#) has broken the divide by inviting clients to work together as a true team in Microsoft 365, primarily via Microsoft Teams. Engaging this way has built trust – quickly – and significantly increased the speed with which work is performed and delivered.

When RealFoundations begins working with a client, it invites the client into Microsoft Teams and establishes a team. Alternatively, the Team can be established in the client’s tenant but once the client sees the way RealFoundations works in Teams, they usually opt to join RealFoundations’ tenant.

Once a team is established on Teams, work is done in Teams channels where every chat, file, shared document, calendar, scheduled meeting and more can be accessed by every person, whether it’s the client or someone from the RealFoundations team.

“We communicate with our clients in real time via Teams, just like we do with our own team members,” said Emily Fuller, Senior Manager, Application Support Services, RealFoundations.

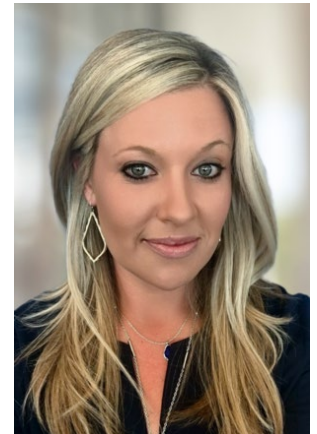
“We use Teams channels to engage regularly with clients. If I have a quick question for one of the key stakeholders from a client account, I don’t have to go over to Outlook and draft an email. I can easily tag them in a threaded conversation, or I can send them a chat.

“And if we’re communicating in chat and recognize we’d benefit from a call, I can call them directly from that screen with a single click of a button – seamless!”

There’s no longer a need to stop work in one digital environment to pick up the phone to make a call or send an email asking for a time to meet, because in Teams there is clear transparency into a colleague or client’s availability. Emily also points out that 30-minute meetings in the past are now often reduced to five-minute meetings when working out loud in Teams because information is already accessible to all stakeholders.

“Collaborating in Teams makes communicating so much faster, which ultimately leads to improvements in the quality and efficiency of our delivery,” said Emily, whose team supports property management and accounting technology applications across RealFoundations’ client base.

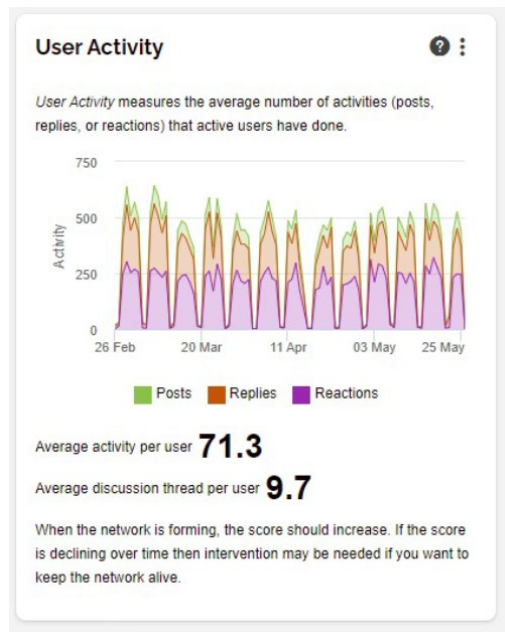
realfoundations



Emily Fuller, Senior Manager  
- Application Support Services,  
RealFoundations.

“The way we interact in Teams, both with our clients and with our client-serving practitioners, really eliminates the potential for issues that would result from delays in communication. Lack of responsiveness is not a complaint we receive because our clients are versed in collaborating with us in this manner, and us with them.

“Teams has simply streamlined the communication process that may hold others back from completing work and responding to questions in a timely fashion.”



SWOOP data showing RealFoundations' Enterprise User Activity over the past three months.

## Building trust by connecting remotely

Perhaps even more importantly than smooth communication is the personal connection built using the M365 suite – within RealFoundations and with clients whom, Emily says, sometimes feel more like team members than customers.

There are at least four Application Support practitioners who report to Emily, whom she has never met face-to-face. While she understands the importance of in-person interaction, Emily feels she has as strong a relationship - if not stronger - with these four people she's never met in person, as she does with colleagues whom she previously shared an office with prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

That's because working collaboratively on M365 is not just about working *next* to someone but working *with them* on every aspect of delivery.

“Even though the whole Teams ecosystem is relatively new to most companies, there is a very real personal connection you're able to build within your group, regardless of the virtual aspect,” Emily said.

“From a teammate experience, and the interpersonal relationship experience, I think the

Teams environment has really fostered that ‘work-together’ mentality because it’s not just a phone call or an email, it takes some of the formality of scheduling a call or having to send a perfectly drafted and punctuated email, out of the equation.”

One way Emily believes using Microsoft Teams channels and chat has helped build trust quickly with clients is the way communication has become informal, as if you’re talking with your colleague sitting next to you rather than a client in another company.

“Chat messages and threaded conversations have removed the stigma of business communication which enables us to focus more on the decisions that need to be made or the outcomes we’re working towards, without worrying much about the formalities associated with email messages,” she said.

“No one is ever going to judge a chat the way that they may infer specific tone from an email message. And the emoji and GIF options help lighten the mood, as needed.”



Similarly, working together in Teams means everyone, and everything, is more accessible because you can see where people are, when they’re available, what everyone is working on and how work is progressing.

“The accessibility of another individual via Teams just makes collaborating smoother and more efficient,” Emily said.

“We are no longer required to plan a formal communication event to contact one another. Clients and colleagues can see my status as available and reach out with: ‘Hey do you have five minutes?’ and my response is either ‘I’m sorry, I don’t right now but I can call you in an hour’ or ‘sure thing, let’s hop on a meeting’.

“Not only does Teams enable accessibility to individuals, we also gain more transparent access to knowledge, documentation, calendars, ‘in-progress’ work product, and even learn more about an individual’s personality.”

Emily has found you can learn a lot about someone’s personality by the way they interact in Teams channels. Do they use emojis or GIFs? Are their communications formal or casual?

Looking through a client’s messages in Teams channels often gives Emily an insight into their personality – are they relaxed, are they organized, do they need extra support, are they comfortable using Teams?

“We’ve also seen clients’ personalities in Teams change. At first, they may be very careful in the way they interact, apprehensive a bit to lose the formalities. And then six months later

you can tell this is a truly collaborative and safe relationship by the comfort they display in messaging,” Emily said.

“Formality is important, but in day-to-day collaboration, if you focus too much on how proper everything needs to be, you really miss out on the ability to quickly get to the root of an issue and devise a plan for resolution.

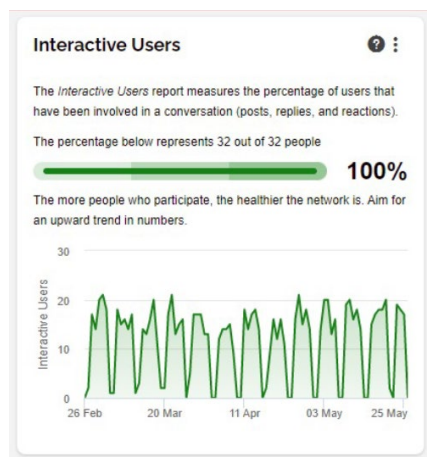
“For us, Teams has enabled us to work very collaboratively across distance (spanning multiple time zones and geographic locations) and maintain our personalities. It’s shifted the mindset around those things where if I want to have a quick chat, I can have a quick chat. If I want to have a formal communication, I can absolutely do that too.”

Emily points out that even if the whole team is in the office, nobody walks around saying; “Greetings, I hope my communication finds you well” and nobody ever ends a real-life conversation with “regards”.

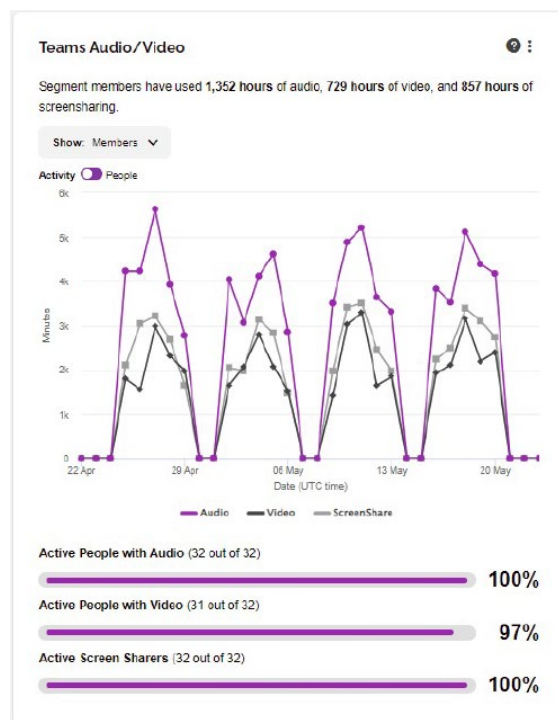
Dropping the formalities by working in Teams saves huge amounts of time, Emily says, and has developed stronger relationships with clients and colleagues alike.

## Collaboration champions

RealFoundations’ RFMS (RF Managed Services) department, of which Emily is a member, is made up of 35 US-based employees responsible for delivering ongoing services spanning Accounting, Lease, Data, Automation, Application Support and Modern Workplace Services to clients across all real estate sectors. It was one of the top three organizations ranked in SWOOP Analytics’ 2022 M365 benchmarking of 3,773 departments for medium-sized departments – those with between 20 and 50 members.



A screenshot of Microsoft Teams usage from SWOOP Analytics for RealFoundations’ RFMS for the past three months.



RFMS teams screen sharing data from SWOOP Analytics for the past three months.

In ranking departments in SWOOP's analysis, all seven of [SWOOP's Collaboration Habits](#) - Email Liberated, Asynchronous Collaborator, Chat Liberated, File Sharer, Community Contributor, Screen Sharer and Camera Confident – are combined to give an overall collaboration score for every member of the department, which is then compared with the 3,773 departments benchmarked in the 2022 report.

Lindsey Zollner, Senior Manager, Presence and Asset Support at RealFoundations polled a sample of service line leaders in RFMS asking them to describe their collaborative behaviors in M365 as they relate to SWOOP's Seven Collaboration Habits.



Lindsey Zollner, Senior Manager, Presence and Asset Support, RealFoundations.

***Email Liberated - Shows how good you are at collaborating in Teams Channels and Yammer compared with sending emails.***

- It's estimated 95% of RealFoundations's Application Support delivery communication is performed in M365 and its applications (Teams, Planner, Sharepoint, OneDrive, etc). Defined Microsoft Teams are created, and threaded conversations are carried out in designated channels to support efficient and fast decision making, both with internal RealFoundations-only teams and teams where external clients are invited to join to collaborate. Using Teams rather than email in Outlook brings transparency and simplifies the client onboarding process.
- Every function within Teams is leveraged across RealFoundations; from organized, threaded conversations, meeting polls, tasks and planners, file sharing and editing, recorded meetings with transcriptions, lists for data capture, OneNote notebooks, whiteboards and more.
- Elimination of email reliance creates flexibility for staff. "If a practitioner needs to step away for an appointment, they don't return to a slew of unread emails that require application of logic to locate the latest update – everything exists in a historical, threaded conversation," Lindsey said.

***Asynchronous Collaborator - Shows how good you are at collaborating in Teams channels and Yammer (asynchronous) compared with collaborating in Teams meetings/calls (synchronous).***

- Because clients are also invited into RealFoundations' M365 Teams as guests, it means everyone can work together on any piece of work or file, all in their own time. Collaborative revisions to documentation allow multiple practitioners and/or clients to review and modify files in real time or asynchronously.
- When decisions are made by clients, all practitioners are notified with @mentions, and both clients and practitioners alike can easily refer back to the communication stream in the future, if necessary.

***Chat Liberated - Shows how good you are at collaborating in Teams channels and Yammer compared with collaborating in chat.***

- The majority of work conversations happen in Teams channels, by design, for transparency and ease of transition to the way work is delivered.

- Every employee at RealFoundations has a bi-annual review, and part of that review looks at their collaboration habits, using data from [SWOOP for Yammer](#) and [SWOOP for Microsoft Teams](#). The SWOOP dashboards also identify the most collaborative teams, departments and individuals across the firm. Everyone knows posting in Teams channels and Yammer boosts their personal collaboration habits and their SWOOP persona, which is an incentive to work out loud in Teams channels and Yammer, contributing to the competitive nature of the employees.

***File Sharer - Shows how good you are at working with files on SharePoint (shared by default) compared with OneDrive (private by default).***

- All documentation and deliverables are stored in SharePoint and accessible via Teams, which benefits both RealFoundations' clients and client-serving practitioners. With version history enabled, there is no longer a requirement to create multiple versions of the same document when revisions are applied – every version and modification exists in the original file.
- File sharing also means clients can access any document in the Teams channel, giving them the speed and independence to access every piece of work without the requirement of emailing a practitioner to request a file.
- Time saving is another huge benefit of file sharing on SharePoint via Teams. If a client wants a few words changed in a document, they can go to the channel, locate the file, and revise immediately without having to share multiple versions via email.

***Community Collaborator - Shows how good you are at balancing participation in Yammer communities with working in Teams.***

- At RealFoundations, Yammer is the place to share information across the entire enterprise, ask a question, get real-time support and generally build a culture of collaboration.
- Yammer notifications are elevated to Teams when the Announcement or @mention functions are used.
- “RealFoundations employees share and consume a great deal of real estate and related technology information from Yammer communities,” Lindsey said. “Yammer is often a better avenue than Teams to broadcast information to an extended community and promote social collaboration to a larger audience.”
- As a professional services firm, RealFoundations staff attends about 50 real estate conferences every year. They create a Yammer community for each conference which enables RealFoundations practitioners share information, capture knowledge, and expand the reach to the rest of the organization.



***Screen Sharer - Shows how good you are at sharing a screen during Teams meetings/calls.***

- Screen sharing is one of the best ways to work together and troubleshoot in real time. One of the benefits of working in Microsoft Teams is the ability to immediately call and screen share with a colleague or client to resolve an issue or collaborate on a deliverable.
- “Sharing the screen helps keep everyone’s attention on the topics being discussed with the ability to access and display files as examples to support issue resolution or forward movement,” Lindsey said.

***Camera Confident - Shows how good you are at turning on a camera during Teams meetings/calls.***

- Camera ON is a cultural expectation and setting default for all users at RealFoundations and has been an active part of its enterprise collaboration practice for the past decade.
- “Seeing someone’s reaction to a comment can be a great indicator to knowing if you need to elaborate more, pause and wait for response, or continue moving on when the consensus is in agreement,” Lindsey said. “While not all clients are comfortable using cameras at first, most will eventually do so upon recognizing that video capabilities are the standard for RealFoundations.”

*Learn more about how knowledge is harvested at RealFoundations and why [email is where knowledge goes to die](#), get expert advice from RealFoundations on [how to write a great post](#) and how [working out loud in places like Microsoft Teams means thinking more about what you’re going to say](#).*

## 3.2 CityFibre – How to build a successful digital workplace

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When a stakeholder at [CityFibre](#) wants an update on the progress of a software development initiative, they often send off an email asking for a briefing.

Instead of spending valuable time responding to the email to address the questions, and probably organizing a couple of meetings with key stakeholders to explain more, the original sender of the email is invited into the Software Development's team on Microsoft Teams.

There they will find every aspect of what they need to know, all organized within Teams channels, along with all files, recordings of past meetings, all current and previous roadmaps, links to Jira and anything else the team has been involved in, linked as a tab to the channel.

If the new team member wants to join a meeting, they can do so from the channel, or use recordings to catch up on previous meetings.

"I could spend an hour on an email going back to that one person and not even scratch the surface with all the information they're wanting to know about something," said Emma Fisher, Lead Product Owner, Agile Software Delivery Team at CityFibre, which builds Full Fibre infrastructure across the UK.

"If a business stakeholder wants to know something about the work that's progressing on one of our teams, 99.9% of the time the answer would be; 'Come visit the Teams channel, get involved, we'll tag you in some posts, we'll let you know where to find some of the information, come to those meetings that happen within those Teams channels'.

"Instead of half an hour meeting with person A, another half an hour meeting with person B and hour on an email for person C, we'll invite them all to the channel and from there they are able to self-serve all information, and get involved with open conversations in channel."

Data in SWOOP Analytics' 2022 M365 Benchmarking identified CityFibre's Software Development team as one of the top performing large-size departments – with 50 or more team members. There are about 160 people working in CityFibre's Software Delivery team, with about 100 fulltime CityFibre employees and another 60 contractors who are invited into Teams as guests with full access.

In ranking departments in SWOOP's analysis, all seven of [SWOOP's Collaboration Habits](#) - Email Liberated, Asynchronous Collaborator, Chat Liberated, File Sharer, Community Contributor, Screen Sharer and Camera Confident – are combined to give an overall collaboration score for every member of the department, which is then compared with the 3,773 departments benchmarked in the 2022 report.

## How to turn a successful physical workspace into a digital workspace

Using Microsoft Teams as a hub to work out loud wasn't something that happened overnight.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Software Delivery team at CityFibre was already a highly collaborative team. The team practiced open collaboration with daily conversations and offices were set up to capitalize the flow of information. Desks were positioned around large screens so all build notifications from the Software Development team could be broadcast for all to see, and successes and failures could receive immediate feedback. This injected energy into the office, and was a catalyst for collaboration. Stakeholders were invited to come and see the team in action.



*CityFibre's Software Delivery team in action in the office.*

Then the pandemic hit and sent everyone to work from home. Suddenly, the team had to figure out how to make the successful physical workspace into a successful digital workplace.

Mike Bywater, Associate Director at CityFibre and head of the Software Development team, said it wasn't just about using Microsoft Teams channels to chat, but using Teams as a hub for all work, and a way to digitally replicate their collaborative way of working.

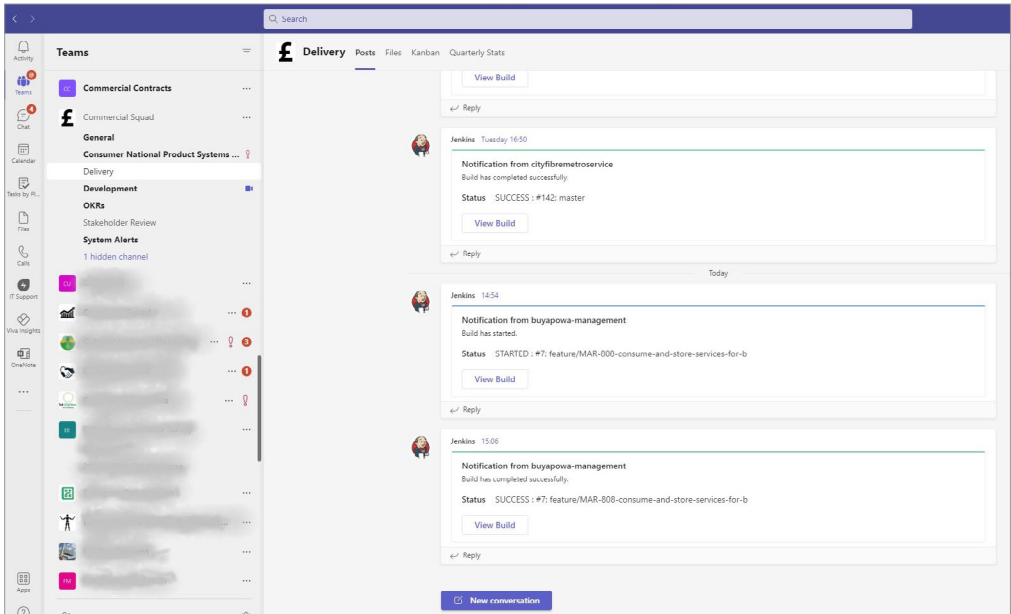
"It was things like having useful information in tabs in channels that would have been the equivalent to on the screen in the office," he said.

"It's having files and artefacts in those channels so when we're working on these things it's driving people to use these as an open workspace. And every channel has a purpose."



*Mike Bywater, Associate Director, Software Development, CityFibre.*

In order to replicate the large screen in the office with the constant build notification updates, a Teams channel was created and every deployment was added for all to see, providing fast feedback for everyone in the team. Mike said while he values face-to-face work, using Teams for the build notifications is here to stay, regardless of what the future of work might look like.



A screenshot of the Software Development team's notifications on Teams.

“In the office you can just pat somebody on the back and start talking about it, but this is the standard way of doing it now so that we can operate remotely, and our stakeholders can see what we’re doing,” Mike said.

“Making them (notifications) available through Teams so everybody inside and outside the squad can get access to it, we wouldn’t change that, it’s a great transition that we’ve made.

“It’s a better place to access it, even if you’re in the office. The screens are still great to have them there because they look cool and it can catch your eye. Still, the primary place where I go and check things now would be Teams over those screens.”

One the keys to making Teams a hub for the Software Development team is to keep Teams open for all to see.

“When you send an email, you have to think about everybody you want send it to and often it is forwarded on to others,” Mike said.

“If you just make the conversation completely open, then anybody who is interested, wants to ask a question, they can just join the conversation in our public channel and find the information.”

## Don't rob yourself of knowledge

"Every day we're not contributing to this bank of digital information, we're robbing our future selves."

This comment from John Holzman, Associate Director, Digital Collaboration at CityFibre, sums up the need for digital collaboration across every organization.

When digital collaboration is done right, it means knowledge is shared, problems are solved and more efficient work practices are benefiting every employee, as well as customers and suppliers.



*John Holzman, Associate Director,  
Digital Collaboration, CityFibre.*



When digital collaboration isn't working, knowledge dies and problems can become toxic. John's purpose at CityFibre is to make it a place where all employees work out loud to share knowledge and solve problems, just as the Software Development team is doing.

Since the start of the pandemic, CityFibre has had meteoric growth from 600 to 2,000 employees; from partnering with one Internet Service Provider (ISP) to now more than 35; building in 12 regions to now more than 60 across the UK, and working with dozens more building and design partners.

While most employees at CityFibre are using digital tools, primarily on the M365 suite, there remains a huge divide across the organization as to how they're being used, with the Software Development team the showcase best practice team, as proved by SWOOP's data analysis, but plenty of other departments sit at the bottom of the SWOOP benchmarking rankings.

"A realistic assessment of how we collaborate is that we're hanging on to old practices even though we have new tools available to us," John said.

It's for this reason John's new role was created at CityFibre – to get people collaborating openly on digital tools across the organization.

One of the first things on John's wish list is to make Microsoft Teams teams public, like Mike and Emma's team, rather than defaulting to private. CityFibre began using Teams at the start of the pandemic and became great at using meetings and chat. Chat was a quick and easy solution for solving one problem, but fails to help anyone not involved in the private chat.

"I try to make the argument to folks that every time you're talking about business content in chat, you're losing the opportunity of building information assets for the company," John said.

"I want the default (for Teams teams) to be public. The reason for that is it promotes the intentional, active, early worry-free sharing of bad information. A problem surfaced quickly is valuable and productive; a problem hidden and held in private is toxic. I want us to thank the bearer of bad news, not slap the person on the virtual wrist."

## **Join lots of teams but know how to turn off notifications**

Mike agrees with John's policy of making every team on Teams open, or public. The trick to making this work though is to turn off notifications for the teams you don't work with closely. This way you can search for any particular topic across any team.

"You want to be in more teams rather than less," Mike said.

"That's counter intuitive but it's about being members of many teams and being across many topics and tuning your notifications to be able to dip into things when you've got a particular thing you're looking for."

The term "working out loud" has been met with some apprehension at CityFibre, so John has coined the phrase "open digital collaboration" to describe the culture he wants his colleagues to embrace.

## **Finding collaboration champions within CityFibre to model best practice behaviors**

John arrived at CityFibre in mid 2020, a few months after Teams had been rolled out at the start of the pandemic. He came to CityFibre from real estate management consulting and managed services firm [RealFoundations](#), a world leader in digital collaboration.

It didn't take him long to realize how much lost knowledge was occurring across the entire organization by working heavily in chat, rather than in Microsoft Teams channels, where every team member can access the information.

"We have developed a chat addiction without knowing it's an addiction and without understanding it's a problem," John said.

"It was quickly clear that we had the right tool kit, but we were mis-using the tool kit that was right under our noses. I started to talk about it, just quietly at first, and then with a little more vim and vigor."

At the time, John was working in CityFibre's IT department and Mike was keen to learn more about John's approach to working out loud.

"The minute I said to him; 'There's a better way to do this, we should set up channels we should be able to work out loud'. And he got it, he went to town with this team," John said.

Mike explained that while the Software Development team was already working openly and collaboratively, which lent itself to an easier transition to remote work, John's ideas helped structure work in the right way.

"John has come in and helped us expand our virtual working practices," Mike said.

"The pandemic has forced us to really embrace these tools and practices. And so we've been better able to deal with things like our overseas colleagues in Ukraine - a situation that would have been far harder had happened in a pre-Teams era."

## **Online behavior changes = real-life behavior changes**

It's not just digital collaboration tools that have changed at CityFibre, but the way the tools have led to real-life behavior changes. Mike and Emma see people mimic the behaviors of working out loud to form ideas together as a team, receive feedback from the early stages, and remain fluid to develop the best outcome rather than come to a team with a finished product that may not meet the requirements because there's been no input along the way.

"It does change you as people," Mike said of working out loud.

"You get it in real life - people are raising ideas sooner and wanting to lay it out in front of everybody. There's a mentality shift that comes with all of this.

"They drive each other - the better tooling and then you see changes in the way you think about collaborating on ideas. With the stakeholders, it's not just about getting them to accept that the tooling is good, but also accept that it's good to share ideas sooner."

That's not an easy shift for many people.

"There's almost a bravery in working out loud," Mike said.

"The tooling is great, the conversation is great but that can be quite easy to start with, but then it gets a bit harder when you start thinking; 'Oh, everybody can see what I'm saying', so you've got to be a little bit more confident in what you're saying and a little bit more professional sometimes.

"It takes real bravery to put your ideas out there and start collaborating over a document."

### 3.3 Syngenta – Work Better Wednesdays



Six months into working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic, employees at [Syngenta](#) were feeling drained by the seemingly endless number of online meetings and calls.

The Workplace Technologies team in the IT department at Syngenta, one of world's largest agriculture companies, stepped in to help its 28,000 employees learn to work asynchronously, and reduce the time spent in meetings or replying to emails.

Trouble was, many had never heard of the word "asynchronous", or if they did, they didn't know what it meant to work that way. These aren't tech people – they're scientists, they're innovating crop protections, they're finding solutions to vegetable seeds, they're farmers getting food to tables around the world. And they're spread across the globe, speaking scores of different languages.

It was a challenge the IT department had to address – how to you phrase asynchronous work in a way anyone can immediately understand? Armed with the goal of reducing meetings, the IT department came up with the idea of running an online session called "Should you have a meeting?"

"Our goal was to get them out of that endless stream of back-to-back meetings and help them get on top of their overflowing inboxes," said Melinda Schaller, Syngenta's Intranet & Content Management Product Lead, Workplace Technologies.

"These were the main pain points we were hearing from many colleagues when it comes to the challenges of working from home."

The "Should you have a meeting?" session was a huge hit and people wanted more tips, which led to an all-day session about working more productively using digital tools, primarily the Microsoft 365 suite of tools.

"IT was a team that was used to saying; 'Here's a tool, here's how you install it, now go use it,'" Melinda said.

