



Choose Your Team Collaboration Platform Wisely

Seek Independent Expertise to Ensure the Right Path

A Frost & Sullivan Executive Brief

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INTRODUCTION

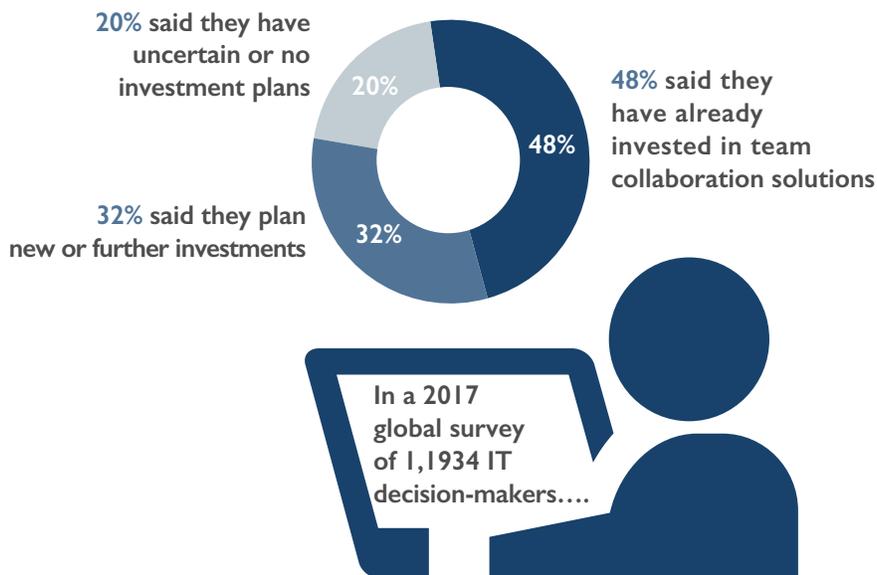
Team collaboration platforms are emerging as the next big advancement in business productivity. These solutions aim to create multi-point, multi-media communication unified into one application or platform, delivering always-on, on-demand functionality combined with dynamic voice, video and data-sharing capabilities that truly change the nature of business collaboration.

With diverse feature sets capable of satisfying a range of use cases and preferences, team collaboration solutions already have a foothold within most organizations. In many instances, team collaboration platforms are adopted as free or low-cost software as a service (SaaS) outside of IT's support purview and with little to no integration with the organization's business and communications software. Sanctioned by IT or not, these next-generation environments are proving their value for small teams and interdepartmental use, which is spurring adoption across more users and business units.

- Frost & Sullivan estimates that daily active users are now approaching 16 million, while net-new users are estimated to grow at a robust compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 38% from 2015 to 2021, from 2.2 million new users to reach nearly 23 million new users annually.



- In a 2017 Frost & Sullivan global survey of 1,934 IT decision-makers, 48% said they have already invested in team collaboration solutions and 32% said they plan new or further investment in the technology over the next two years.



Today's most widely adopted and evaluated platforms include enterprise-grade solutions centered on Cisco Spark, Microsoft Teams, Slack, Google Hangouts and Atlassian HipChat (now known as Stride). The off-the-shelf capabilities of these and other platforms have already taken much of the heavy-lifting burden off of IT through available APIs, use of standards-based protocols and interfaces, and more. However, the genesis of each of these is distinct, with their respective positioning and strengths still reflecting their initial foundation.