"But when the pandemic struck, we flipped that on its head and put our focus on showing people not just the technicality of these tools, but how they can work with them to actually boost their productivity and save time, which would then have the knock-on effect of allowing them to also look after their wellbeing.

"We put a focus on beginner sessions to cover off the basics, tips and tricks and key features of many of our tools. People couldn't believe this hadn't been done before – you are kind of expected to just know Office tools when you start in the workplace, but no one checks that you do!"



*Melinda Schaller, Intranet & Content Management Product Lead, Workplace Technologies, Syngenta.*



Syngenta's leaders were impressed with the response to the sessions and, naturally, asked for more. The IT team came up with the idea of a weekly program called Work Better Wednesdays.



The sessions were aimed at boosting productivity and building efficiencies using digital tools, and they continue today.

"We showed colleagues how they (digital tools) are going to save you time, they're going to make you more efficient and we appealed to that more emotional side of people by highlighting how they could use the tools to schedule and manage their time better so that they can actually switch off at the end of the day," Melinda said.

"The pandemic had this side effect on people that saw many colleagues feeling like, because they had all the tools and resources to be online all day everyday, that they somehow should. We held sessions to show certain features across a range of tools that allow you to take more ownership of your time while also communicating that to others.

"We showed them how to block time to focus on work so you can leave at the end of the day having done some of the work they committed to doing in all those meetings. We showed basic things like setting your hours and days off in your Outlook calendar, advising on how to write an Outlook signature for an out of office that explains you won't be checking your email every second of every day.

"These are the kinds of messages that really started to resonate with people because the 'always on' bubble was bursting and people were really feeling the pressure. It seems simple, but people needed not only the know-how, but the permission."

In 2021, Syngenta ran 93 Work Better Wednesdays sessions with almost 23,000 sign ups, reaching 67 countries. Sessions included navigating the basics of Microsoft Teams, how to use SharePoint to collaborate on files and how to use Microsoft Forms and OneDrive. They offered beginner trainings with a focus on demonstrating the tools, all the way to more advanced trainings.

In 2021, the focus of the sessions shifted from simply using the tools, to using them to support your wellbeing, and that of your team.

Two interactive sessions were run live every Wednesday in the morning and afternoon to cover every time zone, and they were recorded for anyone to watch later.

"This is where we started to introduce some of those concepts around asynchronous collaboration by leveraging the tools that are available," Melinda said.

"The first job was letting them know what tools are there and how to use them and then the asynchronous started to flow out of that almost naturally as it was the obvious next step in answering 'there must be a better way of working that doesn't mean I'm in back-to-back meetings all day everyday'. It is a theme that we still have to this day and I feel it's now something people understand a lot better – but there is still work to do."



Feedback from Syngenta employees about Work Better Wednesdays sessions.

## Collaboration champions

It's no coincidence a department from Syngenta topped the rankings for Asynchronous Collaborator in SWOOP Analytics' 2022 M365 benchmarking analysis of 3,773 departments across 18 organizations.

The Asynchronous Collaborator measure in SWOOP shows how good you are at collaborating in Teams Channels and Yammer (asynchronous) compared with collaborating in Teams meetings/calls (synchronous).

Syngenta departments also dominated the top rankings for File Sharer, which shows how good you are at working with files on SharePoint (shared by default) compared with OneDrive (private by default), and Camera Confidence, which shows how good you are at turning on a camera during Teams meetings/calls.

The organization also had multiple departments ranking in the top 10 for Community Contributor, which shows how good you are at balancing participation in Yammer communities with working in Teams, and the No.1 department for Screen Sharer, which shows how good you are at sharing a screen during Team meetings/calls.

While Syngenta had so many high ranking departments across SWOOP's [Seven Collaboration Habits](#), it didn't top the combined rankings in SWOOP's benchmarking. This is probably explained by the fact some of the 40,000+ employees across all branches of Syngenta Group and its subsidiaries have only limited access to M365. For example, seasonal workers have access only to Outlook and employees in China can't access the entire M365 suite.

For anyone embarking on the digital collaboration journey, especially towards working asynchronously, Melinda notes it took about 18 months for change to really been seen across the organization and she was thrilled to see the data from SWOOP confirmed the effectiveness of the effort.

"It took us half of 2020 and all of 2021 to get the concept through and the way we did it was to highlight that there's a tool set there that means you don't have to be on a call all the time – and then, here's how to use it," she said.

Melinda generously shared, in-depth, how Syngenta is addressing some of the Seven Collaboration Habits identified by SWOOP.

***Email Liberated - Shows how good you are at collaborating in Teams channels and Yammer compared with sending emails.***

Many of the themes for Work Better Wednesdays, especially in 2021 and 2022, have been around wellbeing and using M365 tools to work smarter, not harder. SWOOP's benchmarking analysis found the constant interruptions from email and Teams chat is significant. Syngenta encouraged employees to block out time where email was effectively blocked to avoid interruption to the flow of work.

"There are lots of tips we gave people and we had to work closely with HR on a some of these things to make sure that people felt like they were empowered to implement what we were actually suggesting," Melinda said.

"Things like putting an out of office on your email to say; 'I'm only checking my emails between this hour and this hour, get me on chat or wait for my reply'."



Melinda's email signature.

***Asynchronous Collaborator - Shows how good you are at collaborating in Teams channels and Yammer (asynchronous) compared with collaborating in Teams meetings/calls (synchronous).***

A year into the pandemic and in an ever-changing global landscape of being in and out of lockdowns, working in the office and then being sent back to working from home, many people were struggling with exhaustion and disruption.

Syngenta's IT department worked with HR to ensure employees felt empowered to use the M365 tools to work asynchronously – to block time out to work uninterrupted and not always be available.

"We had HR come in and give some of the messages like; 'You are allowed to look after your wellbeing', because people just didn't know that they had the freedom to own their own time," Melinda said.

"From the IT side we could show them; 'This is how you block out your calendar, this is how you set your working hours in your calendar, this is how you do out of offices, this is how you put a message in your Teams chat to say you're offline'.

"All the technical aspects of it we could cover, but we needed HR to come in and say; 'You're allowed to do this. Your time is yours'. That was a huge cultural shift because we'd gone from being an organization where people felt like that had to be at a desk in an office from 9-5 and now suddenly people were picking their own hours - this was a huge change.

"All these things have really led to that asynchronous score."

***Community Contributor - Shows how good you are at balancing participation in Yammer communities with working in Teams.***

Syngenta CEO Erik Fyrwald has a Yammer community called CEO Stories and News. Pre-COVID, he would use Yammer to update Syngenta staff on his travels – whom he met, what was discussed, plans for the future. Over the past few years, data from SWOOP Analytics shows the CEO Stories and News community is always one of Syngenta's most engaging communities.

When COVID put an end to travel, instead of no longer posting his updates on Yammer, Erik updated his people on how he was dealing with the change.

"For Erik I can imagine it would have been a big change to all of a sudden be alone," Melinda said.

"He didn't pretend to know everything and pretend everything is fine but he actually took people on his learning journey with him. For example, he shared how he initially didn't like online meetings but learned how to do them effectively for business continuity and has found it great in terms of being able to stay connected to other he wouldn't usually see.

"That honesty is what really resonates with people and that is a very much part of the culture here at Syngenta."

Melinda believes this leadership from Erik, and other Syngenta leaders, acts like a permission to encourage everyone to go to Yammer to ask questions and share their stories.

"Things like being honest about if you don't understand something, or you don't get something or you need help - that's really how we use Yammer," Melinda said.

"We have a lot of help groups, no question is a silly question. I think he (Erik) really helps perpetuate that with the CEO Stories and News."

***File Sharer - Shows how good you are at working with files on SharePoint (shared by default) compared with OneDrive (private by default).***

The topic for many of the first Work Better Wednesdays sessions in 2020 were on SharePoint. To put it in context, Syngenta started using Microsoft Teams in some departments only a few months before everyone was forced to work from home.



Erik Fyrwald, CEO, Syngenta.

Of course, the pandemic forced a full and swift rollout of Teams. Prior to Teams being launched, files were stored in different areas and working from home meant people often could no longer access those files. Many people had no idea files could be stored and edited on SharePoint, and they didn't know about permissions or document libraries. SharePoint file sharing sessions continue to be some of the most popular at Syngenta.

The IT team do step-by-step sessions and simultaneously open a test environment during each session for everyone to practice.

"When people were struggling to access their files at the start of the pandemic, we all of a sudden had to urge people to work differently with files. Many people were used to on-premise shared drives and storing files on their desktop. Very quickly we had to change the ways of working for many people and it was an uphill battle at first. Once they realized the benefits (co-authoring, online anywhere anytime any device access) we had them hooked," Melinda said.

"We still run sessions on this topic and explore the features around storing files on SharePoint."

Melinda was thrilled to have the data from SWOOP confirm the messaging around SharePoint has been heard and Syngenta staff are now successfully file sharing on M365.

***Camera Confident - Shows how good you are at turning on a camera during Teams meetings/calls and Screen Sharer - Shows how good you are at sharing a screen during Teams meetings/calls.***

With offices in 90 countries, Syngenta's primary video tool is Zoom. This was a decision made at the start of the pandemic when Microsoft Teams was yet to be rolled out to all 28,000 permanent employees and before Teams was as reliable as today for uninterrupted calls.

More recently though, people are using Teams for calls, Melinda said, especially for one-on-one calls and often screens are shared on these calls for quick fixes, especially when they are IT help calls.

"If people are using Teams to call people, it usually is a one-on-one situation where you need to quickly check in on somebody, or we use it a lot in IT to do a screen session to help people through an issue they might be experiencing," Melinda said.

"The use case for Teams for us when it comes to calling is that more casual interaction and that lends itself better to having camera on, whereas Zoom is great for webinars and larger scale meetings."

Learn how [Syngenta's leaders became some of the world's best at engaging staff in our Yammer case study.](#)



*David Fogarty,  
Senior project manager,  
Engage Squared.*

### 3.4 Engage Squared – where collaboration is non-negotiable

Senior project manager David Fogarty doesn't have Outlook installed on his desktop. On the rare occasions he needs to check email, he'll open the browser and log onto Outlook.

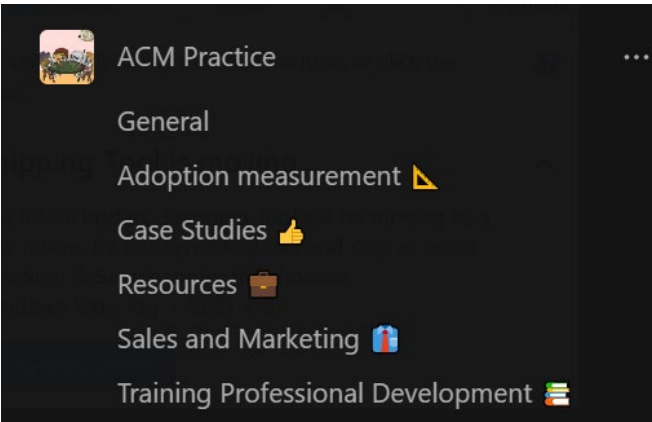
David works in a digital workspace all day, every day. Yet to work efficiently and collaboratively, he knows email is rarely necessary. David works within the Microsoft 365 suite, primarily in Microsoft Teams, along with his eight colleagues who make up the Project Management Office (PMO) team at consulting company [Engage Squared](#).

The PMO team – who go by the name Team Awesome – have a non-negotiable way of working out loud, whether that's internally as a team, or for any project with a client. When Engage Squared's PMO team was informed they were among the top three small-size departments (less than 20 people) in SWOOP Analytics' 2022 M365 benchmarking, frankly, they weren't at all surprised because all their work is carried out with a focus on collaboration.

In ranking the top departments in SWOOP's M365 benchmarking, all seven of SWOOP's collaboration habits - Email Liberated, Asynchronous Collaborator, Chat Liberated, File Sharer, Community Contributor, Screen Sharer and Camera Confident – are combined to give an overall collaboration score for every member of the department, which is then compared with the 3,773 departments benchmarked in the 2022 report.

#### Non-negotiable kick off around collaboration – no more email

Every time Engage Squared begins a project with a new client, a new team is created on Microsoft Teams, whether it be on the client's Teams tenant or on Engage Squared's Teams tenant. A new channel in that team will then be created for every project.



*An example of a team on Engage Squared's Microsoft Teams tenant.*

Every file, every shared document, every task on Microsoft Planner, every OneNote related to that project – it's all shared in the relevant Teams channel. Conversations are also carried out in the channel, not in chat, for everyone to have total transparency.

"At every project kick-off we ask the customer if they would like us to host a shared team, or them to host a shared team, so that forces the channel for the project," David said.

"We'll set ourselves up with a team per customer and then a channel per engagement. So communication is bundled together on Teams."

Senior Project Manager Ruby Bailey describes the process as "non-negotiable". As for email, if anyone does slip up and send an email rather than post in the Teams channel, the email is immediately forwarded to the Teams channel and the team members are @mentioned, alerting them to the content.

"That way, if somebody slips up and goes back to email, then we bring it back to Teams," Ruby said.

There is usually an agreement that contracts and status reports are emailed to the client but David said they are also copied into the relevant Teams channel for anyone (with access) to review.

"This team has built some really great work practices to embrace working out loud and being transparent, with a bit of tech automation to encourage and reinforce that," said Engage Squared CEO Stephen Monk.

"In particular, we have a 'reporting' channel in this team, which project managers cc their weekly or monthly reports in, which means that progress on project delivery and any risks or issues that we're having are really visible to the rest of the team, and to our delivery management.

"We then have a bit of automation which pulls those reports into a dashboard so we can track to make sure all of our customers are being kept up to date, and it automatically attaches those reports to our project management tool, which reinforces this culture."

## **#WeDoneGood – full circle on M365 - start with Teams, end with Yammer**

At the end of each project, a summary of the project is shared on Yammer, along with any lessons learned. Each post includes the hashtag #WeDoneGood and data from [SWOOP Analytics](#) shows it's the No.1 Hot Topic on Engage Squared's Yammer network. (Ruby also revealed there is another cheeky hashtag used for projects that didn't go so well).

"When we write the project summary of what happened, with a few lessons learned, you mention the consultants who worked on the project and it just invites 'atta-boys' and attention as projects work their way to the end," David said.

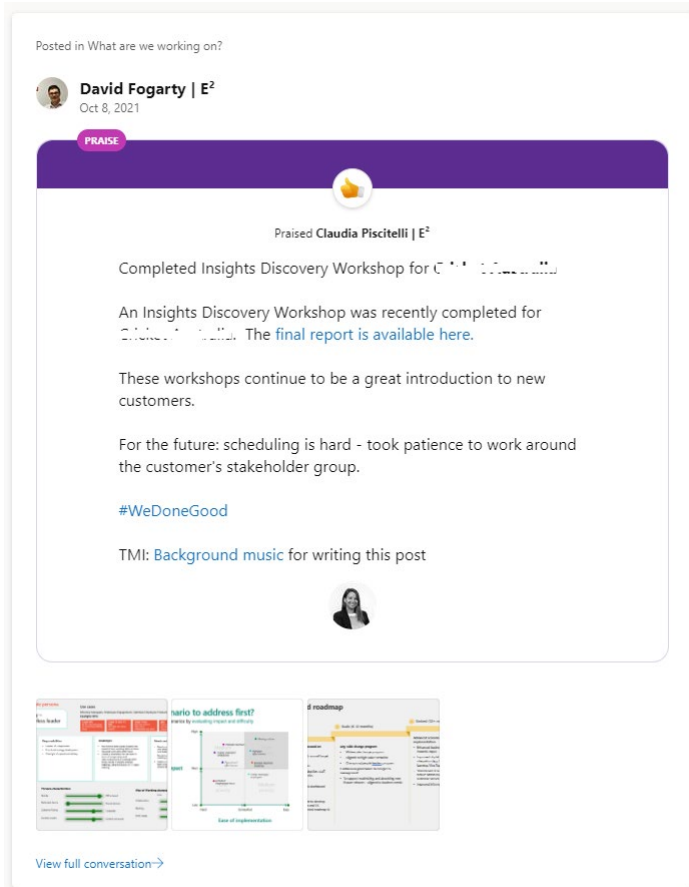
"So there's a process at the beginning and a process at the end."



*Ruby Bailey,  
Senior Project Manager,  
Engage Squared.*

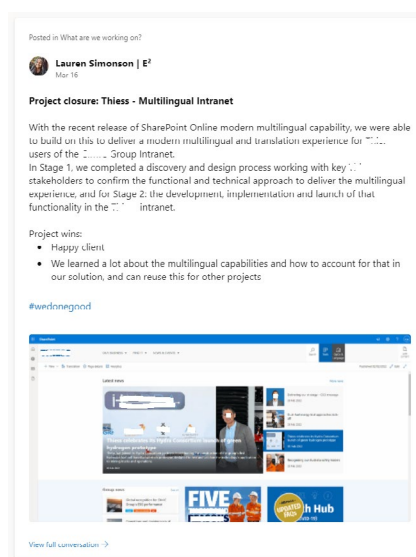
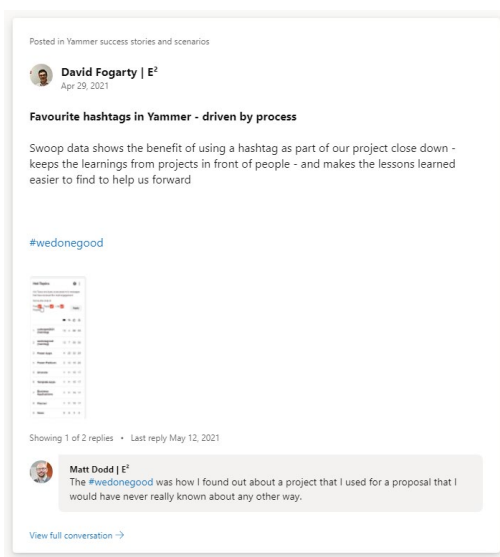


*Stephen Monk, CEO, Engage Squared.*



An example of a #WeDoneGood Yammer post.

With Engage Squared offices and colleagues spread around the world, sharing the lessons learned on Yammer allows every employee to gain knowledge from the experience and learn what worked and what didn't. In this way, the PMO team is participating in organization-wide social learning, which helps deepen Engaged Squared's project management core competency. These posts are then reviewed on a monthly basis using a filter search, David said.



More examples of a #WeDoneGood Yammer posts from the PMO team at Engage Squared.



"This is the way we work and if people start doing it from the get-go, that's the real key," Ruby said.

"Nobody likes change half-way through a project. If you're doing this right from the get-go, people very quickly see the real value and they're on board for this and we like to set a good example for clients."

## How to hold hybrid meetings

For Engage Squared's Team Awesome to top the collaboration score across the thousands of departments analyzed in SWOOP's benchmarking, they were strong performers in all seven of [SWOOP's Collaboration Habits](#), including screen sharing and using the camera during online meetings.

As more employees return to hybrid work, it begs the questions; What do hybrid meetings look like? How do you screen share in a hybrid meeting? Do cameras stay on?

Team Awesome has put together a list of tips and tricks to support employees to run better and more effective hybrid meetings.

**In a nutshell, hybrid meetings work when those in the office take their laptop to a meeting room, along with everyone else who is attending in-person, and everyone looks into their personal laptop with a headset on.**

Ruby shared Team Awesome's tips and tricks.

### ***Before the meeting:***

- Make sure you have a clear agenda so people know if they should attend or not, saving everyone time.
- Utilize the default meetings settings in Outlook. For example, delay start time by 5 minutes or end early by default so you can have a break.
- Use whiteboard from Microsoft Teams so you can set one up ahead of time - save time, see visuals, interactive for all.
- Make people aware of being late or any issues, utilizing chat function.

### ***During the meeting:***

- Record - so people who were unable to join can watch it back later.
- Make it clear the purpose of the chat functionality at the beginning. For example, questions or ideas so you do not interrupt the flow and can come back.
- Remote by default mindset, even when back in the office. People join from their laptop regardless, with headset on.
- Face your laptops, no cross-chat in the meeting to ensure people who are remote feel included.
- Use PowerPoint Live when sharing a presentation. It enables you to co-present, enables you to share presenting so you are not saying; "next slide please".
- Vision impaired, can't use screen reader when you are simply sharing your screen, PowerPoint Live solves this.

- Use immersive reader so people with dyslexia can consume content. Can translate content for you into different languages if selected by viewers, can click on links live, so you don't have to wait until you share the deck to see.
- Encourage team to use reactions to give real-time feedback, iterate, focus etc.

***After the meeting:***

- Follow up with notes and actions.
- If you formalize in Planner, make sure you update Planner just before the meeting.
- @mention people, so it ends up on their "to do" list.

**Teams chat versus channels – aim for 80% working out loud in channels**

Along with every Teams channel created for a project, Engage Squared also usually creates a Teams chat. Which begs the question, when do you use channels and when do you use chat?

"For each project we have a chat function which is for quick chats that don't necessarily require anything formal around them," Ruby said.

"The channel is for working out loud, talking about the project, talking about things that we need to do, tracking tasks, sharing information that everybody needs to know.

"The project chat is more about; 'Hey, I'm running late for a meeting. Can you cover for me?'"

Using channels v chat in this way is usually discussed at the initial kick-off project meeting. Ruby said the rule of thumb is 80% working out loud in the Teams channel, @mentioning the correct people, updating Planner, holding project stand-ups in the channel, sharing files and notes and scheduling meetings. This allows for visibility, governance, hand overs, and covering sick leave or holiday leave.

**David and Ruby have never met face to face, so they think**

David, who is based in Sydney, and Ruby, who is based more than 700 kilometres away in Melbourne, have worked together every day for the past 18 months and feel like they know each other intimately on a professional basis. Yet they realized they have never met face to face. Well, they don't think they have, but neither is 100% sure.

"Working the way we do, you feel like you've known everyone forever," Ruby said.

"We see each other every day, talk with each other every day. It's really hard to say if you've met them or not, or if you do meet them in person, you feel like you've known them for years."



*Four of Engage Squared's Team Awesome met face to face for the first time in late April, 2021.  
L-R: David Fogarty, Elaine Botton, Daniel Margison and Ian Anderson.*

## Walk and talk meetings

As hybrid work and work from home continues to evolve, Engage Squared is pushing the goal posts to experiment with different types of meetings.

As much as camera on and screen sharing practices are encouraged, there are times when camera on and screen sharing is unnecessary for internal meetings and Engage Squared encourages employees to make the most of these meetings by taking a walk while talking, or even multitasking by doing something manual, like cleaning the bathroom or unpacking the dishwasher.

"We also have a lot of internal meetings and we do encourage people to get out and go for a walk, especially during lockdown," Ruby said.

"For many one-on-one internal meetings, I'll ask if we need the screen and, if not, I'll ask if they mind if I go for a walk around the block. 90% of the time, they're happy with that."

During the COVID-19 lockdowns, Engage Squared gave employees an expense account to grab a coffee to encourage them to get out of the home office for one-on-one meetings and team catch-ups.

"This policy continues today, to help break up meetings and replicate some of the magic of in-person conversations across geography and time zones," Stephen said.

"Combined with the company's tech fund, which allows staff to purchase new equipment for their home office, initiatives like the coffee allowance help staff to stay mentally and physically engaged."

Ruby said recently Engage Squared has also encouraged staff to use audio calls when it's appropriate so they can multitask with manual jobs.

Think about it. If you're listening in to a meeting on your computer but you're not required to actively participate, chances are, even with the camera on, you glance at email, or Yammer, or maybe LinkedIn, and see a message you reply to.

Often when you're doing something physical, like going for a walk or unpacking the dishwasher while also listening to a call, you're much more focused on the conversation than if you were at your desktop and being distracted by sending an email.

"For example, I was cleaning the bathroom the other day and I logged onto one of the resources calls and I actually listened to every single word because I was scrubbing, not checking my emails," Ruby said.

"It's proven you absorb more of the information than when you're at your desktop, and multitasking and maybe checking emails. It's a very recent thing we're doing."

It's examples like this that make it unsurprising Engage Squared made the 2022 Financial Review Boss Best Places to Work list.

*Learn more about [Team Awesome in this case study](#) and how a bot is [helping with innovation at Engage Squared in this case study](#).*

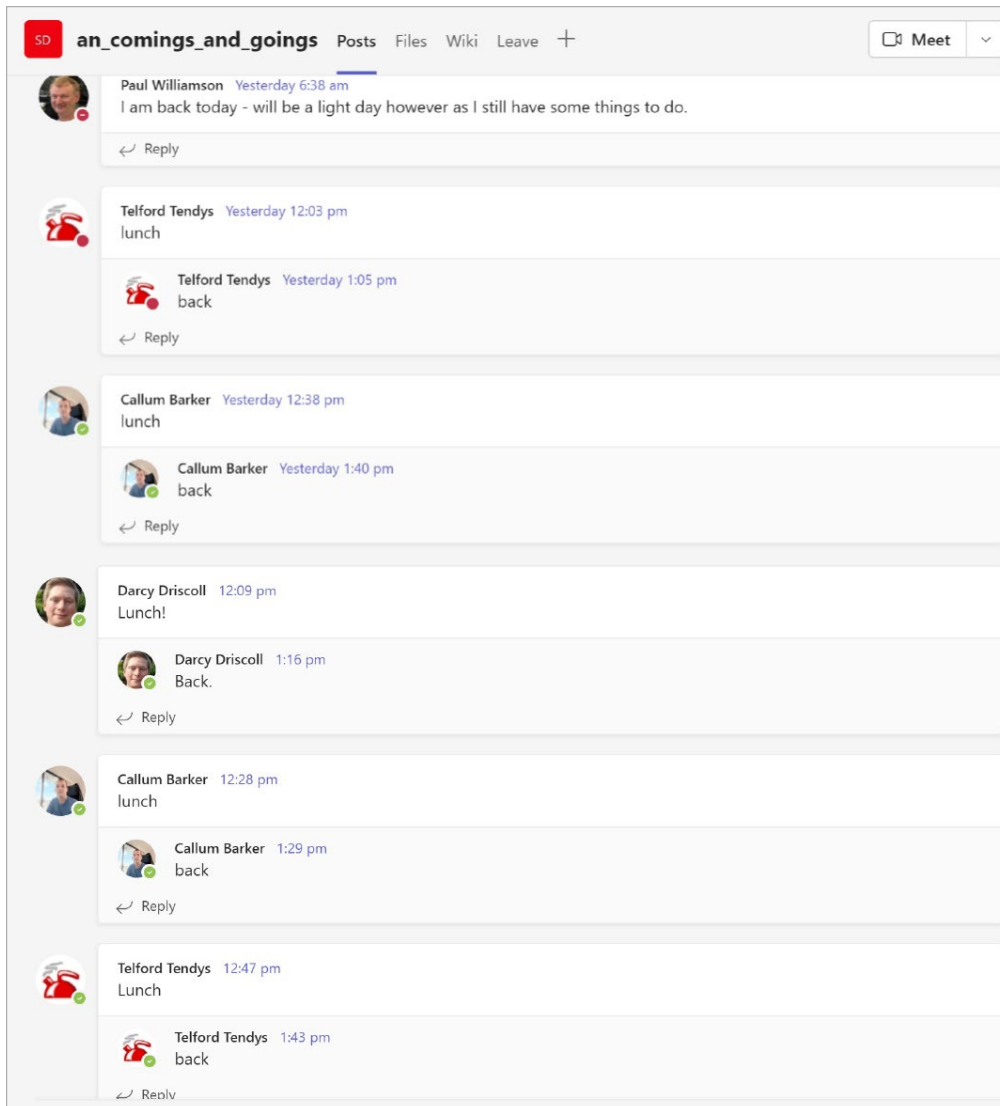
### 3.5 SWOOP Analytics – Practicing what we preach



Every time one of the 11 members of the SWOOP Analytics Development and Operations team heads out for lunch, or leaves their home office to attend an appointment or go for a walk, they write a quick note in their “Comings and Goings” Microsoft Teams channel.