<p>Spark</p>	<p>Cisco Spark was designed as a single pane of glass for messaging, meeting and calling to deliver an optimal experience irrespective of whether users are mobile, sitting at their desk, or in a huddle room or conference room. The cloud service uniquely supports a complete line of purpose-built, room-based Spark collaboration endpoints. While other team collaboration solutions simply provide a video gateway capability, Cisco assumes that groups of people in the same room require both a quality and ease of use experience across different mobile, desktop and room environments. Cisco has integrated Spark with its video conferencing and WebEx portfolios, and has nearly 80 self- or partner-developed integrations with third-party business software solutions, from Zendesk to SharePoint to Marketo and more. Available APIs present opportunities for further off-the-shelf and business workflow integrations. Today Spark also natively delivers an essential set of cloud-based PBX features.</p>
<p>Teams</p>	<p>Microsoft built Teams collaboration to become a Slack killer at the desktop and on mobile devices. It centered upon team messaging and continues to integrate tightly with the Microsoft stack (Directory, Exchange, Office, SharePoint, Dynamics, Skype for Business, Visual Studio, etc.). Microsoft-hosted Teams also integrates with a variety of third-party applications (i.e., Asana, Jira, Salesforce, etc.). In October 2017, Teams received an immense boost from Microsoft via tighter integration and license bundling with Microsoft-hosted Office 365 cloud services, including Skype for Business.</p>
<p>Slack</p>	<p>Slack began as a platform focused on chat delivered to dedicated team, group and peer-to-peer channels. The platform quickly became the industry bellwether for enterprise adoption. It continues to be positioned as an integration hub for third-party developers, creating a single environment to access native Slack and third-party business and vertical software, conferencing, file sharing and other applications (from Appfigures to Zapier). Slack has since introduced native voice, video and interactive screen sharing with essential functionality variously supported on desktop and mobile devices.</p>
<p>Hangouts</p>	<p>Google Hangouts is the multi-party collaboration (voice, video, chat and content) for the Google+ social collaboration environment. Integrating tightly with G Suite (calendar, email, office productivity, etc.), Hangouts has displaced Google Talk as the internet giant's primary chat engine. Hangouts features are variously supported on a range of mobile and desktop devices, as well as Google ChromeBox appliances for meeting rooms. In 2017, Hangouts for Business launched, offering improved video capabilities, support, uptime, storage and other benefits in comparison to the consumer version.</p>
<p>Stride (formerly HipChat)</p>	<p>HipChat initially focused on enterprise group chat and direct messaging. With the evolution into Stride, the platform is more multimedia-capable, variously supporting group video, voice and screen sharing on desktops and mobile devices. It continues to interoperate well with other Atlassian Suite tools (Trello, Jira, BitBucket, GitHub, Confluence) as well as third-party apps (i.e., Alfresco, Dropbox, G Suite, Office 365, Zephyr). Stride is available via Atlassian-hosted cloud service or deployment on enterprise servers.</p>

All of the products named above, as well as many alternatives, have been available since 2015 or later. As a segment these solutions are advancing at a rapid clip. We are already witnessing clear directions for near-term development roadmaps, including:



Artificial Intelligence: AI means different things to different people. In the team collaboration market, AI is regarded as a catalyst to more efficient workflows. AI will mine databases, interaction history, contacts, calendars and more to surface relevant people, information and content resources with the timing and context needed for greater effectiveness and productivity. It will enhance group coordination (meeting scheduling, initiation, content curation, etc.) to ensure better user experiences and more productive meetings.



Customer Experience: Team collaboration will enable more of the organization beyond the contact center to assist with customer experience (CX) and interaction. Better CX will be delivered through improved access to subject-matter experts and information across the enterprise for faster, more complete responses, which drive customer satisfaction and loyalty. In addition, personal hardware interfaces such as Cisco DX80 would further enhance agent-to-customer experience.



Internet of Things: IoT is a popular tech industry buzz term that we believe has real-world implications for business agility and efficiency. Team collaboration is increasingly viewed as a hub where many of the integration points of data sources (asset management, facilities, logistics, CRM, ERP, etc.) hook into a common environment to be organized in discreet channels for search and consumption by different groups within the organization.

EVALUATION CONSIDERATIONS



Although there is a general movement toward a common set of features across the most popular team collaboration platforms, there are and will likely always be significant functionality differences amongst them.

Deployment and adoption success depends on which of these distinguishing capabilities are most important for your organization. For a relatively nascent market and a lack of in-house experience, businesses may struggle to understand which criteria are most important or even which questions need to be asked.