Doing so means every other team member always knows their colleagues’ availability. If they need a quick answer to a question, rather than wondering why someone is not responding, they can immediately see if that colleague is away, and when they return. It’s a completely transparent way of working and it takes, literally, a second to do so. It allows all 11 team members to work collaboratively when they need to do so.

It looks as simple as this:



Screenshot of SWOOP’s Development and Operations team’s Comings and Goings channel on Microsoft Teams.

SWOOP Analytics has always been a 100% remote working organization. Employees are scattered across the globe, in different time zones. One of the benefits for employees is they can choose their availability. For example, one developer prefers to start his days around 1pm or 2pm and work through his afternoon and evening hours. This works well, as long as his colleagues know when he's onboard. He does this with a quick message in the "Comings and Goings" channel.

## **No.1 for Chat Liberated and Email Liberated**

The "Comings and Goings" channel is one of about 15 channels SWOOP's Development and Operations team works in every day. While it's a super simple example of a Microsoft Teams channel in action, it's also a super simple example of a productive working habit. So it was no fluke this Development and Operations team ranked No.1 in SWOOP's 2022 benchmarking of M365 for Chat Liberated and Email Liberated measures, from the 3,773 departments analyzed.

Email Liberated measures how good an individual/team/department/organization is at collaborating in Teams channels and Yammer compared with sending emails. Chat Liberated measures how well an individual/team/department/organization is at collaborating in Teams channels and Yammer compared with collaborating in Teams chat.

SWOOP's Chief Technology Officer Paul Williamson said while there has been no directive not to use email, no one in the team would ever use email to collaborate with each other. In fact, said Senior Developer Benjamin Pearson, email is only occasionally used to contact a customer or to receive meeting invites, which also come in via Teams. He said customers are also invited into Teams as guests on the SWOOP tenant.

"The trouble with emails is they are totally unstructured," said Paul, who is currently trying to convince his Lions club to ditch email in favour of Teams.

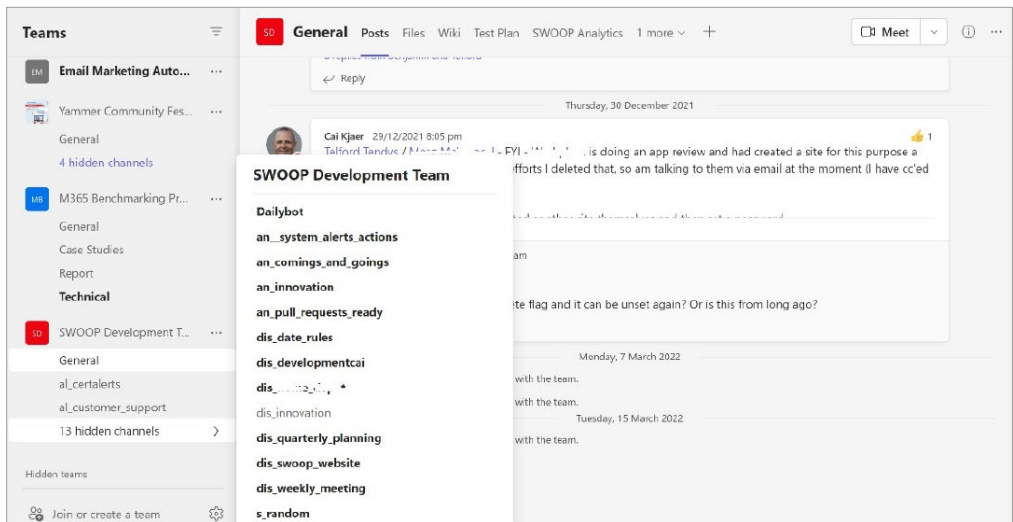
"You end up with replies and then you end with somebody who replies to something about somebody else that is a completely different subject and then they say to you; 'Did you receive my email about this?'

"It's hard to find out what's going on, whereas with a channel message it's very obvious. It's structured and it's faster."

He pointed to the example of the Comings and Goings channel.

"If you want to know what's going on with anybody you can go and click on the Comings and Goings channels. If that was an email thread, I'm not sure how you would survive trying to work out who was doing what," Paul said.

Another way the Development and Operations team organizes its Teams channels is to name them "announcement" or "discussion" channels.



A screenshot of SWOOP's Development and Operations team on Microsoft Teams. The "an" prefix is for announcement channels and the "dis" prefix for discussion channels.

"You don't go using announcement channels to do discussions because you actually want to know what's going on when you go and look in an announcement channel," Paul said.

"You're not supposed to come in here and say; 'How did lunch go?' Because if you come in here and have a discussion about how lunch went, you can't see what's going on at a glance."

The Development and Operations team Teams channels weren't always this structured. They evolved organically as the team and company grew, said Senior Developer Telford Tendys.

"It grew that way because we started by having only one or two channels, and everything was in the same channel, and gradually we started to work it out," Telford said.

"For something like the Comings and Goings channel, mostly it's there to get that stuff off all the other channels."

## When to use Chat and when to use Channels

Ranking No.1 in SWOOP's benchmarking for Chat Liberated means the Development and Operations team is successfully collaborating in Teams Channels and Yammer rather than relying on Chat messages. But how do you know when to use chat and when to use channels?

"You use chat when you want to talk to a specific person," Paul said.

"For example, when I was having problems with accepting a meeting invite to this meeting, I sent a personal chat message. It can be the same with a specific group of people.

"If it's something general you need to send to the team, or a specific function, then you put it in channels.

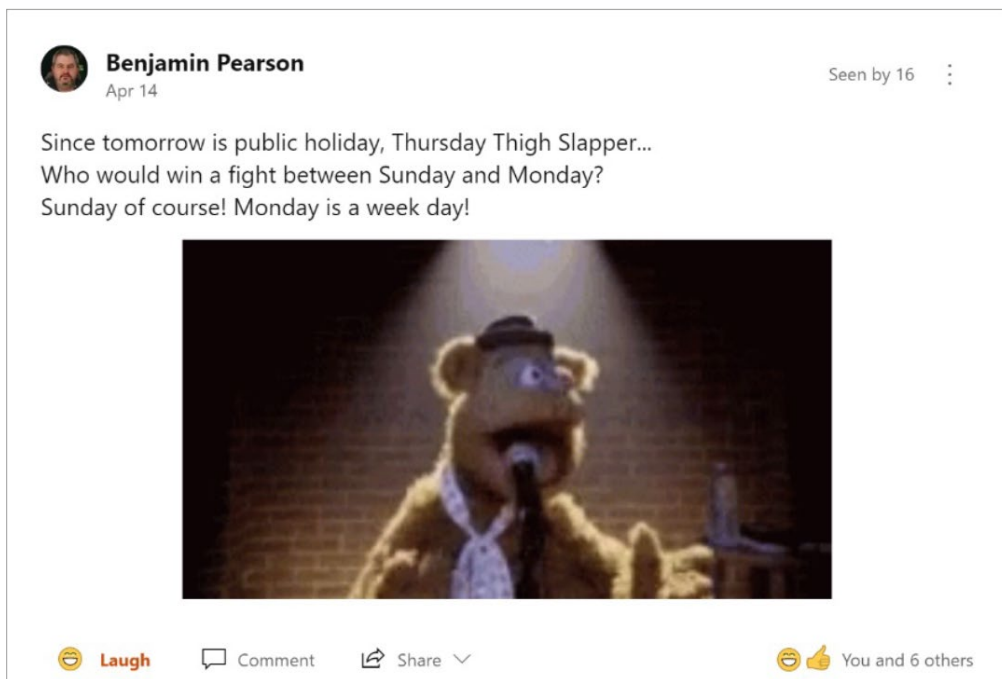
“Otherwise, if you have channels for every combination of people that you talk to it would get very complicated. If the conversation doesn't fit into a channel, we would usually go to a chat.”

The Development and Operations also dip in and out of Yammer, where they communicate with SWOOP staff outside of the development team. For example, members of the Development and Operations team are regular visitors to the Product Development Yammer community where they can discuss developments with Customer Success Managers and leadership.

Benjamin Pearson is the Most Influential Person on SWOOP's “Social” Yammer community, where he regularly shares updates about holidays, interesting news items or dad jokes.

“The Social community is about sharing and caring, and also a way to keep things entertaining,” Benjamin said.

“I only recently started doing ‘Friday Funnies’ - or the ‘Thursday Thigh Slapper’ - to lighten the mood before the weekend.”











A Yammer post from Senior Developer Benjamin Pearson.



### Influential People ? ⋮

*Influential People* are people that many others engage with.

NAME	PEOPLE ENGAGED
 Benjamin Pearson	17
 Sharon Dawson	16
 Cai Kjaer	16
 Jeff Pairis	14
 Laurence Lock Lee	14
 Elwyn Chow	14
 Pete Johns	14
 Coco Molina	13

*The Most Influential People in SWOOP's "Social" Yammer community.*

SWOOP CEO Cai Kjaer was thrilled to learn the Development and Operations team ranked No.1 for Chat Liberated and Email Liberated in SWOOP's inaugural M365 benchmarking.

"We've always made it an unwritten rule not to use email internally," Cai said.

"We are all about working out loud and working transparently so it's wonderful to see the data shows we practice what we preach!"



*Some of SWOOP's Development and Operations team. The team works remotely but regularly get together for social events and face to face collaboration.*

# 4 Assessment Methodology

## - Collaboration habits and collaboration score


Assessment of our “Collaboration Champions” is centered on what we consider are best practice digital collaboration habits. While M365 activity levels play a role in setting minimum activity thresholds, collaboration performance is assessed by how individuals behave, according to SWOOP’s nominated [Seven Collaboration Habits](#) (see section 4.1). For privacy reasons, we are not benchmarking individuals or any business segments with less than five members, which is consistent with the [default minimum group size for analytics used by Microsoft](#) within Viva Insights.




### 4.1 Seven Collaboration Habits



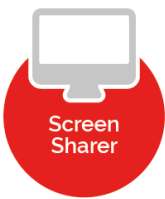
#### - How an overall collaboration score is determined

At SWOOP we have conducted digital working benchmarking studies with Microsoft Teams, Yammer and Workplace by Meta. These studies have drawn out numerous case studies from participants and commentary from our subject matter expert consulting partners. We think we are as well informed as anyone to comment astutely on what makes a good digital collaboration habit. We accept, however, that in the world of digital working there are conflicting opinions. We address many of these in our article on [Digital behavioral change – are you motivated enough?](#)

The table below presents the selected seven collaboration habits, the rationale for their selection and how the raw ratios are calculated:

Collaboration Habit	Rationale	Calculation
	<p>Email has been the main business communication tool for decades, but also the cause of much frustration.</p> <p>It is easy to overlook an important message in overflowing mailboxes. The Email Liberated have learned to reduce the volume by transitioning their internal communications to Teams channels and Yammer conversations.</p> <p>Work colleagues get the urgency of attention they deserve, reserving email for external interactions.</p>	<p>(Yammer posts &amp; replies + Microsoft Teams channel messages) / Sent email</p>

Collaboration Habit	Rationale	Calculation
	<p>Changes in work styles and hybrid work means many rely heavily on Teams calls, meetings and chat to stay connected. Such demands on our time can lead to feelings of overload and burnout.</p> <p>Asynchronous Collaborators have learned to balance these synchronous interactions with more time respectful asynchronous interactions in Teams channels and Yammer discussions where people can respond when it suits their flow of work. More flexible work patterns are therefore greatly enhanced.</p>	<p>(Yammer posts &amp; replies + Teams channel messages) / Teams meetings (minutes)</p>
	<p>Chat Liberated people aim to use a mix of communication channels to maximize their collaboration potential.</p> <p>Today, one-on-one private chat dominates our interactions. Extending your interactions to Teams channels and Yammer communities can help you become more Chat Liberated as others can more easily follow your work.</p>	<p>(Yammer posts &amp; replies + Teams channel messages) / Teams chat messages</p>
	<p>Remote working has resulted in us working more intensely with our close colleagues. Research from Microsoft has shown our broader networks (and consequently innovation levels) have suffered during the COVID-19 period.</p> <p>Community Contributors make a point of taking time out from day-to-day work in Teams to be active in communities platform Yammer to connect with others. It's not only a virtual water-cooler, but also an investment in your broader reputation as a skilled practitioner.</p>	<p>(Yammer posts &amp; replies + Yammer likes) / (Teams channel messages + Teams chat messages + Teams calls)</p>

Collaboration Habit	Rationale	Calculation
	<p>Our common habit is to work on files in our private spaces, before releasing them to shared spaces when ready. With the growth in co-authored content, versioning can become a nightmare.</p> <p>File Sharers have learned to work in the shared space. They and their co-authors make use of the excellent co-authoring toolsets now available, to maximize their shared content production.</p>	$\frac{\text{SharePoint viewed or edited count}}{\text{(OneDrive active files count + SharePoint viewed or edited count)}}$
	<p>While sometimes controversial, the weight of expert opinion is that your camera should be on in video meetings. Human connection is always stronger when you can see who you are conversing with.</p> <p>People who are Camera Confident are biased toward having the camera on, but may also have times when they will turn it off e.g. bandwidth issues, some webinars, but will aim to inform their colleagues as to why.</p>	$\frac{\text{Video time (minutes)}}{\text{audio time (minutes)}}$
	<p>Participating in screen sharing is an effective way of communicating with a virtual audience, minimizing the potential for miscommunication.</p> <p>Screen Sharers are quick to share their screens or encourage their colleagues to do so when communications get bogged down in complexities. It's also a good break from just talking heads.</p>	$\frac{\text{Screenshare (minutes)}}{\text{audio time (minutes)}}$

You should note that all the Seven Collaboration Habits are calculated as ratios or proportions. Like financial ratios, they reflect a “balance” between competing measures. For example, a debt/equity ratio reflects how a firm chooses to finance itself; the asynchronous collaboration ratio reflects a choice between asynchronous and synchronous collaboration. Our proposition is that the scores for each collaboration habit should be maximized to an appropriate level (set by our benchmarking). Read section 5.10 to learn about what “good” looks like.

## 4.2. Benchmarking process

In our product [SWOOP for M365](#) we used a reference set of four organizations and some 70,000 staff to create a score for each collaboration habit. We calculated raw collaboration habit ratios first, and then converted these to [percentile rankings](#) from 0 to 100 for each collaboration habit. Note that individual people are anonymized by the allocation of a unique ID code. The organizations in the reference set are active users of both Teams and Yammer, so we anticipate their collaboration levels will be at the better end of the scale. The following diagram summarizes the overall benchmarking process:

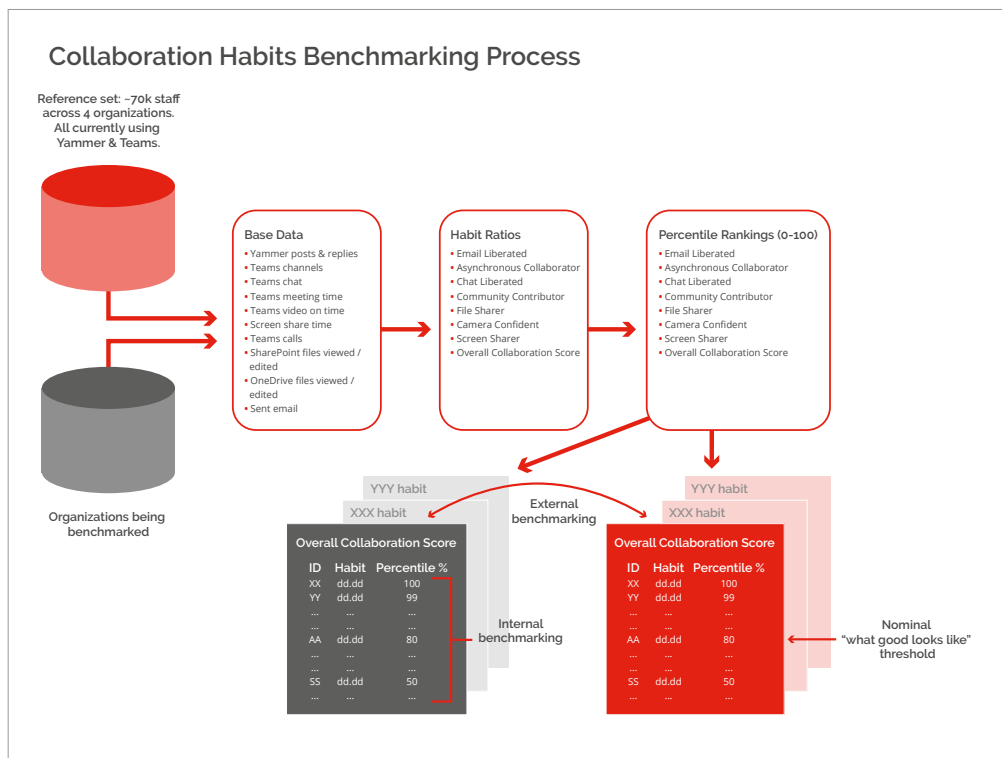


Figure 1 - Collaboration habits benchmarking process

External benchmarking is achieved by matching the raw habit scores with a similar score from the reference set. The percentile score from the reference set is then assigned as the external benchmark score. For example, say Susan in Organization A has a score of 67 for Camera Confidence, which equates to a percentile rank of 60%. Susan is therefore ranked in the top 40% for camera confidence in Organization A. When we match Susan's score of 67 against the full reference set, an internal score of 67 might drop to only 53% because of the larger comparison set.

On the SWOOP for M365 dashboard, an individual's habits are compared with an external reference set to determine their digital habit score. In the example above, Susan would score 53 for Camera Confidence.

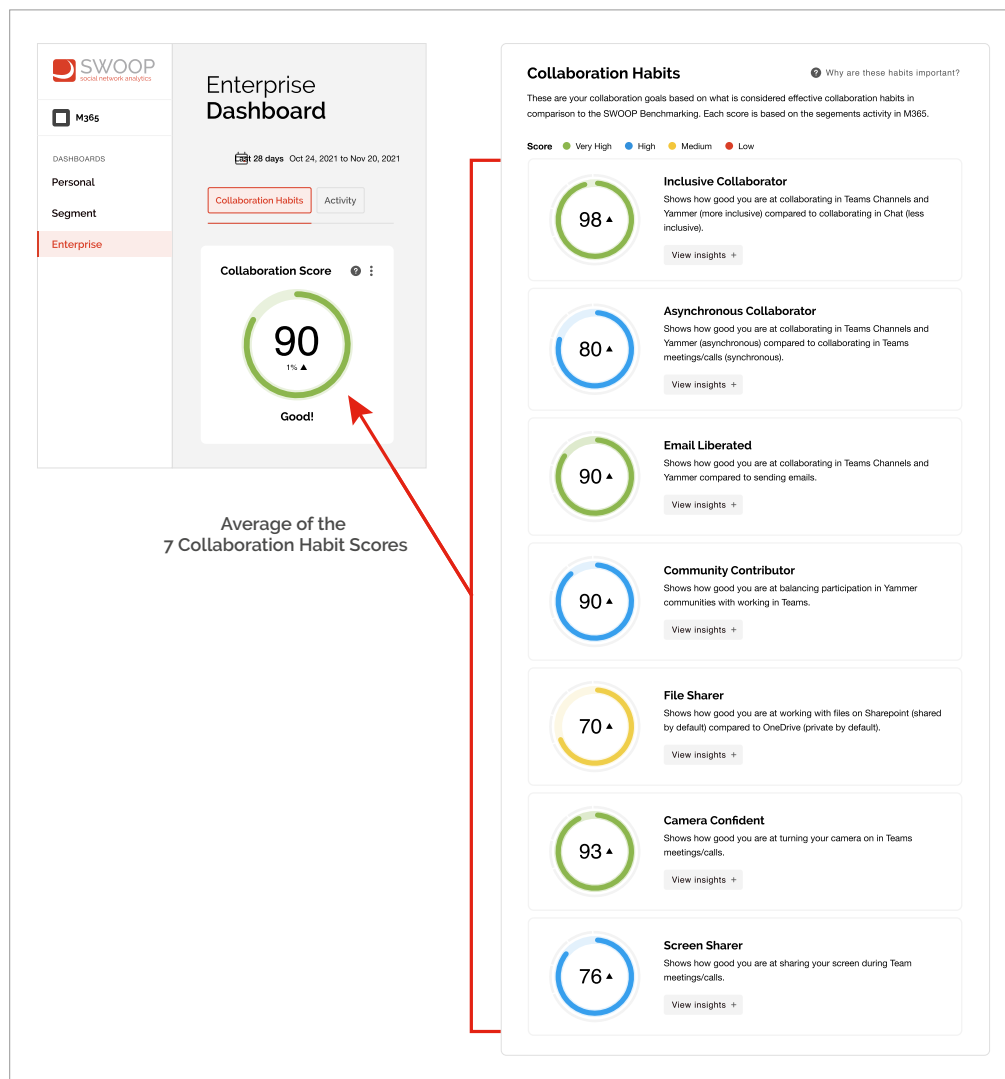


Figure 2 - Overall collaboration score

The overall collaboration score is the average of the percentile scores across the Seven Habits. To calculate the collaboration score for an organization or a business segment of an organization, the individual member scores are aggregated. The screen shot in Figure 2 is an enterprise-level dashboard compared with the reference set.

Note the colors represent the ratings when compared with our reference set. We use the 80/20 rule to nominally set the "what good looks like" level around the 80% threshold. We anticipate the reference set and thresholds will change over time.

For this benchmarking study, we have expanded the initial set of 70,000 people to the 18 organizations and some 113,000+ staff. The same process shown is conducted for each organization participating in the benchmarking. The percentile scores calculated for

each anonymized individual provides a means for conducting internal comparisons for individuals. The individual scores can then be aggregated up to any group identified within the staff profiles, to provide group level comparisons.

For the purposes of identifying our true collaboration champions, we have chosen to benchmark at the business segment level. A business segment is a profile attribute in Azure Active Directory. Typically, it's a department or geographic area. We identified 3,773 business segments with more than five active members from which to choose our collaboration champions, to solicit our case studies. For collaboration performance, group size does matter. It's easier to score higher as a group if your group is smaller. We therefore chose examples of high collaboration scores within different group size categories, to ensure we achieved a good cross section of high performing groups.

These top performing groups were used to solicit the case studies found in Section 3.



## 5 M365 adoption insights

We anticipate a large part of the audience for this report is concerned with the dynamics of effective adoption of the M365 suite. How are organizations leveraging the M365 suite to effectively navigate the complexities of hybrid working? How are we performing? How do we compare with those that appear to be doing well?

One enduring insight we have developed from benchmarking hundreds of organizations and millions of staff is that even the poorest performing organizations have an example of excellent performance within their own four walls. Surprisingly, most organizational leaders are totally unaware of where these pockets of excellence exist but benchmarking by SWOOP can identify these quiet achievers to showcase internally. Take, for example, the below story from RACQ where SWOOP identified its top performing department.

### M365 for frontline workers



RACQ is a member organization providing roadside assistance, insurance, banking and more to the people of Queensland, in north-eastern Australia.

SWOOP's benchmarking identified RACQ's Retail Stores department as one of the top five organizations for large-size departments.

These retail stores connect frontline workers across the enormous state of Queensland, which is seven times the size of Great Britain and two and a half times the size of the US state of Texas. These workers are the customer-face of RACQ.

Kim Price, Senior Internal Communications Advisor at RACQ, said the retail stores are adept at using the M365 tools to connect and collaborate to deliver a better service to RACQ members.

"It doesn't surprise me," Kim said of the Retail Stores' high ranking in SWOOP's analysis.

"The retail stores are geographically dispersed across the state, so they rely on electronic interaction to communicate with each other. They are all over the M365 tools for collaboration to keep connected."



## 5.1. The organizational design dilemma

Ever since the hierarchical organization design was popularized by the industrial revolution, there has been an undercurrent of speculation as to how organizations really worked. We are arguably at a peak of uncertainty right now.

In our previous benchmarking reports we have relied on the informal groupings of [Yammer](#) or [Workplace](#) communities, or [Microsoft Teams](#) to report on group activities. The informal and voluntary nature of these groupings meant that only those motivated to join and participate could be identified with a group activity. For the first time, we have chosen to study group work based on an identified “hierarchy”, being the assigned “department” for individuals. Hierarchical design sees staff being uniquely allocated to a single group/department. We are therefore able to report on group activity that purports to cover the whole organization. We acknowledge that relying on the Microsoft directories is far from perfect. We did, however, find that more than 90% of the 113,655 staff had been allocated a departmental designation. It is therefore the closest we can currently get to identifying staff within a formal organizational structure.

Given that few, if any, organizations are today operating like pure hierarchies, or the other extreme pure [holacracies](#), we find ourselves living somewhere in the middle. Former US Army chief Stanley McChrystal best described a transition from hierarchy to holacracy in his book “[Team of Teams](#)”, that describes how he facilitated the re-engineering of the military forces in Afghanistan to meet the need for extreme responsiveness and adaptiveness. We have found his depiction works well for organizations looking to place themselves in the continuum between hierarchy and holacracy:

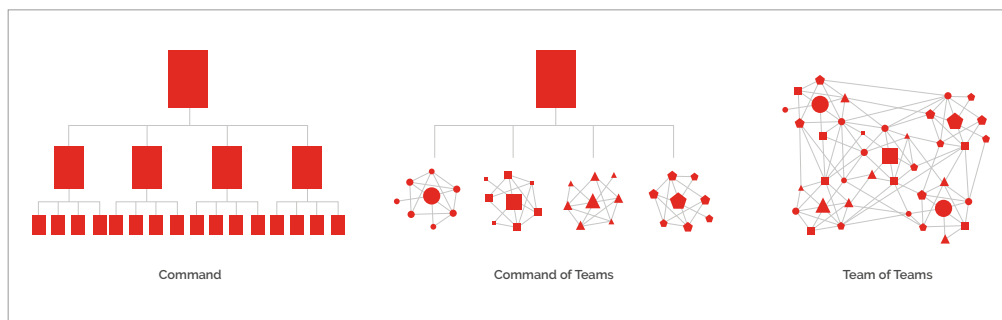


Figure 3 - Hierarchy to holacracy continuum

If you interview a range of your colleagues on where they think your organization might fit in this continuum you will likely get a range of perspectives. We suspect the views from executive management, compared with the frontline workers, might vary the most! This is why we think it is critical to aim to measure what is really going on. This is what we have aimed to do in this report.

## What can we learn from our benchmarking Leaders?

This illustrative example was drawn from one of our M365 leaders [Engaged Squared](#), a specialist in digital working and a 2021 Microsoft Partner of the Year.

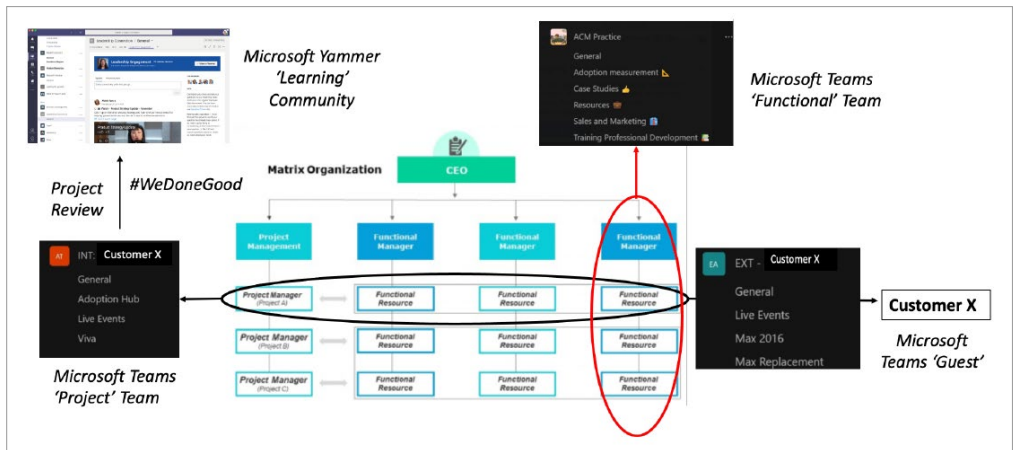


Figure 4 - M365 best practice organizational example

As a project organization, a typical staff consultant is a member of three Microsoft Teams teams:

1. A group representing an individual's position in the formal hierarchy (functional team)
2. A member of the customer project team, which includes customers' members invited in as guests
3. An internal project team, which mirrors the customer project team, but without the guests.

You can see the Teams spaces that have been created with “fit for purpose” channels, where most of the team interactions take place. Teams norms are agreed on the use of chat; being short logistical interactions e.g. “I’m running a 5 mins late”. Norms are also formed for the use of email for weekly project reports and formal deliverables to the customer.

A Yammer community exists for capturing “lessons learned” from post project reviews. Links to good successful practices are tagged #WeDoneGood.

It is important to differentiate the “functional” or “line of business” team as a group, more so than a real team. Its purpose is to facilitate top-down communications and goal alignment. These groups can be quite large (tens or even hundreds of members). Large groups could also comfortably be hosted on Yammer, which has functions optimized for large group interactions. The project teams, however, are the real teams, and [should have less than 10 members, ideally 4 to 8](#), as is the case with Engaged Squared project teams.

The linkage between each project team and a Yammer learning community for project managers provides a shared learning space for Engaged Squared to enhance its project management core competency.

For some organizations, the “project team” equivalent may exist as a team at the base of the hierarchy e.g. a recruitment team as part of the HR function, or a litigation team as part of the legal function. In these cases, team members will have membership of their day-to-day team, where most of their interactions will take place, but they are also members of the larger functional team.

**The key point here is that each staff member is a member of one or more digital teams and at least one Yammer community.** Our benchmarking results show **58% of all active staff had not made a Yammer post, reaction, or sent a Teams channel message over the six-month period.** This means a majority of staff are missing the opportunity to engage more effectively across their teams. It also means they are missing the learning and organizational networking opportunities provided by Yammer.

**Using artificial intelligence (AI) to explore collaboration habits**

Our regular approach for exploring a new data set is to apply some exploratory data analysis techniques to the base data collected. These statistical clustering techniques are now more broadly referred to as “AI machine learning” techniques.

To put it in layman’s terms, these techniques look to develop clusters of cases that share a common attribute. Amazon has done this for many years, offering “people who bought this product also bought that product” insights.

For digital work we are likewise interested in the tools used by those on the M365 platform. At the same time, we are interested in how best to categorize the individual toolsets that make up the digital infrastructure developed to service these users.

The following chart provides the results of our machine learning exploration of the base data elements collected:

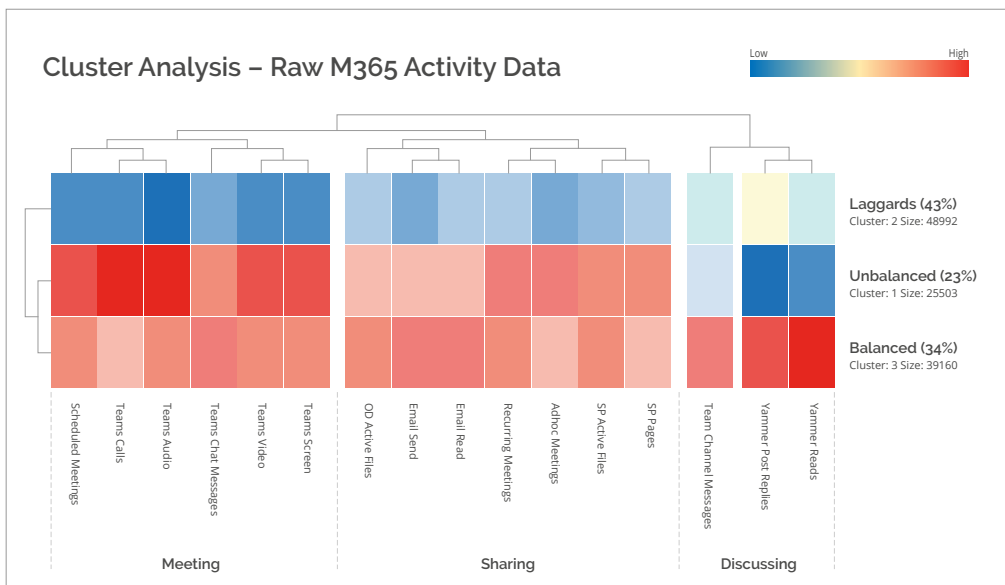


Figure 5 - Cluster analysis results

The results are shown as a matrix with the columns representing the base data elements collected from the [M365 usage reports](#). We can see the M365 collaboration tools have been visually clustered according to their statistical affinity. For example, those who have “scheduled meetings” also have “Teams\_calls”. The darker red color means high usage and blue means low usage. Interestingly, we can see the clustering of the columns broadly align with the underlying product feature sets; providing a reinforcement that the clustering technique is working.

The synchronous collaboration tools have been clustered together and we have labelled this cluster “Meeting”. The Microsoft Teams channel usage has been naturally clustered with Yammer, and we call that cluster “Discussing”. The cluster in the middle (“Sharing”) is largely a mix of content sharing tools. Recurring meetings and ad hoc meetings are included in this cluster.

The rows represent **three categories of users** identified through common patterns of usage:

- **Laggards:** 43% of the users fall into what has been labelled “Laggards”. Essentially this group of users are under-achieving across the breadth of digital interaction factors. They represent the “long tail” we talk about in the next section. The table below quantifies the “long tail” of relative inactivity<sup>1</sup>:

Table 1 - Account inactivity statistics

Account Inactivity Patterns over a six-month period	Proportion
M365 active accounts with no activity <sup>2</sup>	6%
No Teams channel messages sent	71.6%
No Yammer posts, replies or reactions	72.8%
No one-on-one call participation	26%
No online meeting time	17.8%
No chat messages	18.9%
No SharePoint file activity	4.5%
No OneDrive file activity	12.1%
No SharePoint page accesses	5.7%
No emails sent	5.3%
Guests with no activity	90%

1 We acknowledge that the owners of the less active accounts may be using non-M365 toolsets, or have purposefully not launched parts of the M365 suite at the time of benchmarking.

2 These accounts have been excluded from the remaining calculations.

- **Unbalanced:** 23% are identified as “Unbalanced”. This group preferences synchronous work but is also relatively strong on content sharing. They noticeably avoid the asynchronous interaction opportunities provided by Teams channels and Yammer.
- **Balanced:** 34% of staff are labelled as “Balanced”. They are the preferred persona, due to their relatively strong usage of all the M365 collaboration tools. They are particularly strong with Yammer; an effect we identified in our [2021 Yammer benchmarking report](#). In that study we identified that strong Yammer users were also adept at using other digital interaction modes.

These highly insightful usage patterns give us an evidence-based method to identify our collaboration high performers. If you come across someone who is very active in Teams channels and Yammer you know this person is highly likely to be a strong collaborator across all the M365 collaboration tools.

## 5.2 M365 as an innovation adoption

In the 1960s, communications professor Everett Rogers created a model for the diffusion of innovations that has stood the test of time. In the model, Rogers labels personas according to their likelihood of adopting a new technology. This model has been widely used to inform adoption strategies for new products.

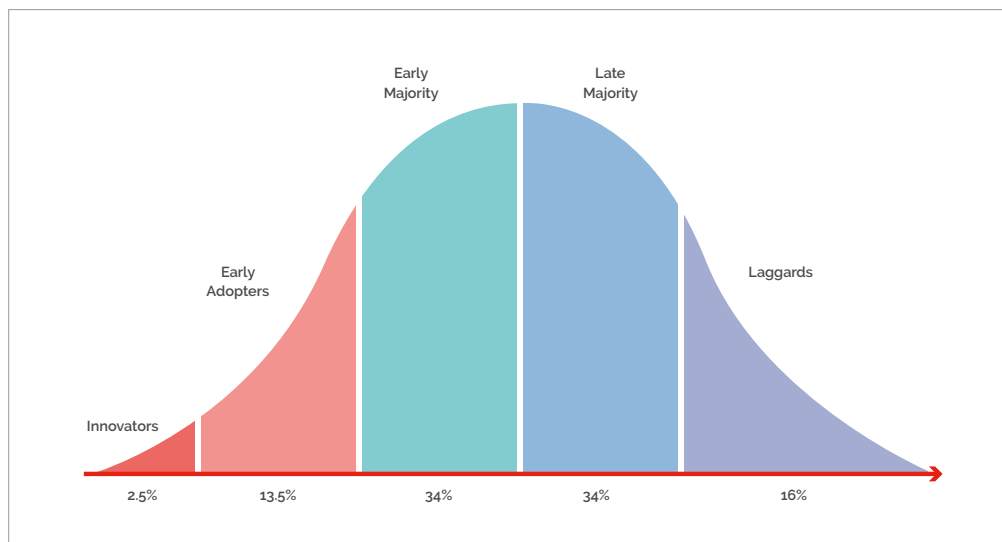


Figure 6 - Diffusion of innovations

While many of the office components of the M365 platform are mature and well adopted, M365 as a collaboration platform could be considered a new innovation, with all of the adoption challenges identified by Rogers.

We have taken the overall collaboration scores for staff across our participating organizations to create an equivalent adoption curve for M365:

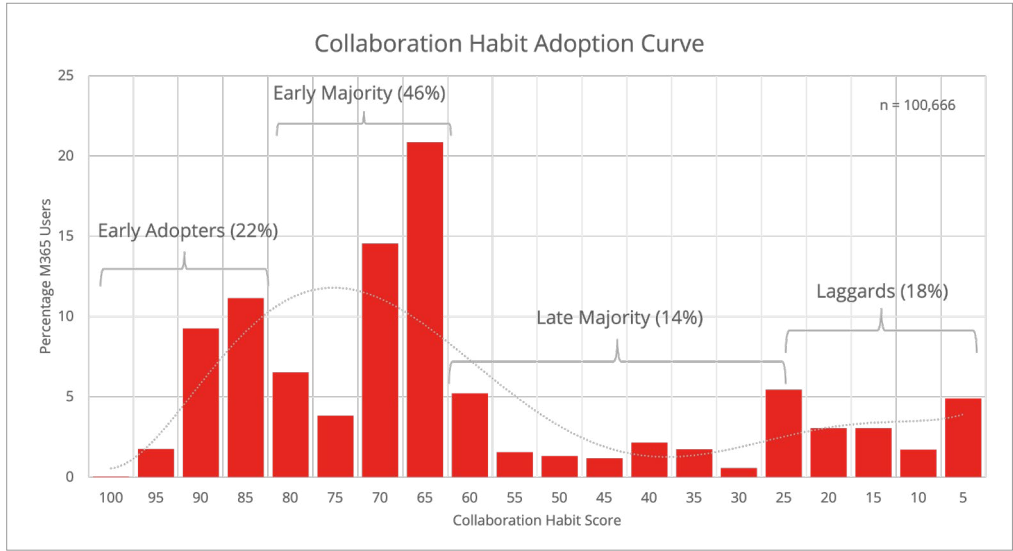
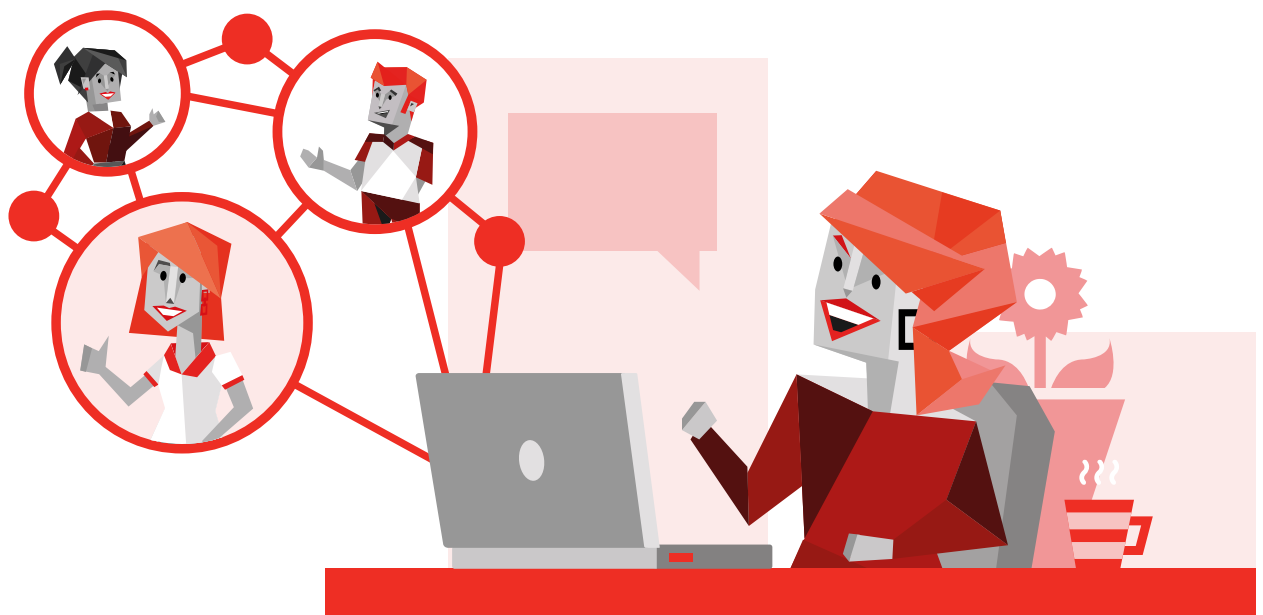


Figure 7 - M365 adoption curve

The above chart captures the proportion of the population categorized by their overall collaboration score (between 0 and 100). We can see the data approximates Rogers’ adoption curve, with some important variations. Rogers’ model assumes a classic normal distribution. The M365 collaboration score distribution exhibits a stronger “early adopters” proportion (22%), a smaller “late majority” (14%), but also a larger proportion of “laggards”.

What we can take away from this analysis is that while we have a greater proportion of laggards that need to be converted, we also have a larger proportion of early adopters and early majority that can be leveraged into influencing laggards to adopt.

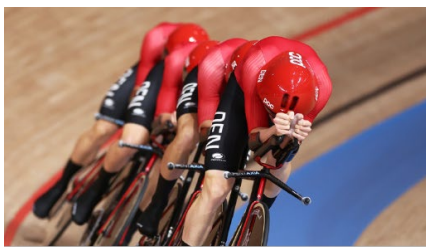
As we have indicated previously, the gold is in converting the late adopters and laggards.



### 5.3 Collaboration habits of groups

Up to now we have written about collaboration habits at the individual level. The reality, however, is that staff need to collaborate to get work done. Mismatched collaboration habits within close working teams can be disastrous for collaboration. We therefore looked at how collaboration performance might be impacted by the variation in collaboration habits within the group or team.

For those of you whose eyes glaze over when the conversation gets too statistical, this example may resonate. If you followed cycling at last year's Tokyo Olympics, there is a track cycling event called the four person teams pursuit, where basically success happens when four-member teams work together to overtake their competitors. As a team event, a team is only as good as its weakest link. The best teams work totally in-synch i.e. aim for zero variability. Any variability, however slight, is reflected in the outcome:



Low Variance Team



High Variance Team

Figure 8 - Variability and team success

Which team do you think won the gold medal? A team could have one or even two of the very fastest riders, yet still fail as a team. Sound familiar? A star team will always outperform a team of stars!

With the cycling team and variable team member performance in mind, we will explore the M365 collaboration habits data.

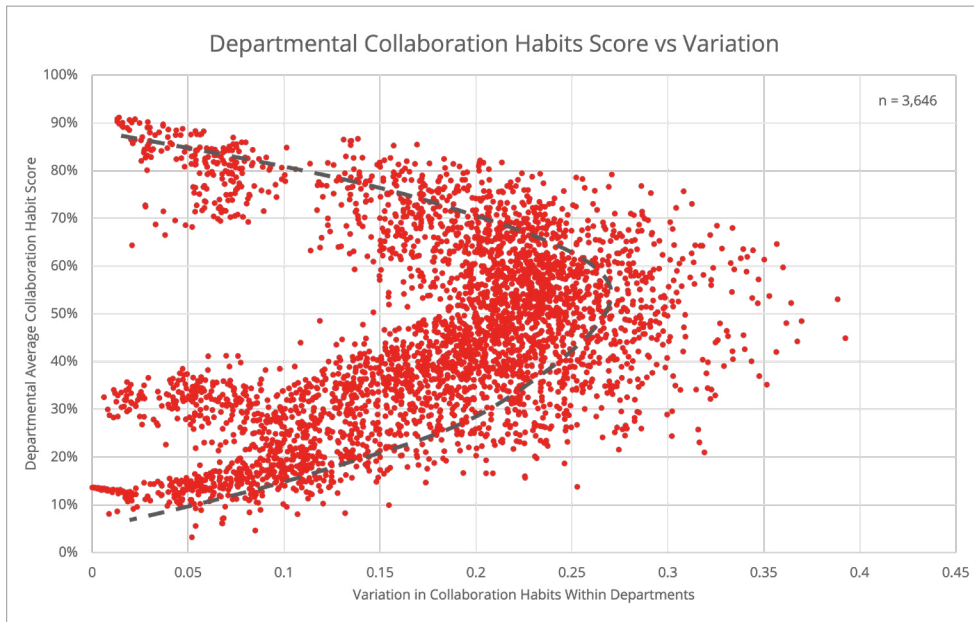


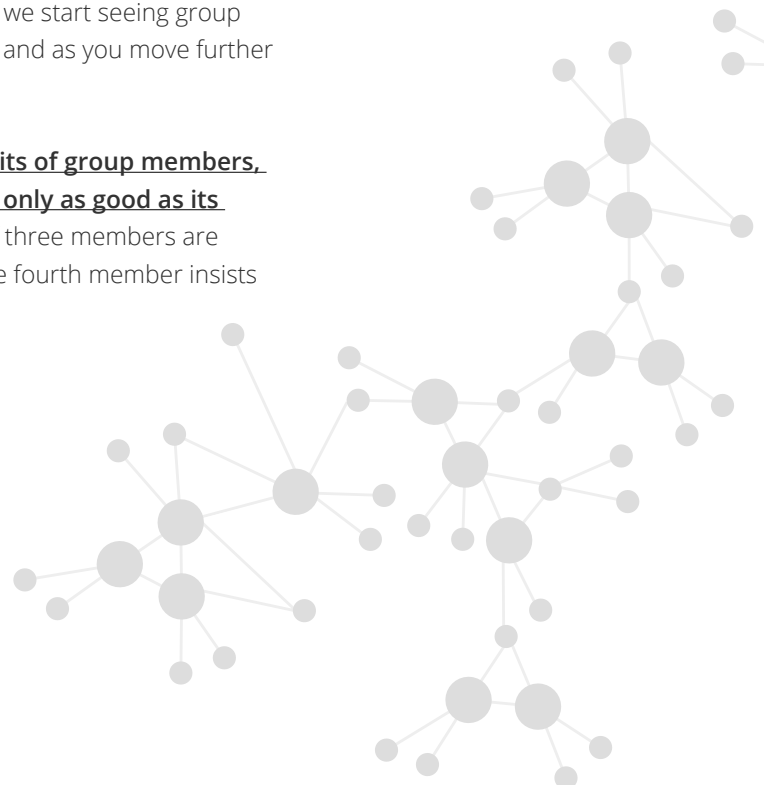
Figure 9 - Departmental performance mean vs standard deviation

In the graphic above we show the results for 3,646 departmental groups with more than five members. The graph shows the average group collaboration habits score (vertical axis) against how much variation in the scores we found within the group (horizontal axis).

Groups clustered in the lower left have one thing in common. All people have equally poor collaboration habits. As you follow the dotted line further to the right, we start to see groups where the average collaboration habits improve. These groups consist of people who have strong and poor habits. The potential for frustration is increasing as some members are becoming better, but are working with others who are not.

As the dotted line shifts towards the left (at about the 50% level), we start seeing group members that are collectively having strong collaboration habits, and as you move further to the left, all the group members are equally good.

**The clear message is the need to align the collaboration habits of group members, if optimal group collaboration is to be achieved. The team is only as good as its weakest link.** Just imagine the impact on a four-member team if three members are happily communicating through Teams channels and chat, but the fourth member insists on using only email.





## 5.4 Are organizational leaders also digital leaders?

We often hear stories about how “old school” managers are the most disenfranchised by the movement to WFH. The office was their kingdom, and there was little need to excel at anything digital.

### 5.4.1 Digital leadership

We thought we would test this hypothesis by looking at how organizational leaders performed with respect to their collaboration habits, compared with those in non-leadership roles. From our benchmarking participants, we identified almost 50,000 individuals with a job role title. We excluded any individuals with no active participation over the six-month period. We selected a “leaders” grouping based on their job title. The key words we chose for their selection included:

*“Leader”, “Supervisor”, “Manager”, “Managing”, “Lead”, “Partner”, “Principal”, “Director”, “Executive” and “Head”.*

Some 12,613 staff were classified as “leaders”, leaving the remaining 36,586 as “non-leaders”. What did we find?

**Average collaboration score for leaders = 66%**

**Average collaboration score for non-leaders = 53%**

**On average, leaders are performing at a 25% higher level than non-leaders; an encouraging sign as we move into hybrid working.**

### 5.4.2 One-on-one calls between leaders and non-leaders

The [M365 usage reports](#) capture the number of one-on-one calls that staff have participated in. The degree to which “managers” engaged with their staff in one-on-one calls was seen as [critical to the health and wellbeing of staff during the pandemic](#). Viva Insights can provide the [average number of hours that managers spend in one-on-one meetings with all of their direct reports](#) for those with appropriate subscription levels and permissions.

We looked to explore the one-on-one calls data for our selected groups of leaders and non-leaders, with the following results:

Measure	Leaders	Non-Leaders
Average calls/week	2.5	1.7
% Making zero calls	19%	39%

Firstly, the average number of one-on-one calls for both leaders and non-leaders does appear quite low. Why is this? Perhaps there is a level of one-on-one conversations that were conducted face-to-face. More likely though, the level of synchronous one-on-one interactions has reduced compared with pre-pandemic levels.

The percentage of leaders and non-leaders who made no one-on-one calls over the six-month period is also surprisingly high. The data suggests **almost 40% of staff did not have a one-on-one call with a colleague or their line manager.** This result reinforces the view that a lack of manager-direct report one-on-one engagement could be contributing to increases in workplace stress and the so-called "great resignation".

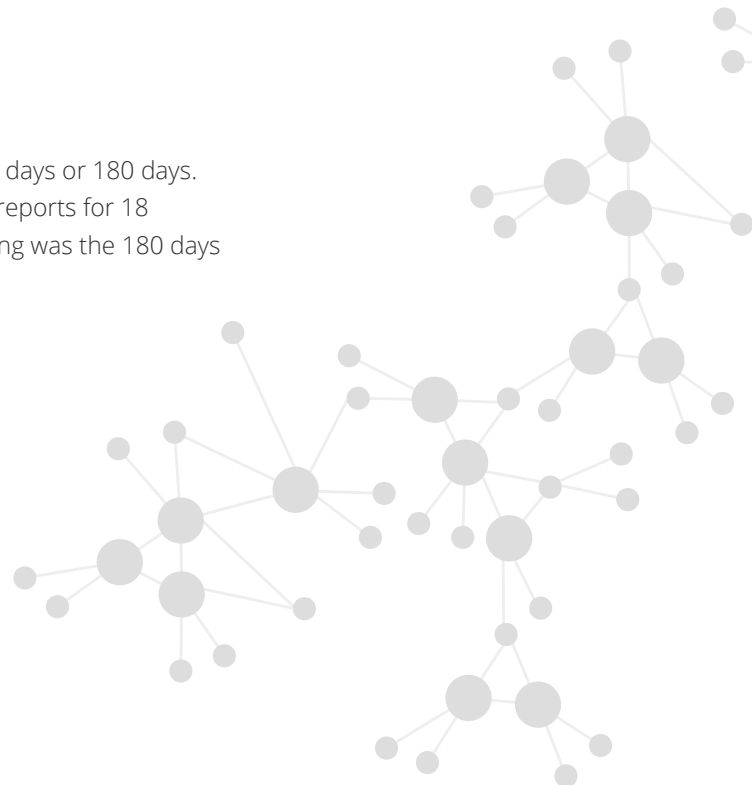
## 5.5 Overview of activity data sources used

SWOOP for M365 draws its data exclusively from the M365 Administration Activity Reports.

The following fields are used:

- Teams chat messages
- Teams channel messages
- Teams audio time (minutes)
- Teams video time (minutes)
- Teams calls
- Teams screen sharing time (minutes)
- Teams recurring meetings
- Teams scheduled meetings
- Teams ad hoc meetings
- OneDrive active file count
- SharePoint active file count
- SharePoint pages viewed or edited
- Yammer posts & replies
- Yammer reactions
- Email sent
- Email read

The user activity reports are available for seven days, 30 days, 90 days or 180 days. To maximize the available coverage, we drew from the 180 days reports for 18 benchmarking partner organizations. The period for benchmarking was the 180 days to the end of March 2022.



## 5.6 Demographics of benchmarking participants

The M365 usage activity was analyzed from 18 participating organizations.