Questions to ask:

- Consistent quality and ease-of-use experience across endpoints and physical work environments are critical. What functionality do you require on desktop and mobile devices and in meeting rooms?
- Do your teams ever use physical whiteboards? Where do you want to capture the information automatically, digitally and seamlessly for everyone else to see in real time and post meeting, without the need to follow a whole process of capturing, recording and then disseminating afterward?
- Who are the users: engineering only, marketing, HR, sales, etc.? Usability and experience will differ, and a solution well suited for engineering may not be the right fit for other parts of the company.
- Simplicity is essential. Which out-of-the-box integrations do you require?
- Do you have unified communications assets to integrate, such as video conferencing and meeting room solutions?
- Checklist features are not enough. Does the platform offer the breadth and depth of capabilities as well as ease of use to effectively satisfy diverse workloads and use cases (marketing, sales, HR, facilities, etc.)?

- What are the security and compliance implications, and does your targeted platform or available integrations satisfy your specific regulatory requirements?
- How does the licensing structure work? Does it scale affordably? Are there price and support advantages of bundling with other single-source applications?
- Do you need external users (i.e., guests, others outside the firewall) to join in collaboration?

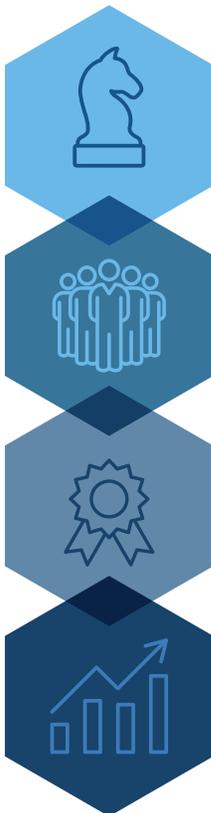
SOLUTION SPOTLIGHT: AVI-SPL

Choosing a team collaboration solution should be a strategic decision that addresses the greater organization, not solely the first few teams with a pressing need for the technology. Therefore, it's important to understand the complete solutions landscape with respect to today's platform capabilities and the roadmaps for each. Many IT departments lack the resources to tackle these additional responsibilities on top of daily activities as well as progressive initiatives that are already under way. With all of the available options as well as the potentially high risk and reward, enterprise decision makers are strongly urged to align with an experienced, independent provider.

AVI-SPL Value

AVI-SPL is a multi-national service provider with over 40 years of experience in communications and collaboration technology. The company maintains a comprehensive portfolio of partner and internally developed products and services to deploy, integrate, manage and maintain single-stack and multi-vendor environments.

The company brings to bare the following attributes:



- Comprehends the lay of the land and has deep understanding to provide **strategic guidance**.
- Works to understand your organization's unique **business goals** and pain points.
- Ensures the breadth and depth of team collaboration platform **integrations** are available to address more **workgroups, workspaces and workflows** that your organization will need to support in the future.
- Owns the skill sets to bring **multi-vendor, multi-protocol** solutions together effectively.
- Knows how to integrate the right aspects to ensure successful **business outcomes**.
- Serves as a liaison for **vendor management and support**.
- Assures key **compliance certifications** for distinct industries and practices.
- Can **design, deliver and deploy** locally, regionally and globally.
- Recognizes that ease of use and user experiences are key across **all modalities** of mobile, desktop and room-based meetings with one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many participant formats.
- Offers usage and adoption services to deliver lifecycle programs that ensure a solid **return on investment (ROI)**.

Team collaboration is clearly a fast-emerging solutions area that IT departments must proactively address. Given the speed of technology development and viral adoption, it's best to act now.

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-  Interested in learning more about the topics covered in this white paper? Call us at 877.GoFrost and reference the paper you're interested in. We'll have an analyst get in touch with you.
-  Visit our **Digital Transformation** web page.
-  Attend one of our **Growth Innovation & Leadership (GIL)** events to unearth hidden growth opportunities.

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