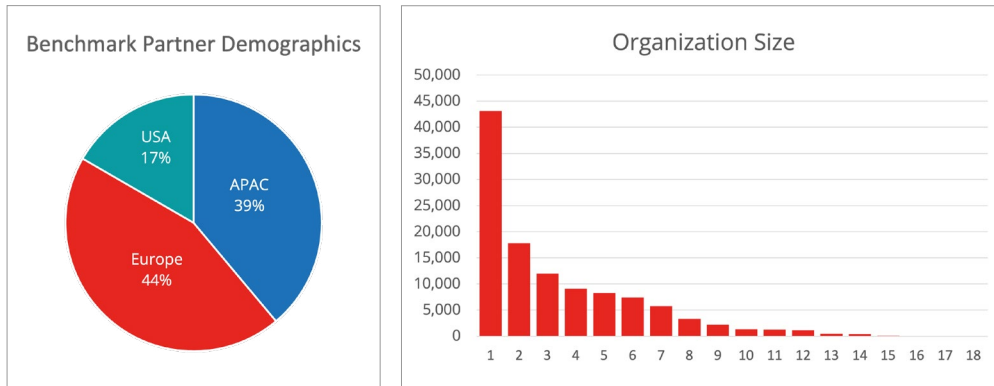


Figure 10 - Benchmarking participants

The organizations were drawn from Europe/UK, North America and Asia/Pacific regions and across industries as diverse as agriculture, engineering, transport, real estate, insurance, telecommunications, software and management consulting. They ranged in size from a boutique digital working consulting company of just 12 staff, through to a multinational company with more than 43,000 staff. We included:

- 113,655 active M365 accounts
- 213,411 M365 accounts when guest and accounts de-activated during the period are included
- 3,773 departments

Best efforts were used to identify and exclude non-people i.e. service accounts from the analysis. While this initial sample of 18 organizations for SWOOP's inaugural M365 benchmarking report is somewhat modest, it does represent a good cross-section of geography, size and industry. Importantly though, SWOOP benchmarking does not use surveys to source our data. **We use anonymized data from the Microsoft usage reports. We do not sample the organization.** In this way we gain a comprehensive and complete view of an organization's collaboration habits, when using the M365 suite.

For the 180-day period to the end of March 2022, the majority of staff from our benchmarking participants were still working remotely. This has provided us with a unique opportunity to study how staff were working in this transition to the hybrid working period.

We acknowledge, however, that some level of face-to-face activity would have been conducted that is not captured in our data. For example, calendar data for meetings not conducted virtually using Teams would be missed. Collaboration activity conducted outside the M365 suite would also be missed. However, to the best of our knowledge, our benchmarking participants were largely reliant on the M365 suite during the benchmarking period.

## 5.7 Detailed usage data benchmarking

The following charts summarize the current usage of the different M365 collaboration tools.

### 5.7.1 Calls, chat and meetings

Audio minutes capture online meeting and call time spent. Across the 18 organizations, we can see quite a variation in the frequency and time spent in calls and meetings i.e. synchronous interactions. The most active organizations average about nine meetings per week taking 6-7 hours per week. At the other end of the scale, some organizations make do with less than two meetings, or one hour/week in synchronous work.

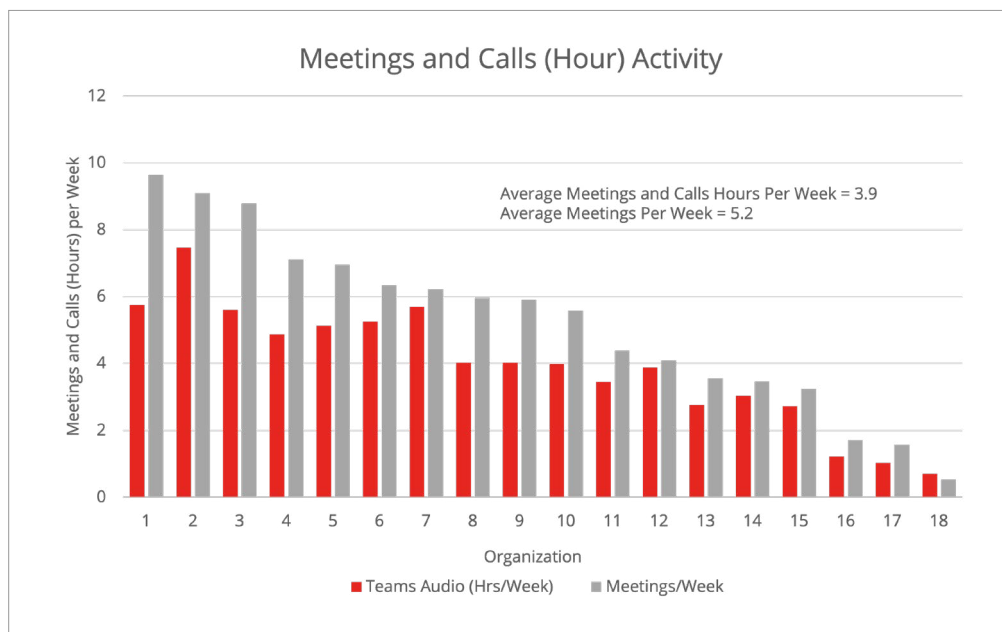


Figure 11 - Meetings and calls

We show later that the Asynchronous Collaborator habit is the most variable of all collaboration habits, both across and within organizations.



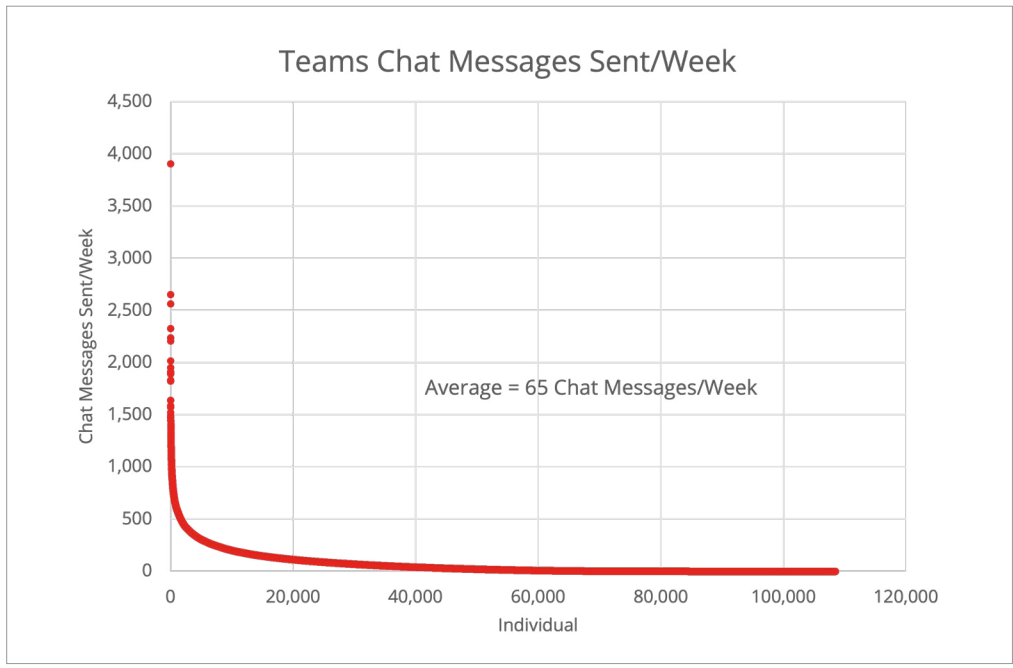
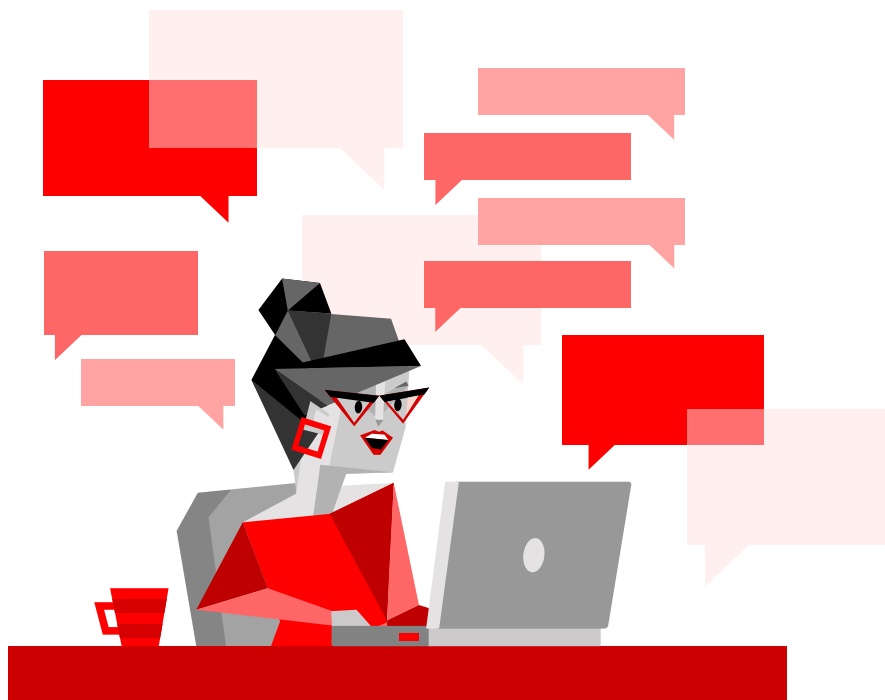


Figure 12- Microsoft Teams chat messages sent per week

On average staff are sending 16 chat messages on Microsoft Teams per workday. However, the familiar distribution shows a proportion of over-adopters sending more than 100 chat messages/day, but a much larger number sending few, if any.

While the M365 usage reports do not include data on how many chat messages are received or read per person, there will, as a bare minimum, be one received message for every sent message. Thus, as a minimum average, a person “processes” 32 messages per day.



## 5.7.2 Email

Email, through Outlook, is the most time consuming of the M365 activities.

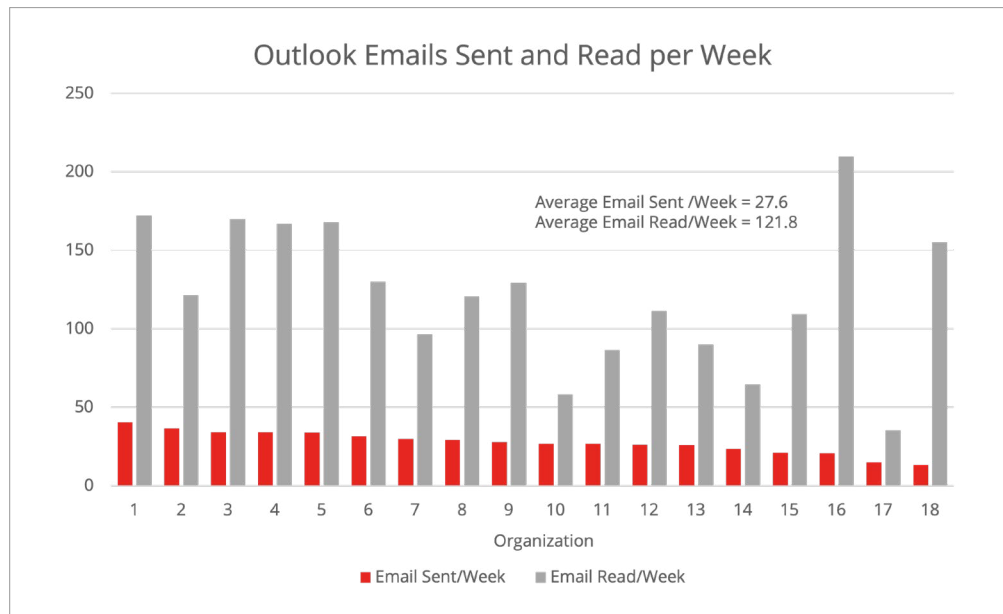


Figure 13 – Outlook email activity

We can see from the above chart that email sent rates did not vary substantially across participants. Email reading rates did vary substantially though, with no apparent relationship to the email sending rate. The most prolific email reading organization was consuming more than 200 emails/person/week or 40 emails a day, on average. What might lead an organization to spend more time consuming emails? Perhaps they might have an extensive network of partners and customers where email is the only channel? Or perhaps email is embedded in a core business process e.g. contact centers?



### 5.7.3 Yammer

Yammer is the home for enterprise communities within the M365 suite.

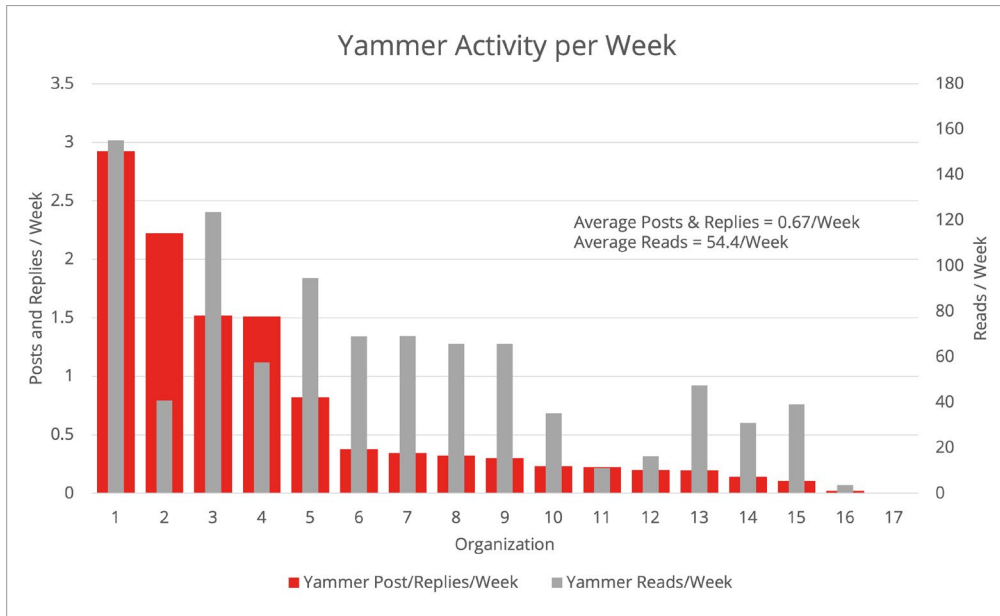


Figure 14 - Yammer (Community) activity

We can see the challenge for Yammer is active participation i.e. posts and replies. Perhaps four of the 18 organizations benchmarked have a good ratio of active to passive participation. The remainder are more consumers than creators of Yammer content; with some 82% of staff having read Yammer content.

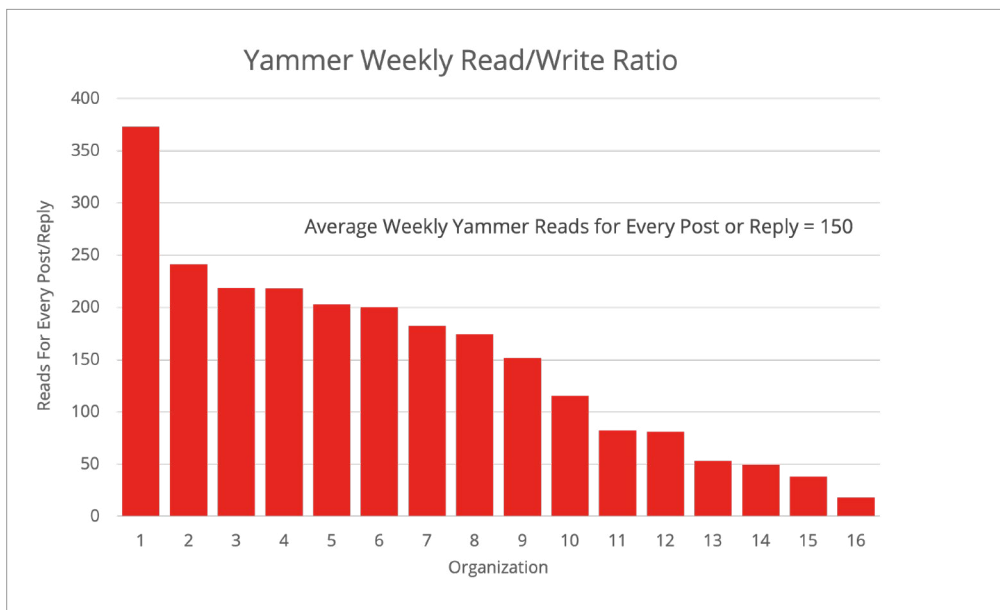


Figure 15 - Yammer reads to write ratio

When we plot the ratio of Yammer reads to writes (posts and replies), we can see the main use of Yammer is as an internal social media channel. On average, 150 Yammer reads are made for every post or reply made.

We identified this trend in our [2021 Yammer benchmarking report](#). We found “social” communities were attracting a strong growth in readership during the pandemic. While we welcomed this development, we also identified that social-facilitated connections are often just introductory. Yammer has a unique and critical role in facilitating innovation and the development of core competencies through social learning. It’s important to give staff a voice, which means stronger levels of active, more so than passive, participation.

### 5.7.4 OneDrive and SharePoint

From a knowledge sharing perspective, SharePoint is the preferred location for developing and storing content. For content producers, the regular practice has been to develop content in private spaces (OneDrive or equivalent), until the author feels it is ready to share. As cloud computing has matured, shared spaces like SharePoint are now being increasingly used for developing new content as well. This becomes particularly useful when content is being co-authored, where the issue of version control is ever present.

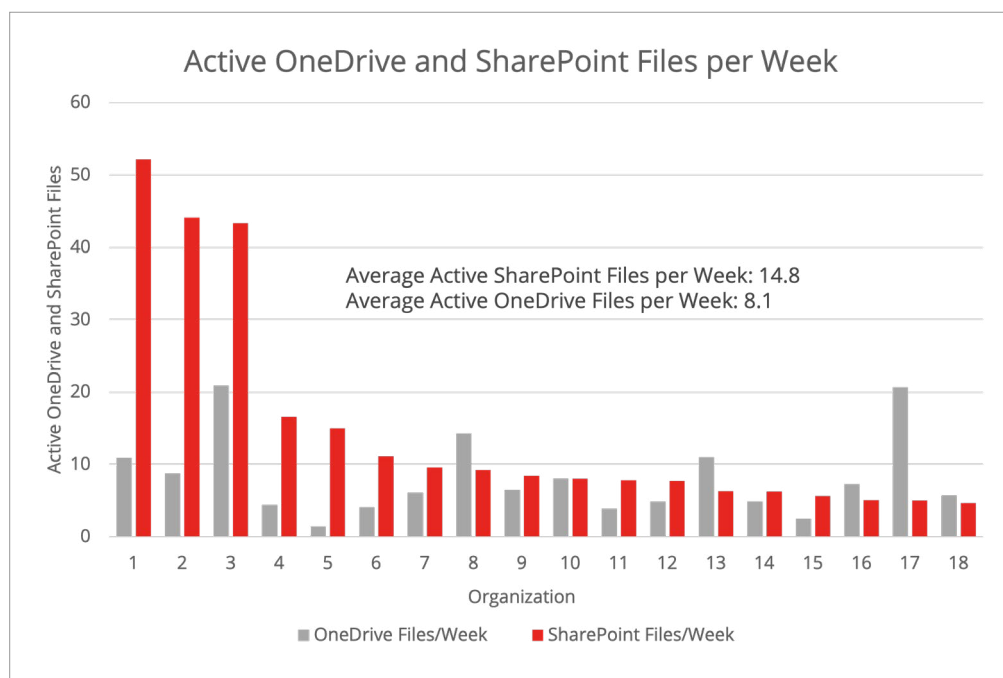


Figure 16 - OneDrive and SharePoint file access

We can see that with a few exceptions, the majority of organizations are accessing files on SharePoint more than on OneDrive. There is, however, quite large variations within organizations; so whilst the average usage rates are in the right direction, there is still work to do with those who prefer private over shared repositories.



### 5.7.5 SharePoint pages

SharePoint pages are now regularly used for hosting an organization's intranet.

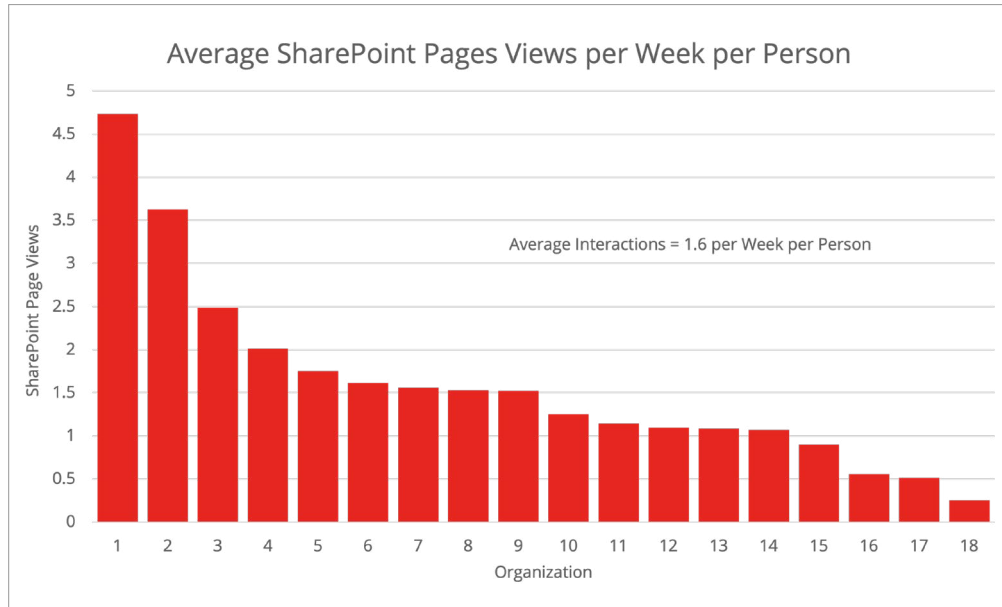


Figure 17 - SharePoint pages activity

The above activity levels would suggest SharePoint pages is a resource that is also under-utilized, with perhaps the exception of the two leading organizations. It could also be a case of these organizations having other intranet platforms or the intranet runs on older SharePoint platforms.

### 5.7.6 Account governance

In the course of our analysis we identified some issues that could be related to governance of the M365 platform. In the early days of Microsoft Teams introduction, the issue of whether or not to invite external guests into internal digital teams was a hot topic for discussion. On a more basic level, we identified 6% of accounts labelled as "Active", but had no activity across the 180-day benchmarking period. We could assume that some unnecessary licensing costs may exist that we are reporting on here as well.



Firstly, guests in M365:

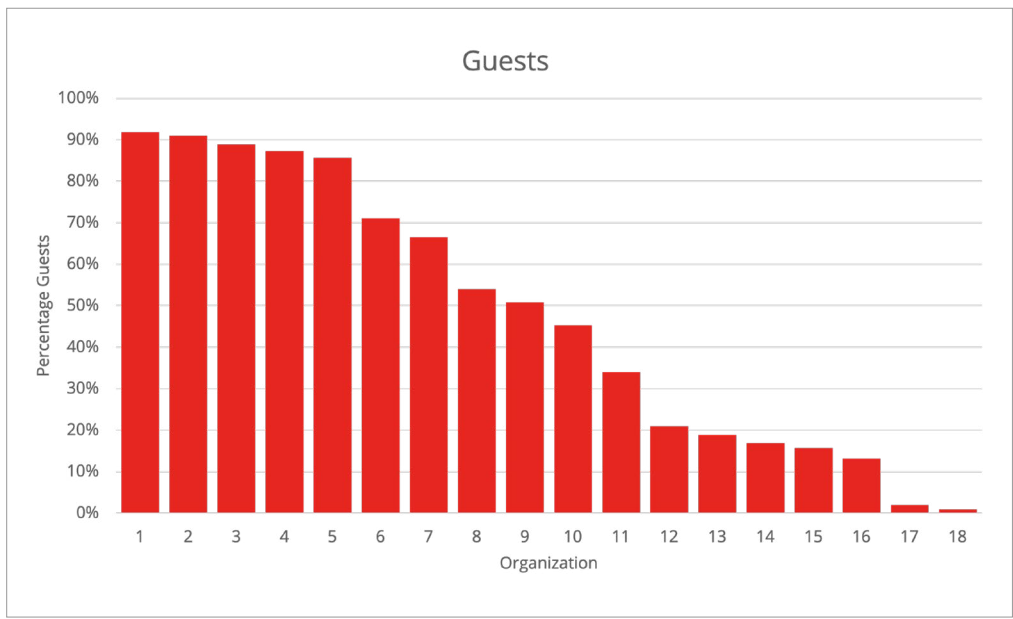


Figure 18 - %Guests in M365

Across our 18 participants we can see the median %guests is around the 50% mark, which is certainly more than we would have envisaged during the initial discussions when Microsoft Teams was launched in 2017. Those organizations with extremely high levels of guests are largely the smaller consulting companies who have freely invited their clients into their digital teams. We have previously reported on the stronger customer engagement and trust that can be built using this practice in our [2021 Teams Benchmarking report](#).

It appears larger organizations are now also becoming more comfortable with inviting customers and partners into their digital teams. However, there also exists a few organizations that appear reluctant to invite guests onto their internal platforms.

Secondly, we report on inactive M365 accounts, those accounts deemed to be “active” and likely paid for, but with no activity in any of the M365 tools:

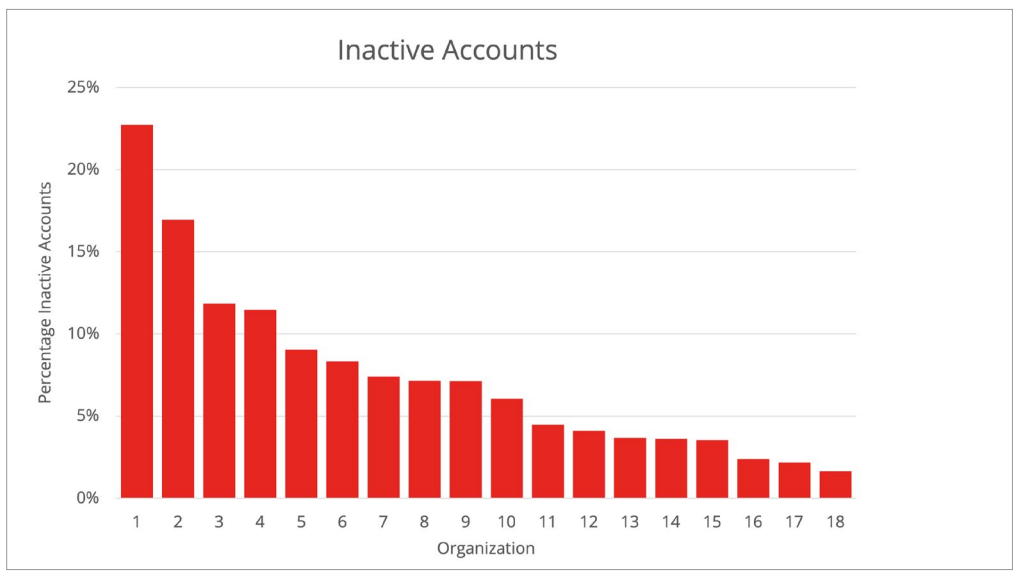


Figure 19 - Inactive M365 accounts

We can see the proportion of accounts marked as “active” with no activity is for some organizations quite significant. We acknowledge organizations do create non-people service accounts e.g. meeting room accounts. The average of 7% is significant though, if indeed these accounts are being paid for unnecessarily.

### 5.7.7 Digital working exhibits a “long tail” distribution

The preceding section reinforces a feature of digital working we refer to as the “[long tail distribution](#)”. In layman’s terms, it means there exists a small proportion of the population that have extremely high values, but a much larger proportion of the population that exhibit extremely low values. One of the more famous examples of the exploitation of the “long tail” of potential customers was when Amazon facilitated the selling of the long tail of non-best seller book titles. Amazon’s motivation was that the collective value of long tail sales could exceed the sales of any single best seller book.

In terms of digital working, much of the focus has been on the most active adopters. More recently we are seeing many reports on the negative effects of health and wellbeing on the small proportion “over-adopters”. While this focus is justified, in that the over-adopters are likely also key people and leaders, there is also **hidden value potential in addressing the much larger collective of long tail poor adopters.**

The table below illustrates the major differences between the high adopting top 10% and the low adopting bottom 50%:

M365 Average Weekly Activity			
Top 10%		Bottom 50%	
Yammer activity	51.97	Yammer activity	0.89
Teams Channel posts	4.18	Teams Channel posts	0.00
Teams Chats	354.88	Teams Chats	2.27
Audio minutes	751.74	Audio minutes	9.13
Video on minutes	512.95	Video on minutes	3.57
Screen Sharing minutes	291.02	Screen Sharing minutes	1.31
SharePoint pages activity	8.55	SharePoint pages activity	0.33
Files activity	174.08	Files activity	2.46
Email activity	687.21	Email activity	39.81

Table 2 - Digital working long tail distribution

To highlight some data from the poor adoption long tail; half of our population of more than 100,000 users had:

- Not posted a single Teams channel message
- Had less than a single Yammer activity each week
- Spent less than 10 minutes in calls or meetings each week
- Only accessed a SharePoint intranet page, on average, once every three weeks
- Accessed less than three files every week

## 5.8 Collaboration habits benchmarking

In this section we describe benchmarking specific to SWOOP’s Seven Collaboration Habits (Email Liberated, Asynchronous Collaborator , Chat Liberated, Community Contributor, File Sharer, Screen Sharer and Camera Confident).

### 5.8.1 Overall collaboration habits performance

The SWOOP M365 platform provides each individual with an overall collaboration score which is the average score of their Seven Collaboration Habits. The average for each benchmarked organization is as follows:

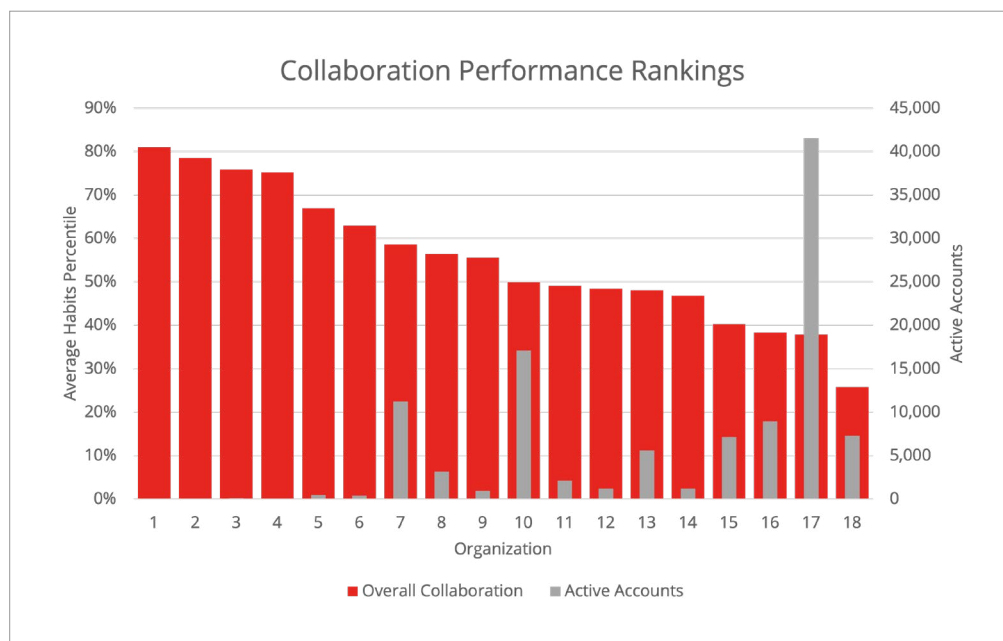


Figure 20 - Overall collaboration rankings

We can see the leading organization achieved average scores in the high 70s, down to the lowest performing organization with an average of just over 40%. The grey bars represent the number of active accounts. We can see the top four performers were all small organizations. However, beyond these top performers, size seems to be less of a predictor of performance. Our analysis showed that size does matter, but only a little.

## 5.8.2 Variations in collaboration habits

We might anticipate that individuals will have personal biases when it comes to a given collaboration habit. The degree of variation in a particular habit tells us something about the habit itself. A smaller variation might signal the formation of an accepted behavioral norm. A large variation would signal the opposite; typically an unwanted effect.

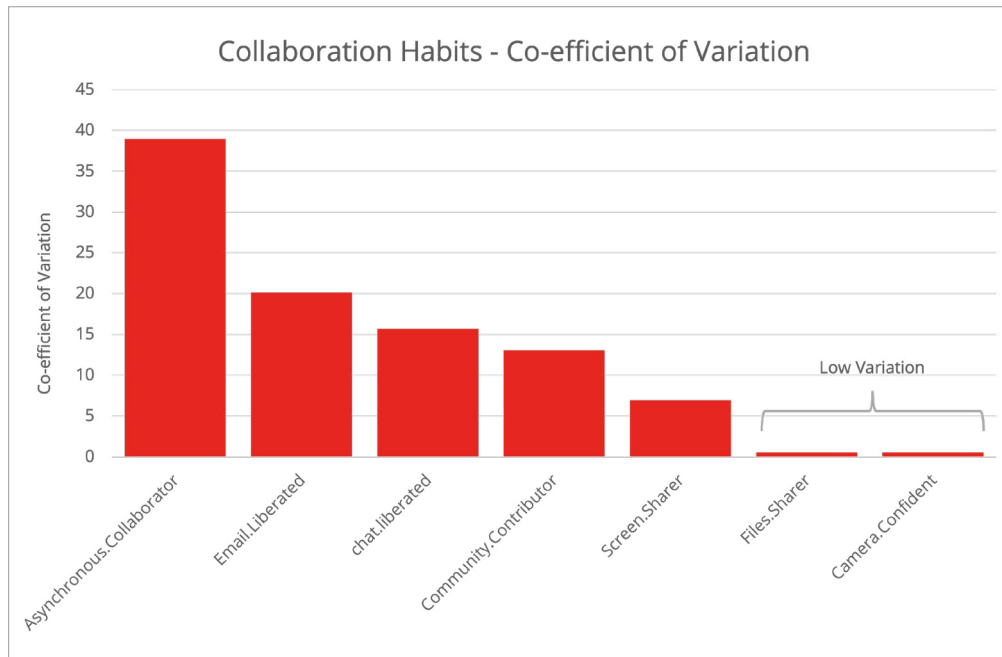


Figure 21 - Variations in digital habit use

The [co-efficient of variation](#) provides us with a way of comparing the variations from diverse factors. The results are quite revealing and reinforce why we are mostly obsessed with meetings and email; these show the greatest variations in practice. This is followed by Chat Liberated, Community Contributor and Screen Sharer. All of these habits have coefficients of variation greater than one; the level above which the variation is described as “extreme”. The Files Sharer and Camera Confident habits were the only habits that have coefficients of variation of less than one, and therefore exhibit low variation.

The important takeaway from this analysis is the [majority of the identified collaboration habits are a long way from achieving anything like an operational norm](#). Over half a century of management techniques aimed at productive efficiencies that include [Total Quality Management \(TQM\)](#), [Lean Manufacturing](#) and [Six Sigma](#) have a basic tenet of removing variation.

The extreme levels of variation can be largely attributed to the uneven adoption of digital behavior patterns in general. The [“long tail distribution”](#) digital adoption effect was highlighted as early as when Amazon first disrupted the book industry; identifying a [previously unexploited long tail of buyers](#) of non-best seller books.

Below we plot the distributions of the two collaboration habits that vary the most: Time spent in meetings (audio minutes) and emails sent.

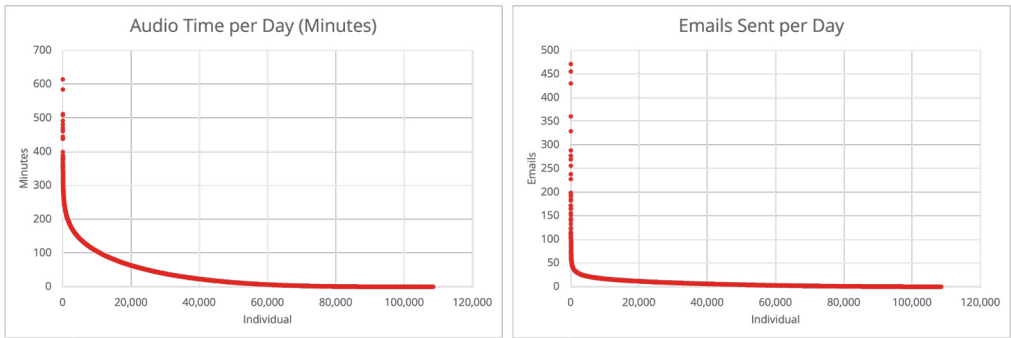


Figure 22 - Long tail distributions of digital work

Each of the above represents more than 113,000 staff across 18 organizations. What is significant is that at one extreme we have the over-adopters. We can see some staff who are spending more than eight hours each day on calls or in meetings, or people sending hundreds of emails a day. However, at the other end we have a long tail of staff spending little, if any, time in online meetings or sending email.

While the spotlight is often on the over adopters and ways to lessen the load on their work, the data is telling us the real opportunity for radical, digitally enabled, productivity increases is in the long tail. There is a large proportion of staff that can contribute more by being a little more digitally active.

### 5.9 Where do we spend our time on M365?

In this section we were inspired by [Viva Insights reports](#) on time spent in meetings and working on emails. We have adopted the same activity to time conversion factors, where they were available from Viva Insights.

We asked the question “where do people spend their time when working with M365?”

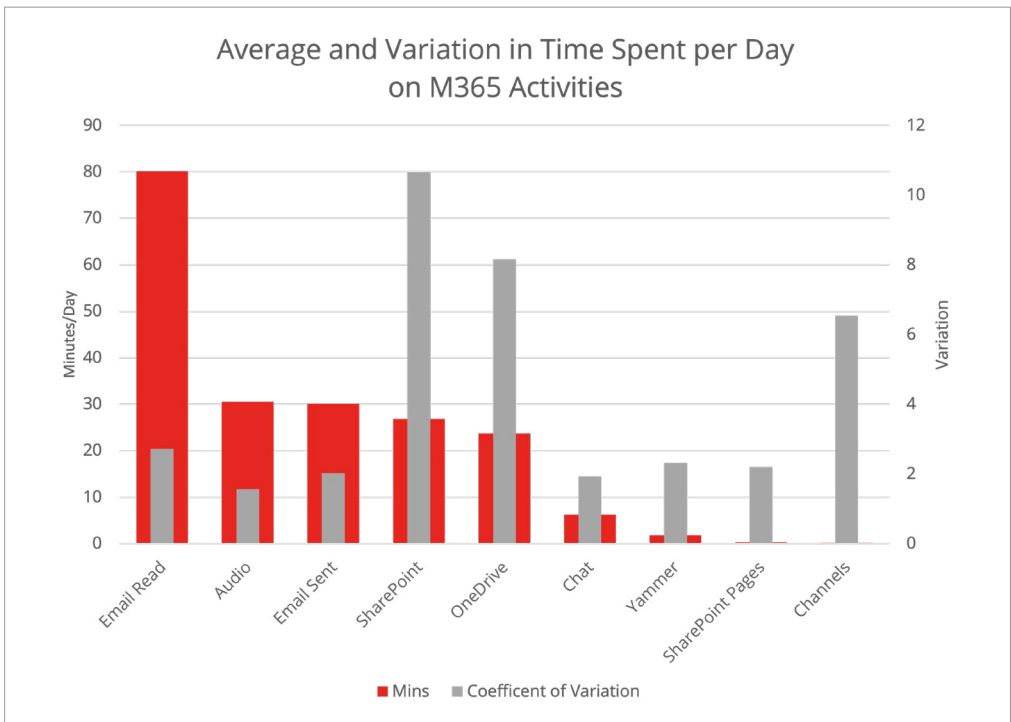


Figure 23 - Time spent on M365 activities

The chart above shows the average time spent per person each day on the different M365 tools. The grey bars identify the relative variation in use across all individuals.

Reading emails is our most time-consuming activity, followed by time in meetings and calls and then sending emails. Time in SharePoint was slightly more than time in OneDrive. Perhaps the most concerning is the low usage of Microsoft Teams channels and SharePoint pages.

The large variation in Microsoft Teams channels usage is indicative of the low level of maturity in its use. Perhaps more surprising is the large variation in SharePoint and OneDrive usage. The data suggests the population that works with content files can vary significantly across the organization. All coefficient of variation measures are more than one, and therefore classified as high to extreme.

### 5.10 What good looks like

What is the “right balance” when it comes to collaboration habits? We have taken the position with our collaboration habits that “good” is what is demonstrably achievable. The SWOOP for M365 dashboard uses rankings to rate performance. Our rule of thumb is that around the 80% percentile level is set as “good”. It means that you’re in the top 20% of those that have sufficient activity to achieve a habit score.

The following table provides some evidence-based “rule of thumb” goals for good collaboration habits:

Digital Habit	Good Target Level
Email Liberated	One Microsoft Teams channel or Yammer post for every 20 emails sent
Asynchronous Collaborator	One Microsoft Teams channel or Yammer post for every 80 minutes spent in meetings or calls
Chat Liberated	One Microsoft Teams channel or Yammer post for every 25 Microsoft Teams chat messages
Community Contributor	34 Microsoft Teams channels/chat or calls for every Yammer post/reply or like
Files Sharer	90% of all files stored in SharePoint
Camera Confident	Camera on 96% of the time
Screen Sharer	Participating in screen sharing 57% of the time

Our intention is to update the “what good looks like” goals after each annual benchmarking study, for incorporation into [SWOOP for M365](#) dashboards.

# 6 Framework for changing M365 collaboration habits

Having great analytics is of little use if they don't lead to sustainable change for the better. In this section we introduce a model for change we feel is best aligned with the nature of a workplace we are looking to achieve as we migrate into the new world of hybrid work.

## 6.1. Collaboration habits change management framework

Section 5 provided a comprehensive picture of the status quo for digital working using M365. Setting a baseline is fundamental to any improvement initiative. Unless we know our starting point, any destination can look good. Given we have chosen human habits as our measure of improvement, we looked for the best practices that target changing human habits.

We have [previously written](#) about the [Prosci's ADKAR](#) (Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability and Reinforcement) model for organizational change, facilitated by SWOOP. ADKAR targets individual change, which we feel is critical for effective M365 adoption. However, this time we decided to look for a methodology that specifically targets human habits. What we found was the work of James Clear and his publication [Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones](#), which happens to be the New York Times #1 selling business book since its publication in 2018, having sold more than 4 million copies. This is as good a place to start as any.

### 6.1.1 Atomic habits

Speaking about habits, James Clear describes them as: *"What you repeatedly do (i.e. what you spend time thinking about and doing each day) ultimately forms [the person you are](#), the things you believe, and the personality that you portray"*.

Clear associates your habits with your personal identity. This is a powerful proposition. We are all creatures of habit. We spend a lot of personal time working to change some of our less desirable habits e.g. eating badly, not exercising, driving too fast, yelling at the kids too often, not visiting your parents enough .... and the list goes on. We all have habits that we may even not be aware of, that others are e.g. not listening enough, speaking too loudly, not speaking up enough etc.. We all want to be better people, whatever that might mean. If we subscribe to Clear's proposition, being a better person is all about changing habits.

What about our collaboration habits? What could they say about the sort of person you are? Let's look at some examples. As you read them, think about what identity you might associate with that person.



1. This person “lives in email”. They spend 3–4 hours a day reading emails. However, they send very few emails.
2. This person mostly participates in only online meetings. They tend to not read emails or respond to chat messages.
3. This person “lives in chat”. They stay away from email, thinks calls and meetings are too intrusive.
4. This person spends a lot of solo time working on documents in OneDrive. They do share documents via email from time to time, but only with close contacts.
5. This person connects with their team peers in the team’s digital channels. They regularly post questions and compile and share team decisions.
6. This person is very visible across several Yammer communities. They actively broker connections between disparate colleagues across communities.

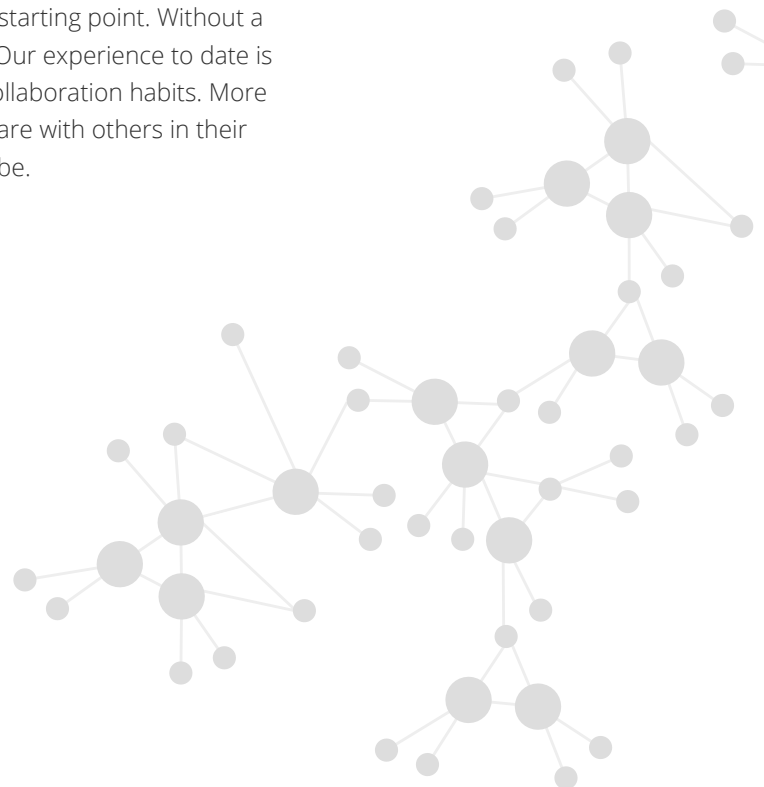
Were you building a profile in your mind as you read about these individuals' collaboration habits? Fair or not, it's likely you will be judged by your collaboration habits. If you are seen as a “source of friction” for effective collaboration with your colleagues, you will be judged negatively. Alternatively, if your collaboration habits help your colleagues to be more effective, then your identity will be judged positively.

### 6.1.2 The framework

We have developed the collaboration habit changing framework around the [Seven Collaboration Habits](#) described in Section 4.1. We are not claiming they are the only collaboration habits that should be considered. We do, however, need a starting point; and our research to date would indicate we are covering a good proportion of our collaboration habits.

#### ***Establishing a personal baseline***

Understanding what your collaboration habits actually are is the starting point. Without a baseline, we have no reference point to measure improvement. Our experience to date is that most people have an incomplete perspective of their own collaboration habits. More importantly, they have virtually no perspective of how they compare with others in their organization, or how good or bad their collaboration habits may be.



The [SWOOP for M365](#) privacy protected personal dashboard, provides that baseline:

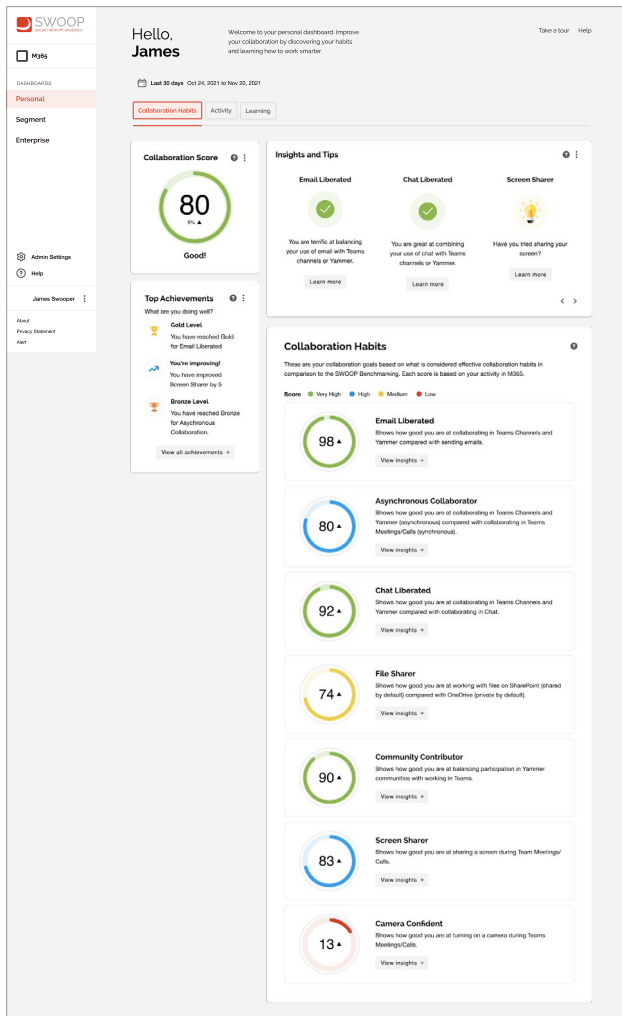


Figure 24 - SWOOP for M365 personal dashboard

The dashboard shows a comparative score against a selected reference set. The first time this is viewed forms the baseline. From this point forward, improvements are analyzed on a daily basis.

### Group (business segment) baselines

Group performance is simply an aggregation of the group membership; whether that be a department, location or any other identified grouping. The group leaders are responsible for identifying a baseline date. From then on, the group leaders will be responsible for monitoring the collective collaboration habits improvement for the group.

### Enterprise baselines

Enterprise performance is also available to provide senior executives a sense of how they compare with other organizations. Over time, we anticipate an ability to compare like-for-like organizations as we grow the benchmarking data base.

## Changing collaboration habits

Having identified a baseline performance, the next task is to identify interventions that can lead to improvements in our collaboration habits. Here we look to James Clear and his habit changing framework:

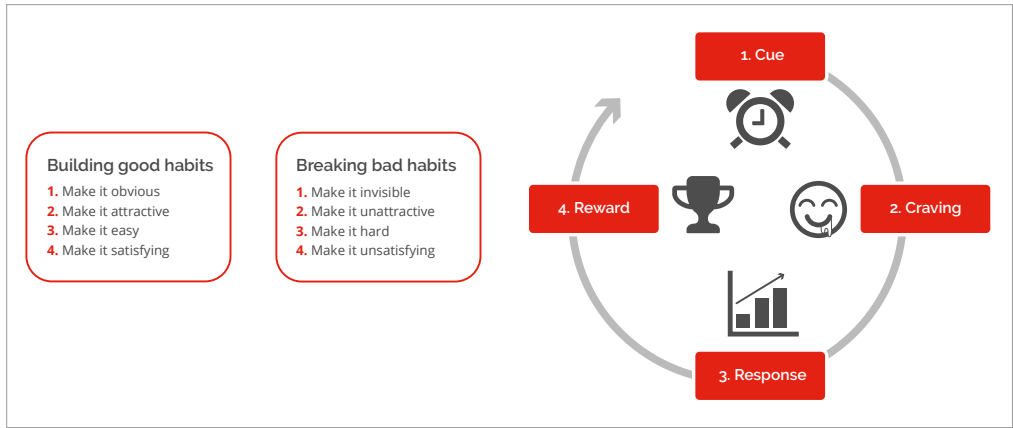


Figure 25 - Building better collaboration habits

As an example, let's look at two of the most important habits to address: Email Liberation and Asynchronous Working. Here are some ideas:

### Email Liberation

Building good habits	Breaking bad habits
<p><b>1. Make it obvious:</b> Ensure teams are established on Microsoft Teams for each department, with appropriate channels established as the default means of interaction within the department. Ensure Yammer is installed as a Teams app for all teams (the Community app).</p>	<p><b>1. Make it invisible:</b> Remove the Outlook app (yes – it's radical!). Remove Outlook from other fast access bars. Remove your work email account from your phone's email platform.</p>
<p><b>2. Make it attractive:</b> Establish your Microsoft Teams site as the team/departmental hub. Ensure all group resources and applications are available and in good working order.</p>	<p><b>2. Make it unattractive:</b> Actively direct colleagues to Teams as the norm for group interactions. Get in the habit of asking colleagues who continue to use email to move the interaction to the group hub. If email has to be used, try using Outlook in the browser.</p>
<p><b>3. Response:</b> Within your teams or departments, agree to respond promptly to all channel messages. Get in the habit of providing positive reactions to all channel and Yammer posts. Get people to agree to @mentioning each other if a response is required.</p>	<p><b>3. Make it hard:</b> Agree in your teams or departments to de-prioritize internal emails received for team or departmental colleagues.</p>

Building good habits	Breaking bad habits
<p><b>4. Reward:</b> Use SWOOP to recognize Yammer and Teams channels influencers. Use leader boards to reward asynchronous behaviors.</p>	<p><b>4. Make it unsatisfying:</b> Develop the habit of redirecting colleagues who insist on emailing to the Teams site. Make a point of only reading internal emails once per day at the most.</p>

**Asynchronous Collaborator:**

Building good habits	Breaking bad habits
<p><b>1. Make it obvious:</b> Ensure teams are established on Microsoft Teams for each department, with appropriate channels established as the default means of interaction within the department. Ensure Yammer is installed as a Teams app for all teams.</p>	<p><b>1. Make it invisible:</b> Try and keep your calendar less prominent on your desktop.</p>
<p><b>2. Make it attractive:</b> Establish your Teams site as the team/departmental hub. Ensure all group resources and applications are available and in good working order.</p>	<p><b>2. Make it unattractive:</b> Actively direct colleagues to Teams and Yammer as the norm for group interactions that minimize the need to meet. Introduce strict processes of justification for scheduling meetings i.e. purpose, attendee justifications for their time.</p>
<p><b>3. Response:</b> Within your teams or departments, agree to respond promptly to all channel messages. Get in the habit of providing positive reactions to all channel and Yammer posts.</p>	<p><b>3. Make it hard:</b> Agree in your teams or departments to not schedule recurring status update-only meetings. Aim to use Teams channels or Yammer to replace meetings.</p>
<p><b>4. Reward:</b> Use workplace analytics to recognize Yammer and Teams channels influencers. Use leader boards to reward asynchronous behaviors.</p>	<p><b>4. Make it unsatisfying:</b> Aim to reverse the perceptions that ties meeting attendance to busyness. Set goals for focus time.</p>

Ideas for influencing collaboration habits is open to your imagination. Work with your close colleagues to implement your ideas. Track your Email Liberation or Asynchronous working performances over time. Create some internal competition with your close colleagues. Nothing works better than a bit of peer pressure to create shared norms for positive behaviors.

## 6.2 SWOOP for M365, Microsoft Viva and Microsoft Productivity Score

At SWOOP, we are regularly asked about how our offerings compare and contrast with the “out of the box” Microsoft offerings. It is also one of the first questions we are asked when presenting our new [SWOOP for M365](#) product to prospects. Firstly, we would like to say, we are not in the business of competing with Microsoft! In many ways Microsoft’s objectives with [Viva Insights](#) and the [M365 Productivity Score](#) align completely with ours. We want to help organizational staff become more efficient and effective, while maintaining their personal health and wellbeing. However, as we have mentioned before, we are now entering the “wild west” of workplace productivity through hybrid working; where no-one has all the answers. Opportunities abound, and we, like many others, are looking to prosecute our varied approaches and points of view as best we can.

That said, we have identified these main points of difference, though we acknowledge that Microsoft is also not standing still, and these points can change over time:

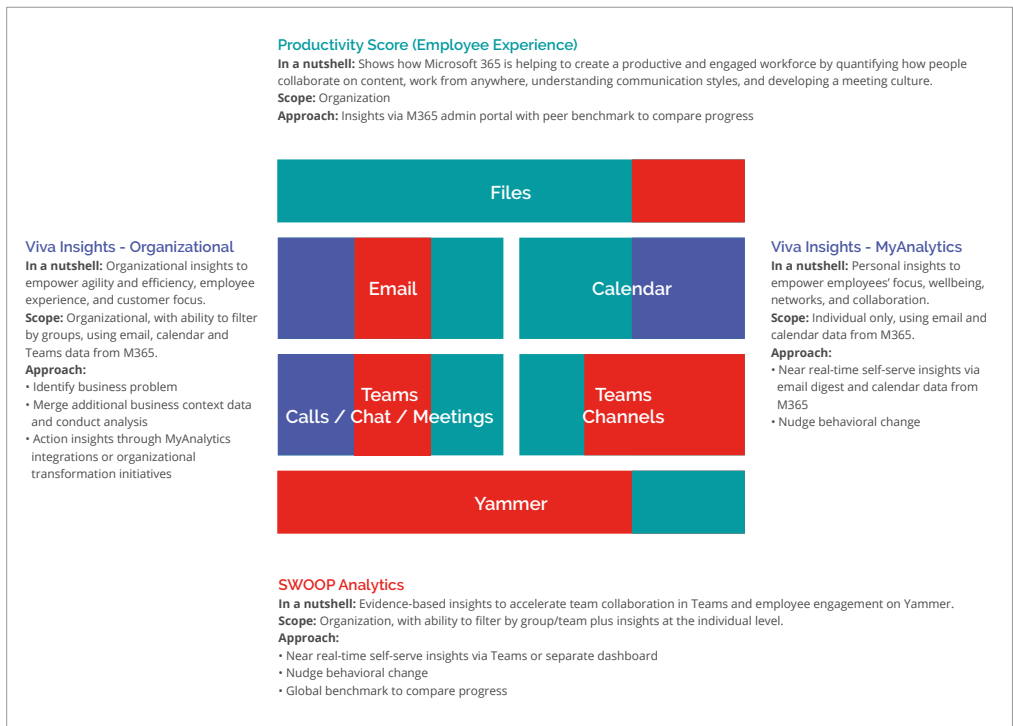


Figure 26 - Viva Insights, Productivity Score and SWOOP Analytics

The above graphic shows some of the current functional differences that exist today. We believe the largest differential is our approach to organizational change management. The traditional approach to analytics, that is consistent with the major part of Microsoft’s analytics approach, is to target the specialist analysts within their customer base. The intent is to facilitate these analysts to be able to derive insights and then communicate these insights to senior management. Equipped with these insights, senior management is therefore positioned to sponsor top-down driven organizational change initiatives to achieve the desired outcomes. The SWOOP Analytics approach has always been one of democratization i.e. put the analytics in the hands of those closest to a required change. In many instances this will be with the individuals themselves. Our dashboards are designed for use by end users and analysts alike.

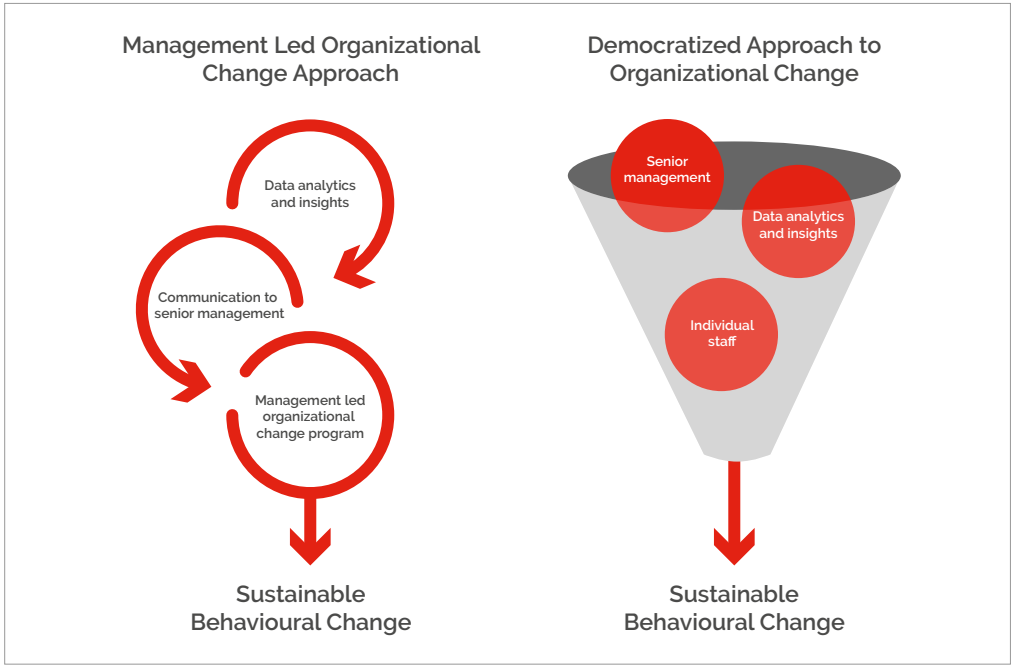


Figure 27 - Differentiated approaches to organizational change

Our approach has been influenced by organizational change guru [John Kotter in his book XRL8](#). He paints a picture of organizations needing to balance structure and hierarchy with internal networks, designed for responsiveness and adaptability.

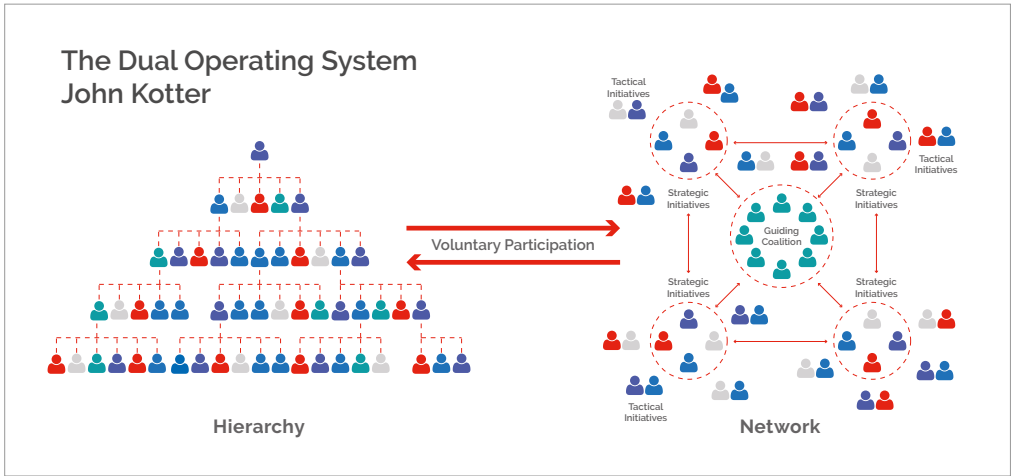


Figure 28 - The Dual Operating System

We see that by providing our analytics to both the formal and privacy protected informal sides of the business, we have the best chance of achieving the behavioral changes we are looking for.

# 7 ROI on optimal M365 usage

## (making the business case)

Creating the business case for change is a key to gaining senior leader sponsorship for the change initiatives required to succeed in the emerging hybrid working world. For most readers of this report, an investment has likely already been made in the M365 suite.

M365 provides the “digital infrastructure” that much of our work into the future will rely on. As with all infrastructure, however, there is a multitude of ways it can be used by individuals. What is different about organizations is the vast majority of positive business outcomes happen when staff collaborate as teams and communities. Because of this, it’s essential a high degree of co-operation between group members to agree on how the M365 infrastructure is to be used. In other words, [“what tool to use when” is important for collaborating groups to agree on.](#)

SWOOP’s Seven Collaboration Habits encompass the balance between different collaboration tool choices. In calculating a Return on Investment (ROI) from sustaining excellent digital collaboration habits, we make use of the collaboration habits calculated for more than 113,000 M365 individual account holders. By benchmarking each individual’s collaboration habits, we can look to the top 10-20% to provide an achievable benefits level. Where we can, we have looked to quantify that benefit in terms of time (and money) saved. In other areas, that do not lend themselves to easy quantification, we provide a statement of potential qualitative benefits.

We address the ROI potential for each of the Seven Collaboration Habits:

### 7.1 Email Liberation

We start with Email Liberation, as it is an area many recognize they can profit from doing less. Our analytics shows email is one of the largest time drains for staff. We have previously written about calculating the [ROI for Email Liberation](#). The methodology essentially suggests that internal emails can, and should, be replaced by either Microsoft Teams channel or Yammer interactions. The ROI is calculated based on time saving alone, in using these more efficient asynchronous communication modes.

#### ***Email Liberated***

We have made the following assumptions:

- An email takes 5 minutes to write and 3 minutes to read
- Yammer / Microsoft Teams channel messages take two minutes to read and two to write. It therefore takes half the time to read/write Channel or Yammer messages
- Based on our benchmarking an average person writes 5.6 emails per day and reads 28.2 emails per day
- 20% of emails can be substituted for by Teams channel or Yammer messages
- An average hourly wage at \$75
- 220 working days in a year

The following table summarizes our results for a typical sized organization:

Time spent per person reading and writing emails	112.6 minutes per day
20% of the email minutes (22.52 min) now takes half the time	11.26 minutes per day
Annual saving for an organization with 10,000 people (220 working days * 11.26 minutes * \$1.25 per minute * 10,000 people)	<b>\$USD30,965,000</b>

**Practical tip to be more Email Liberated and share in the benefits:**

Stop using email to communicate internally.  
Use Microsoft Teams channels or Yammer instead.  
Check the proportion of internal only emails you currently send and receive. If it's more than 20% you can get at least 11 minutes back every day!





## 7.2 Asynchronous Collaborator

The Asynchronous Collaborator habit follows a similar methodology, but this time substituting meeting and call time with asynchronous Microsoft Teams channels or Yammer messaging. This habit showed the most variation across all organizations, by far. Why not replace email with chat? We will discuss this in the ROI for Chat Liberation section.

### *Asynchronous Collaborator*

We have made the following assumptions:

- Based on our benchmarking data a person:
  - Spends 45 minutes in meetings/calls per day
  - Has on average 1 meeting per day
- 50%<sup>3</sup> of the 45 minutes in meeting/call can be substituted by posting 4 messages in Teams Channels or on Yammer (4 messages @ 2 minutes totalling 8 minutes)
- An average hourly wage at \$75
- 220 working days in a year

The following table summarizes our results for a typical sized organization:

Time spent per person in meetings/calls	45 minutes per day
Save 50% meeting/call minutes substituted by writing 4 messages	14.5 minutes per day
Annual saving for an organization with 10,000 people (220 working days * 14.5 minutes * \$1.25 per minute * 10,000 people)	<b>\$USD39,875,000</b>

### **Practical tip for more Asynchronous Working and sharing in the benefits:**

Ask your colleagues which parts must be necessarily done synchronously i.e. decision-making, creative work, socialization etc.; and which parts could be done asynchronously e.g. status updates, non-critical information sharing etc. Look to reduce your meeting times by 50%<sup>3</sup> by doing this.



<sup>3</sup> Opinion plus empirical research suggests a 50% reduction is a realistic goal  
e.g. <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/the-surprising-science-behind-successful-remote-meetings/>

### 7.3 Chat Liberation (interruption effect)

Our benchmarking showed an average of 65 chat messages sent each week. The time to write a chat message is minimal, so the time savings is not overly significant.

Chat, however, has a large “interruption effect”. Unlike any other asynchronous messages, chat or text messages virtually demand immediate attention. They are replacing direct audio calls as a way of interrupting someone more politely e.g. today we are more likely to text someone to ask if they are free to talk, rather than calling first.

[Gloria Mark's](#) work from the University of California Irvine is often quoted for her finding that it [takes on average 25 minutes and 26 seconds to get back on track after an interruption](#). This research has been regularly quoted as a drawback when referring to the disruptive impact of activities like texting and chat. Mark, however, finds that many interruptions are in fact beneficial, especially if they come from members of your close working team. Disruption becomes more apparent when the interruptions come from outside your normal working sphere. Such interruptions are more likely to have a negative impact on one's intended work patterns, leading to additional workplace stress.

The emerging habit of substituting email with chat is therefore only likely to be beneficial when the emails are between close working colleagues. Otherwise, the increase in chat traffic is likely to have a negative effect on health and wellbeing.

Chat Liberation is therefore about ensuring chat is reserved for quick and beneficial interactions with your close team. When you are tempted to chat with someone outside your close working circle, be mindful that you may be adding to their workplace stress.

***The core benefit from being Chat Liberated is achieving less stress through unwanted interruptions to your desired work patterns.***

#### **Practical tip to become more Chat Liberated:**

Aim to reserve your chat interactions to your close working colleagues, where such interruptions are more likely beneficial. Aim to substitute your interactions with those outside your inner working circle with Yammer, Microsoft Teams channels or email, where the response expectations are less immediate.



## 7.4 Community Collaborator

Yammer is the home for enterprise communities. We have been Yammer champions from our inception. In SWOOP's most recent [Yammer Benchmarking report](#), we identified recent integrations with Microsoft Teams and Outlook had resulted in a large increase in the readership of Yammer posts. We also identified that organizations had established several common interest communities that staff were flocking to as a means of stress relief i.e. simply "taking a break" from the remote working grind to find out what's happening across the organization.

While Yammer is now further establishing itself as the internal communications channel, this has been at the expense of more active participation in Yammer. Active participation (posts, replies and reactions) dropped from previous years. Within the M365 suite, Yammer activity, on average, was less than two minutes a day across all account holders. 22% of all staff benchmarked had no Yammer activity at all over the six-month benchmarking period.

We think that to be an effective staff member, participation in Yammer is essential. Even as a modest user, Yammer provides staff with the opportunity to create a broader suite of contacts outside your immediate working group. It is the place where staff can often interact directly with senior leadership, gaining a better appreciation for your organization's strategic intent.

One of the **biggest benefits from becoming an active community collaborator is the opportunity to participate in the type of social learning that is unique to your organization.** The concept of "[communities of practice \(CoP\)](#)" was pioneered and promoted by the Knowledge Management movement from the 1990s.

The other critical role **Yammer plays is being the digital home for nurturing innovation.** [Microsoft research identified that during the pandemic individual network contacts i.e. social capital, became more constrained.](#) The weaker, but more diverse connections that can happen in the office, have gone missing during the pandemic.

In the rush to establish a social media presence, many organizations have overlooked this staple means for **sharing and developing core competencies** unique to your organizations competitiveness. Led by in-house experts, online CoPs can become the place where the hybrid worker can engage and connect with others in their own discipline. When strategically aligned, CoPs can become a home for innovation and renewal. As part of [Viva Connections](#), the Community Champion is contributing to how enterprise knowledge is being shared and exploited.

### Practical tip to become a Community Collaborator:

Peruse your Yammer network for communities that align with your own skill sets or aspirations. Join one or two and start posting questions to other members i.e. get some conversation going.



If your Yammer network does not have a community that aligns with your aspirations, look for one or two buddies with like interests and start one up. Consider using Yammer to launch innovation campaigns. There are [copious resources available to help a budding community manager](#).

## 7.5 File Sharer

The File Sharer habit is essentially preferencing the shared space of SharePoint over the personal space of OneDrive. The underlying principle for this habit is knowledge sharing. By preferencing SharePoint, you are essentially flagging that the content you are working on is being developed to share. By adopting a “SharePoint first” mindset, you are trusting your colleagues, that share your SharePoint space, that your work is “in progress” until you tell them it’s ready for review. It’s like “buyer beware” if they choose to read it beforehand.

What is wrong with developing content in your own private space and only releasing it when you are ready? We have found from personal experience, even in writing our reports, the handover point between OneDrive and SharePoint is rarely clear cut. There is a period where versions will be mixed, co-authors and reviewers will be looking at a wrong version, etc.. Additionally, you may even welcome some commentary on your early drafts from those that you trust to keep this feedback to your working group.

The return on investment for the File Sharer is the [avoidance of the angst and time wasting these issues can cause, as a piece of content is shared more broadly](#). After all, our objective in developing content at all is to ensure the audience is as broad as its value can extend. Also as [Gloria Mark](#) discovered, [interruptions from your close team can actually be time beneficial](#).

The good news is that File Sharing is one of two collaboration habits where the variation in performance is not high or extreme.

### Practical tip to become a File Sharer:

Start by working with your close team. Advise them of your intent to develop content in your shared space on SharePoint and advise them that while they are free to peruse your work in progress, and even comment on it if they see fit; but it’s work in progress until you advise them otherwise.



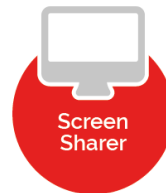
## 7.6 Screen Sharer

The Screen Sharer habit can be related to the face-to-face meeting where a participant chooses, for example, to use the whiteboard or share a PowerPoint presentation. We are looking to get to a point of detail where participants can gain a shared understanding about what is being discussed. You have probably attended meetings where the only sharing happening is verbal. You may have had the feeling that not everyone in attendance was taking away the same understanding about what was being discussed. Virtual meetings are prone to becoming “talking heads only” meetings, as it does require at least some technical capability to achieve the equivalent of a physical whiteboard or presentation.

While largely intangible, the return on investment in the Screen Sharing behavior is greater levels of shared understanding of what has been discussed in your online meetings; certainly something we would all aspire to!

### Practical tip to become a Screen Sharer:

Whenever you are participating in an online meeting and find the topic being discussed is somewhat unclear; make the suggestion to “share your screen”. You will find that once this happens the attention will immediately become more focused.



## 7.7 Camera Confidence

While this habit can be somewhat controversial, in practice, along with the File Sharer, it is the least variable amongst all Seven Collaboration Habits. The benefits for having your camera on during an online call include the increased levels of human connection that is achieved when participants can see each other (as of course they do in face-to-face meetings). During the early stages of the pandemic and WFH, we have seen senior executives achieve positive cultural impacts when their staff could observe them working in environments not unlike their own. These incidents are credited with “flattening the hierarchy”, as executives suddenly appeared more approachable.

### Practical tip to become Camera Confident:

Aim to have your camera on as the default when attending an online meeting. If there are valid reasons for not having your camera on e.g. bandwidth issues, start by having it on, but declare to the meeting that you will be turning your camera off, and why.



## 7.8 Active account governance

Account governance is not one of our collaboration habits, but has been added opportunistically, based on insights we have discovered while benchmarking. Of the 18 organizations assessed, we found on average 7% of the active accounts had no activity for the full six-month period. For one organization it was more than 20%. We have no insights into whether these inactive accounts were being fully paid for or not. If so, a simple bi-annual check could result in some substantial savings:

### Base assumptions

We have made the following base assumptions:

- Inactive accounts are being paid for at nominal list price of \$USD300/head per year
- 75% of inactive accounts are not required

Benefits calculation method:

- Calculate average account savings/head based on %inactive accounts

The following table summarizes our results for a typical sized organization:

Nominal number of staff	10,000
Average inactive accounts/organization	7%
Average cost of all inactive accounts/organization	\$USD181,537.43
75% of annual \$ saving equivalent for an organization with 10,000 staff	\$USD136,153.08



## 7.9 Summary of ROI benefits

The following table summarizes the potential returns available by optimizing your collaboration habits:

Digital Habit	Potential Return on Investment
Email Liberation	\$USD30,965,000 (10,000 staff)
Asynchronous Collaborator	\$USD39,875,000 (10,000 staff)
Chat Liberation	Achieving less stress through unwanted interruptions to your desired work patterns.
Community Collaborator	Participate in the type of social learning that is unique to your organization (Core Competencies).
File Sharer	Time wasted due to versioning issues. Early feedback opportunities.
Screen Sharer	Greater levels of shared understanding of what has been discussed in your online meetings.
Camera Confidence	Increased levels of human connection.
Active Account Governance	\$136,153.08 (10,000 staff)

Table 3 - Potential ROI from better collaboration habits

To put these potential benefits into perspective, **for an organization of 10,000 staff these annual savings are equivalent to having their headcount increased by more than 5% (536 extra staff)**, without taking into account the significant intangible benefits available.

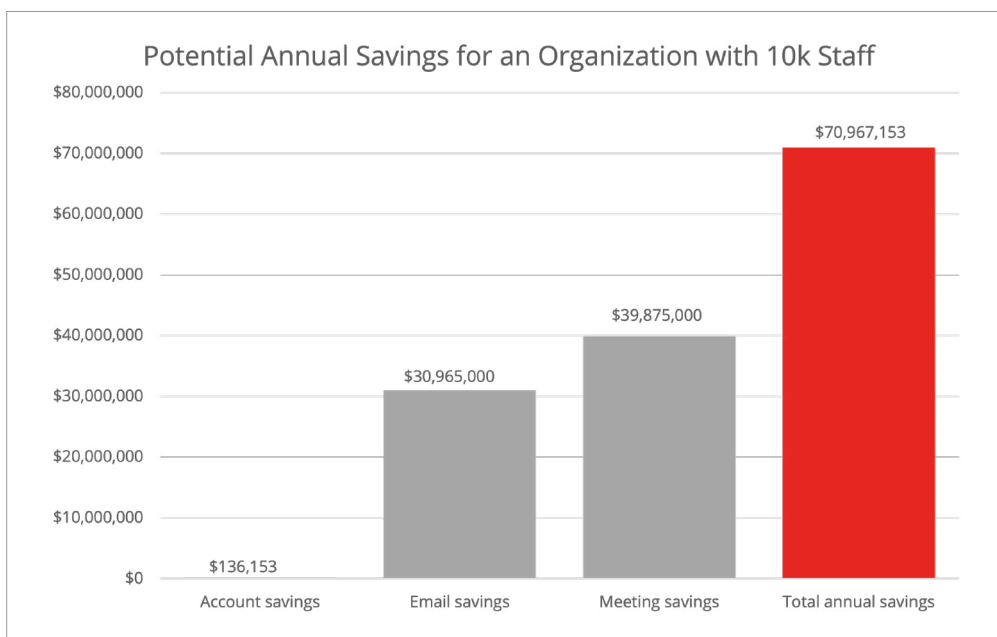


Figure 29 - Potential annual savings for an organization with 10k staff

# 8 Futures

## - the role of workforce analytics for effective hybrid working

*"The future of work is hybrid"*. This is the clear message we are hearing as organizations start to move back to their offices as we learn to live with the COVID-19 virus. Surveys find few staff want to go back to the office fulltime, and few want to work remotely fulltime either. The default position is a bet each way: hybrid. The big problem is, we are finding hybrid work is much harder than either of the extremes of all-office or all-remote. The [early reports are that hybrid work is more exhausting and stressful than either of the extremes](#); yet this is [what staff overwhelmingly want!](#)

How do workplaces deliver on what staff overwhelmingly want, when that option appears to be the worst of both worlds? The situation is not helped by the common, but naïve, policy guide of *x days in the office and y days remote*. At best, organizations might be able to identify the "degree of hybrid-ness" based on job role classifications. At least for knowledge workers, the scope exists for the individual to shape how they perform their duties quite differently, even if in nominally similar roles.

### 8.1 Is there an answer to this conundrum?

There are no shortage of studies addressing just this issue. Global consulting firm [PWC has reported comprehensively](#) on a broad suite of factors ranging from office designs through to work practices, and finally, changed leadership styles. PWC positions the role of the "office" as bringing to employees social connection, purpose, collaboration and organizational identity. PWC recommends organizational leadership to finally move *"from a mechanical leadership model relying on structured places, hours and roles for work toward an organic model based on flexibility in both time and place, a focus on strengths-based work and decentralized decision-making"*.

Alex Christian, [writing for the BBC](#), reports on the stress and exhaustion being experienced with hybrid working. He writes that things start to go wrong when the hybrid schedule is dictated by a supervisor. *"Employees end up with a working week they have no control over: it's like the fixed full-time office schedule of old, which just happens to be in the worker's home twice a week."* The suggestion is to provide autonomy for the worker to self-manage their schedule – *"flexibility needs to be dictated by the individual, not the boss."*

Microsoft's comprehensive [Work Trend Index 2022: Great Expectations: Making Hybrid Work Work](#) surveyed 31,000 people across 31 countries. A key finding was the mismatch they found between organizational leaders and regular staff on their expectations. 73% of staff were looking for increased flexibility when returning to the office. 50% of leaders wanted staff back in the office fulltime.



Jared Spataro, head of Microsoft's Modern Work team, in [a recent interview with the HBR](#) suggests the gap can only be resolved by leaders fine tuning their listening skills. Spataro, speaking of the research said; *"the thing that we've uncovered is that it's really about social capital. In other words, moving an organization forward isn't just about projects and transactional completion of tasks, it really is about the way that people are bound together so that they honestly create a greater whole."* Spataro concludes with; *"At the end of the day, whether it's social capital or anything we're trying to do, the deeper the connection, the higher the exchange of information and connection, we feel like the more people are able to be productive together. That's our underlying assumption."* This proposition essentially takes us back to the core proposition of the Knowledge Management movement from the 1990s: [it's all about Connections and Collections](#). We can already see this influence surfacing with the Microsoft Viva offering.

Harvard professor and virtual working expert Tsedal Neely has published her new book ["Remote Work Revolution: Succeeding from Anywhere"](#), which encompasses the global virtual working "experiment" that we are still a part of. In essence the message from her research is that business value from virtual working has always been there. But now the benefits have been amplified globally. She acknowledges the difficulties like technical exhaustion, loss of social connections, etc.; but responds confidently with simple practice adjustments to alleviate them. She quotes the example of agile teams, premised on intense collocation; now being adapted even more successfully to globally distributed agile teams (see 3.2 City Fibre Case Study).

[Martine Haas, writing for the Harvard Business Review](#), has identified the five challenge factors for hybrid work that need to be overcome: *communication, coordination, connection, creativity, and culture – the 5 Cs*. All five ultimately consider how staff relate to each other; and how leadership facilitates such interactions. Haas suggests each of these challenges were amplified by the experience of remote working over the past two years, but now complicated by the partial return to the office. For example, will we see a class divide appear between those that preference the office over remote work? Will those staff who have joined during the pandemic be permanently less enculturated than those who have had the benefit of a pre-pandemic culture?

One thing common amongst all the offered solutions is [the need for experimentation](#). As Alex Christian says: *"currently, we know more about full-time remote working through a health crisis than we do about hybrid working in the long-term"*. There is no "one size fits all" answer. Organizations are different. People in organizations will differ on what works best for them. [Effective experimentation requires data, analytics and insights](#) that can lead to effective interventions.



## 8.2 How can analytics help?

Regarding hybrid work, one thing is certain; uncertainty prevails and no-one has the complete answer. It is and will be a complex problem that will require rapid experimentation to resolve. And analytics is core to successful experimentation.

### ***What relevant data is available?***

One of the blessings provided by enforced remote working is that everyone had to rely on digital toolsets to continue to do their work. Whether it was the Microsoft 365 suite, Zoom, Slack, Google Workspace, Workplace by Meta, or some combination, each leave a “digital trail” of how people are actually working. Products like [SWOOP Analytics](#) and Microsoft's [Viva Insights](#) can expertly mine such data in privacy protected ways to provide insights to individuals, groups leaders and enterprise workforce analysts on staff collaboration behaviors. Such data and insights can form the basis for what has been commonly described as “the biggest workplace experiment of all time” since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The “how people are actually working” is complemented by “how people are feeling about their work” provided by the [HR/People Analytics](#) provider surveys. Together, the insights derived will become an essential service for navigating the complexity of hybrid working.

### **8.2.1 Using SWOOP's analytics to address the hybrid working 5Cs challenges**

Using Martine Haas' 5Cs framework to provide a data analytics driven response:

#### ***Communication – What form should it take in the hybrid world?***

The forced rapid movement to remote working in March 2020 had one major upside. Organizational leaders learned how to engage with staff at all levels via digital channels. Face-to-face town hall-type events were replaced by digital channels, with even larger and more inclusive audiences. In our [2020 Yammer Benchmarking report](#) we heard case study after case study on how leaders had stepped up to the plate to engage with all staff online; many from their own homes. The cultural impact was enormous, as the corporate hierarchies evidenced in the physical office were dismantled as CEOs interacted directly with frontline staff.

We think this “digital first” approach to enterprise-wide communications is one area that needs to be sustained into the hybrid working world. There appears no reasonable argument to go back to large scale face-to-face communication events. The feedback and discussions observed during the height of the movement to remote work could not be replicated in town hall events.

#### ***Coordination – Avoiding the “fault-lines” between office and remote staff***

This is one area that requires significant attention. If you thought it was hard to get the right people into a meeting pre-pandemic, hybrid work has escalated the complexity by an order

of magnitude or more. Where it may have been possible to pull large groups of office-based staff into a meeting at short notice; it will be logistically impossible with hybrid work.

Our benchmarking has shown it is the middle management, being the natural coordinators, that have been most impacted by remote working. Forced to do their coordination online, they were the ones who mostly felt stressed and over-worked from meeting overload.

Our benchmarking data provided evidence that calls and meeting overload is being unfairly distributed, with the busiest 10% of staff accounting for 42% or all minutes spent in calls and meetings:

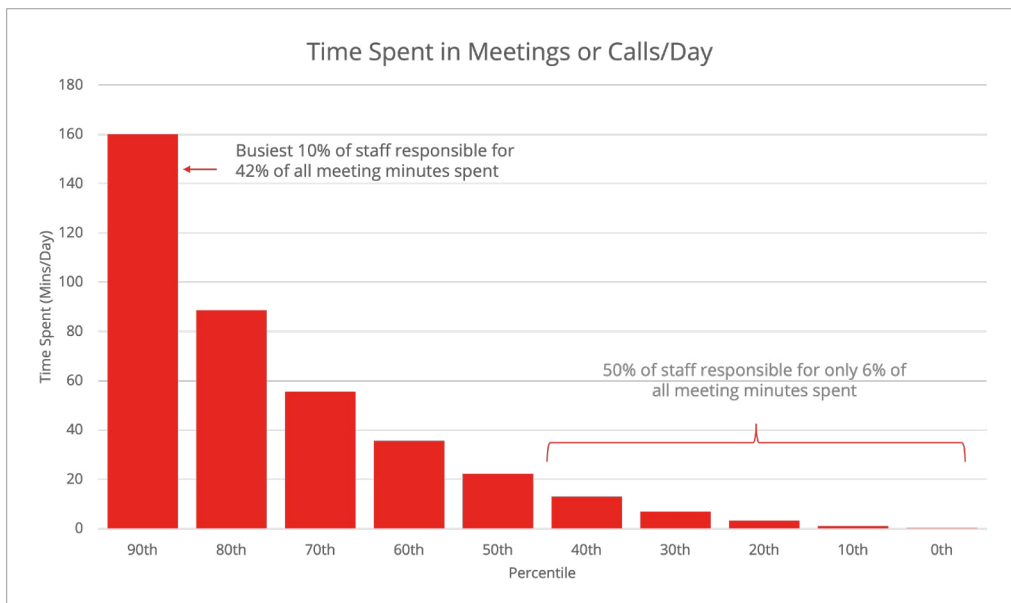


Figure 30 - Distribution of time spent in calls and meetings

Fundamentally, hybrid working will be the “burning platform” for the long called for change to more self-managed and autonomous teams. As Alex Christian claims, in the hybrid world, staff will want more control over their schedules. We have written extensively about the change in our most recent [Microsoft Teams benchmarking reports](#) and [follow-up articles](#). Today, digital teams are still too large (~49 members with about half active). Effective co-ordination cannot happen with groups of this size.

Hybrid working teams will need to be kept below 10 and ideally in the four to eight range for effective co-ordination to be possible. The smaller the team, the easier it is to schedule calls and meetings, but also to adjust for the inevitable unforeseen events that can disrupt meeting plans.

In terms of broader levels of co-ordination, we see the [“Team of Teams” organizational structure first popularized by General Stanley McCrystal](#) as a preferred organizational model. McCrystal used a Team of Teams design to combat terrorist groups in Afghanistan. It is a good fit for coordination of large-scale hybrid teams, where scheduled improvisations are more likely a constant than an exception. With [SWOOP for Teams](#) you can see what your Team of Teams structure is looking like. A traditional hierarchy will see the central people being overloaded. An effective Team of Teams structure will see a flatter connections structure:

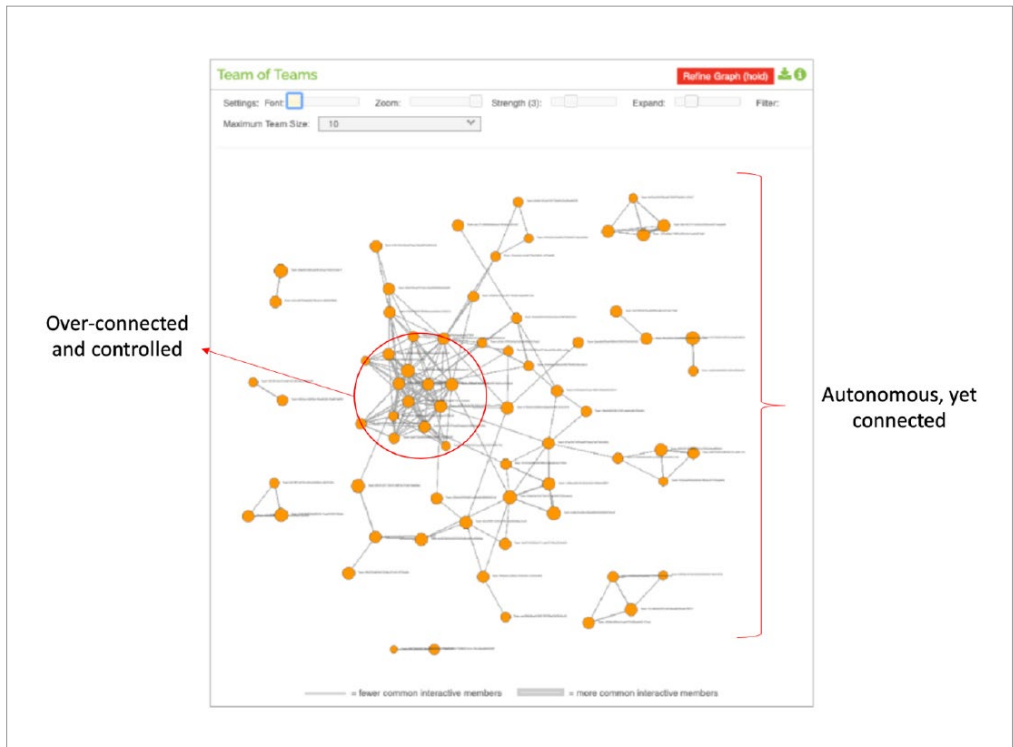


Figure 31 – The new hybrid working organization chart?

The above chart identifies how digital teams are connected through common members. The loosely connected teams show a measure of autonomy that facilitates flexible adaptation to hybrid work needs, without being totally disconnected. The tight cluster of teams marked identify many common and potentially redundant connections. The overconnected teams may find it more difficult to operate independently in a hybrid working world. The central connectors in this cluster are also at risk of [collaborative overload](#).

**Connection – Avoiding “class divides” in enterprise social networks (ESN)**

The “class divide” in social networks can exist between those present in the office, who can connect, interact and form stronger social bonds, than those working remotely. This was a common situation for remote workers in the pre-pandemic era. Hybrid working, however, provides the opportunity for inviting all staff to the office, specifically for social networking purposes. Perhaps it could take the form of a seminar day with generous breaks and shared meal times. Australian-based [office architects Hassell are promoting a “clubhouse” model](#) which; “offers employees a comfortable and distinct alternative to their home work environments and a place to collaborate and strengthen bonds between otherwise dispersed team members. The space is designed to inspire and build culture, connection and social capital.”

We know from experiences with [“Communities of Practice”](#) that infrequent face-to-face events can create the social capital that is then carried into the online world of Enterprise Social Networks. [SWOOP for Yammer](#) provides a [suite of analytics for assessing the connectedness of online communities](#):

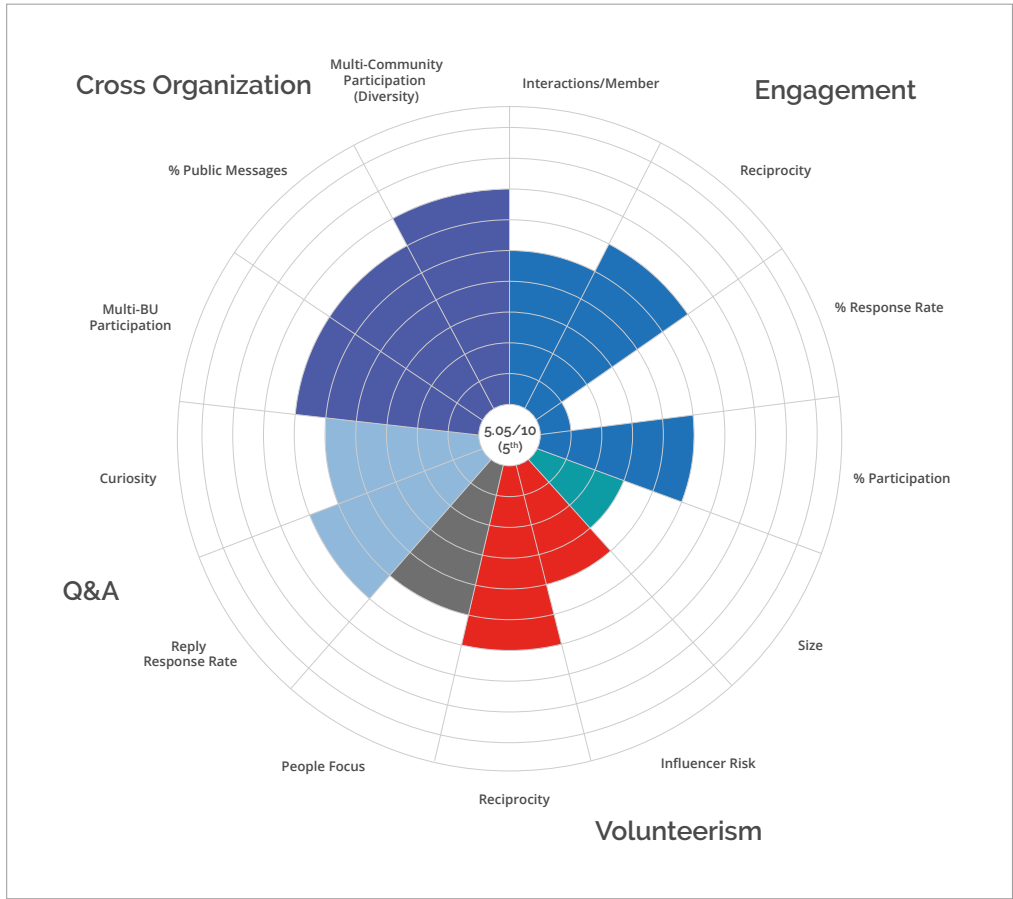


Figure 32 – Online community analytics

The above diagram shows how SWOOP community measures can be represented in comparison with other communities. This example uses SWOOP benchmarking methods to provide a percentile ranking for each measure, with a summary overall ranking score.

Some of our customers have used the community monitoring tools to identify when a face-to-face event might be needed to re-energize a community.

**Creativity – How to create an environment for both brainstorming and serendipity**

Despite the richness of collaboration software available today, nothing beats a face-to-face brainstorming session. As with the ESNs, hybrid working offers the potential for combining the best of in-person and remote working. Specifically, for brainstorming to resolve a difficult problem or pursue an important opportunity, it might be worth scheduling a face-to-face event with plenty of lead time. After the session, it is important to create a follow-up digital team or ESN space to keep the participants engaged throughout the innovation process. Just like for communities, SWOOP provides community and/or teams health indicators that can be used to [track the creation to execution process](#):

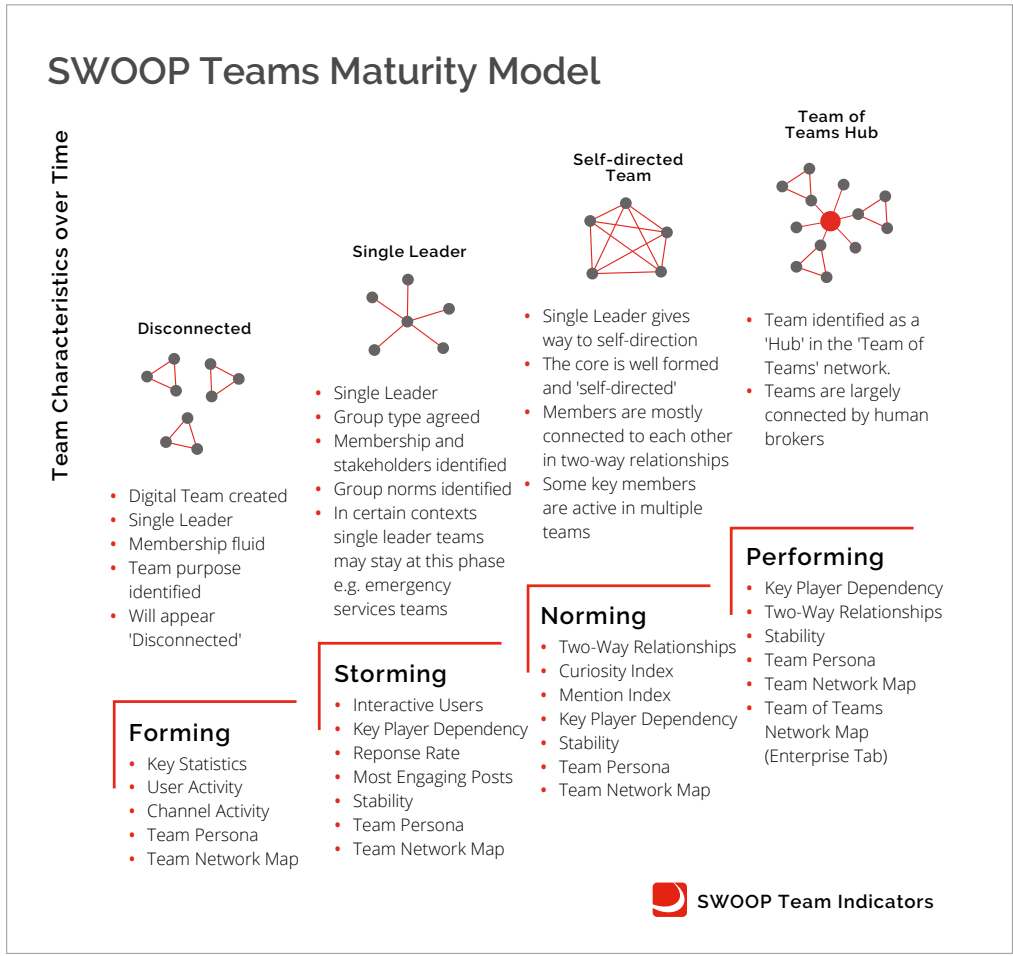


Figure 33 - Teams maturity model

Apple [co-founder Steve Jobs was known for obsessing about office designs](#) that maximized the opportunity for serendipitous connections. There are many who [would argue this style of serendipitous connections cannot be replicated online](#). In a hybrid working world, we don't lose the physical environment completely. And if new office designs like the Hassel clubhouse model becomes a reality, it can be even enhanced.

At [SWOOP Analytics](#), we have two key measures we associate with creativity and innovation. Our [curiosity index](#) measures the proportion of posts that are framed as questions. The second is our [diversity of experience index](#) which measures the degree to which staff are active, and therefore exposed, to multiple communities. In combination, these measures provide an indicator of how naturally inquisitive the organization is and how receptive staff might be to creative propositions.

The second area we have observed serendipitous connections occurring is in ESN "non-work" or social communities e.g. pets group, photography group, etc.. Typically these communities attract membership across the formal lines of business. We have heard [several reports that serendipitous connections made in such groups have led to an unanticipated business outcome](#).

We think hybrid working combining the ideas provided above can lead to even more creativity and innovation across the organization.

**Culture – Sustaining a positive culture and embracing pandemic-era new hires**

**Organizational culture is set from the top, but sustained from the bottom.** For many organizations, the way senior leaders reacted to the enforced move to remote working had a positive effect on the culture. SWOOP’s [2020 Yammer benchmarking study](#) identified a marked uplift in staff sentiment as staff transitioned to remote working. We identified case study after case study showing CEOs placing staff safety and wellbeing above profits.

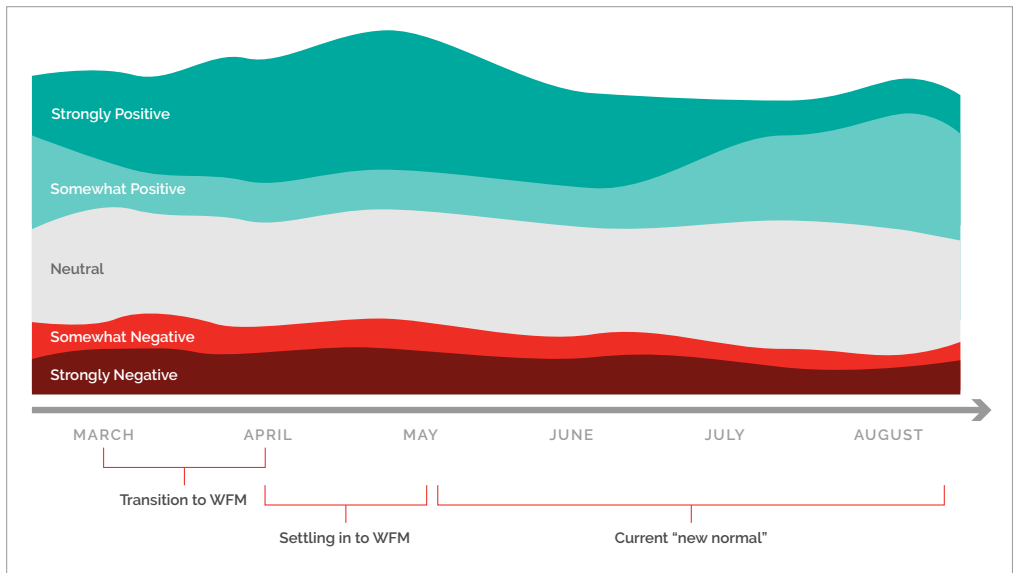


Figure 34 - Staff sentiment during WFH

Staff sentiment remained positive throughout the first six months from the transition to work from home. [SWOOP’s Yammer product provides analytics on the sentiment and key topics](#) staff are engaging around.

Over time, however, the daily CEO-led town hall virtual events became less frequent and more routine. Two years on, we are now seeing many reports [of staff exhaustion and the great resignation](#). Senior leadership can only do so much to generate a sense of purpose and a positive culture across their breadth of staff. It’s the staff we interact with on a regular basis; our team, that most impacts our personal mindsets on a day-to-day basis. Senior leader pronouncements will never make up for a toxic team environment.

We have used SWOOP measures to [map internal cultures](#) down to the individual business unit level:

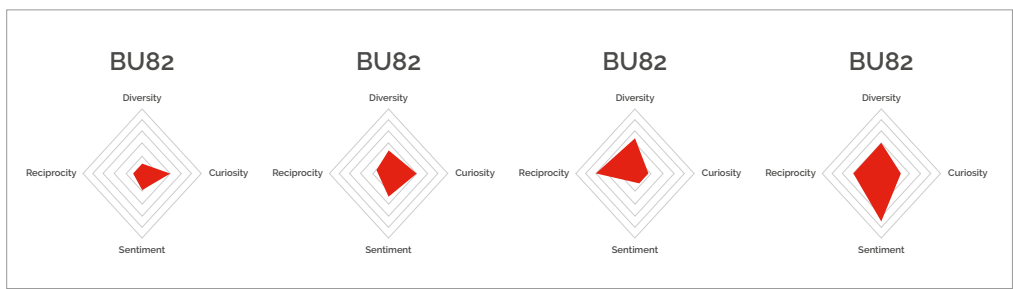


Figure 35 - Cultural profiles

We can see that culture, when viewed from the bottom up, can vary considerably across the organization.

When combined with traditional employee engagement pulse surveys, senior management can receive data, in close to real-time, to help navigate the uncertainties present in the movement to hybrid working.

### 8.3 Practical next steps

The objective should be to move beyond the simple “*x days in the office and y days remote*” policies. The standout finding from our benchmarking of [Microsoft 365 collaboration habits](#) is just how variable they are from person to person.

The first step therefore is to survey staff for their work preferences:

#### **What % of your work time would you like to reserve for solo work?**

*Solo work does not have to be conducted in the office.*

#### **What % of your collaborative time would you prefer to be face-to-face?**

*Provides a sense of “office time” that needs to be accommodated.*

#### **For your face-to-face time, what % would be with your immediate team?**

*Provides a sense of “office space” that needs to be accommodated.*

The second step is to understand the impact of preference mismatches:

The collected survey data should be collated by formal lines of business down to the team level. Where there is a large variance in responses at the team level, team leads need to be alerted and engaged in team negotiations, to settle on a workable hybrid working norm.

The third step is to institute a measuring and monitoring capability for hybrid working. Preferences can change over time. The [digital transformation triggered by the enforced remote working from 2020 needs to now be evolved](#). At SWOOP we have built digital transformation analysis into our [SWOOP for M365 product](#). Collaboration habits exhibited through the use of the full Microsoft 365 suite (Outlook, Yammer, Microsoft Teams, SharePoint and OneDrive) are compared with benchmarked best collaboration habits from the enterprise, down to the privacy protected personal level.



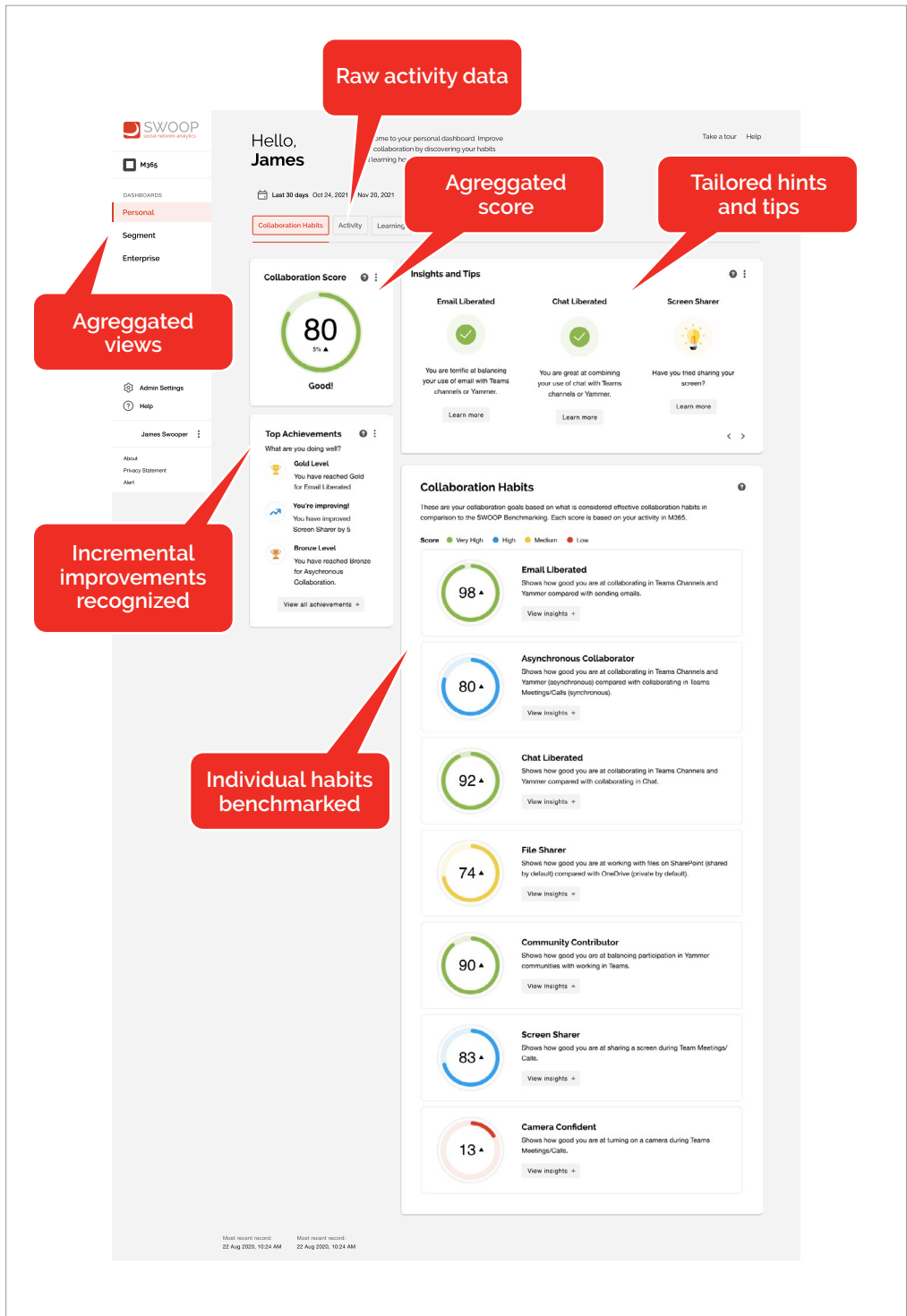


Figure 36 - Personal habits dashboard

The product provides a “finger on the pulse” for everyone transitioning to hybrid working (which is just about everyone!).

## 9 Final thoughts

We have suggested that moving to a hybrid working model is like the wild west. There is a lot to be discovered and learned. Opportunities abound for those who proactively engage with the complexity hybrid work presents.

By focusing our benchmarking on human collaboration habits we were able to quantify just how variable the majority of these habits are within formal organizational groups or teams. The potential productivity gains through more normalized habits amongst team members is immense. According to our estimates, equivalent of more than a 5% increase in overall staff headcount.

If there is one practice we feel will contribute substantially to realizing these gains, it's to fully embrace the digital team and team channel usage. Microsoft has designed the digital team to be the hub for team working. The poor use of Microsoft Teams channels, and the asynchronicity they provide together with Yammer discussions is critical, yet substantially under-utilized. Over 58% of staff had not made a Yammer post, reply or like, or a sent a Teams channel message, over the full six-month period analyzed.

**One simple practice you can undertake today is ensure each group/team identified in your company directory is established as a digital team.**

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