

DIGITAL COLLABORATION TOOLS

TRANSFORMING THE WAY WE WORK

BY VICTORIA TUCKER

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hello@zbglobal.com

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The software solution examples cited here are not endorsements of any kind, nor are they representative of the entire bandwidth of available tools. Additionally, no compensation was received from any of the products, or vendors, mentioned. The examples provided are just that – samples to help the reader get a sense for how a collaboration tool might appear, and the feature sets it could contain.

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Introduction

Seismic shifts can leave tangible marks- sometimes on a colossal scale much like a mountain range that results when two land masses collide.

Today's work world is behaving as though continents have rammed into one another. In this age of global change, we see sizeable workplace shifts occurring with digital transformation emerging as a new, and distinguishing, landmark. This is seen through the increased use of online technologies which automate business experiences (for customers, employees, patients, or members) on a level that exponentially intensifies interaction and enhances operational efficiencies.

This eBook attempts to address one specific aspect of digital transformation – workplace collaboration tools and their grouping into commonly referenced categories. In plain terms, these web-based collaboration technologies equip teams to engage with one another regardless of location. They:

- Provide a shared platform where individuals can ideate, problem-solve, review status and monitor deliverables. In other words – to do the work associated with that of a high performing team.
- Assist in-house, and remote teams, to focus on specific tasks and implement (as well as monitor) a spectrum of projects.
- Share, edit, secure, and store files for easy access and reference.
- Typically support more than one form of communication such as chat, instant messaging, audio/video conferencing, screen sharing and document sharing.

Pros and cons are presented which are associated with the criteria most organizational decision-makers seek, and examples of collaboration tools (by category) are laid out. However, this is by no means an exhaustive list, or even a thoroughly vetted directory. And this is certainly not a software evaluation reference.

This document is simply an outline to help the everyday worker distinguish the many different collaboration tools from one another, increase their knowledge (and vocabulary on the topic), and to see a few examples of tool providers to get a better sense of what a particular application might look like.

The examples provided are derived from personal experiences as well as a broad swath of industry publications.

The digital tool categories covered here include:

Communication

Document & File Sharing

Project Management

Mind-Mapping

Note-Taking

Video Conferencing

Intranet (Centralized Hub)

As time goes by, digital tools will expand to include feature sets from other categories. In fact, many of the examples provided in this reference are capable of more than the one or two functions associated with the category under which they are listed.

One of the key takeaways here is to become familiar with how technology applications may be described, and to make purchasing decisions based on the digital functionality your organization needs. In other words, do your own careful analysis of your company's needs versus rushing to sign-up for specific offerings advertised by vendors.

Another important takeaway is to broaden the scope of your thinking and through your own data collection, nudge others to expand their perspective.

Online collaboration tools (which now span nearly every facet of business) can enable change in the workplace making it possible for employees to work together from anywhere in the world and to do so efficiently and productively.

“Many organizations have shifted to remote-working models almost overnight... allowing companies to mobilize global expertise instantly...”

The COVID-19 recovery will be digital: A plan for the first 90 days
McKinsey Digital

01

THE PROS AND CONS OF ONLINE COLLABORATION TOOLS

“When digital transformation is done right, it’s like a caterpillar turning into a butterfly, but when done wrong, all you have is a really fast caterpillar.”

- George Westerman, Research Scientist with the MIT Sloan Initiative on the Digital Economy



COLLABORATION TOOLS

Randall Stephenson, CEO and Chairman of AT&T, said (during an interview with a leading news affiliate in March of 2020) that roughly half of his 200,000 employees were working remotely. He believed that even with the discovery of a vaccine to the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses in general (his included) would engage in hefty debate on the role remote work would play going forward.

Stephenson implied that remote work would represent more of the norm than not. Since the time of that interview, his sentiment has been echoed among many, if not most, business leaders.

Today, the ability to connect users digitally in an online space is a prerequisite to communication and productivity. The tools needed come in the form of web-based applications boasting features like instant messaging for teams, and a means for file sharing and collaborative search engines (CSE) to locate, and share, information that resides within the guts of the organization.



The ability to communicate and collaborate has always been important, but when team members are geographically dispersed that capability takes on a criticality with success hinged on leveraging digital tools to support productivity efforts.

With a myriad of online tools already flooding the market (and new ones being introduced on a seemingly daily basis) it makes sense to pause before leaping to acquire. First, understand what your organization already has (and is using) by checking-in with your IT department. Ask about their strategies for safeguarding security- and this is no small thing- how they think tools can be standardized so the acquisition of tools doesn't turn into a BYOD or UYOA party (Bring Your Own Device and Use Your Own App).

Also, as a practical matter, you might do well to survey those employees with some longitudinal experience working remotely, as they may have specific insights into the tools already in place within your organization. This is more than a matter of identifying what IT supports. It is also about discovering what team members successfully use that counts.

Likewise, before clicking to buy a digital tool, look for free trial periods. If possible, ask a few people in your organization (preferably those most likely to be affected by the tool) to try out the application for a month then get their input on what works and what does not.

While a slew of options might make selection complicated, it does offer today's users an impressive menu of feature and pricing options. The most important aspects of selection come down to the following: flexibility, efficiency, and cost.

FLEXIBILITY

What Works

Remote Work

Online collaboration gives today's workers the means to work regardless of location, time zone, and in most cases, a user's device. As companies look for ways (and resources) to equip their workforce in an age of global change, supplying a menu of digital tools makes it possible for people to work productively and collaboratively even when remote.

Elastic Approach for Working Parents

Communicating and collaborating online affords flexibility which is a prerequisite given today's climate. For example, working parents – whose children are at home, have had to transform their kitchen table into a home office given the pandemic. This can be complicated on its own, but when that new



home office is shared by a 3-year old fascinated with crayons, or an 8-year old coming to grips with fractions, having tools which allow for a more elastic approach to getting things done should be at the top of any leader's technology wish list.

Minimized Interruptions

Being away from a crowded office reduces the likelihood of interruptions often experienced from impromptu meetings, colleagues stopping by unannounced or co-workers holding brainstorming sessions in front of your desk. These kinds of interruptions are an often-cited distraction to work getting done. According to a [research study out of UCI](#), it can take up to 23 minutes to regain focus after being interrupted in the workplace. Focused time equates to better productivity.

Shared Information in Easy-to-Access Systems

Production is enhanced when the organization's information can be shared in an easy-to-access portal (user-centric online platform or system). Case in point: some online tools send workers automatic updates alerting them when a document has been added or modified. This feature alone can keep people informed which in turn ensures their projects stay on track. And, if course correction is needed, it can take place in an expedited fashion.

What Doesn't

Feelings of Isolation

A lack of in-person contact can lead to feelings of isolation which become amplified during significant change, such as those brought on by a pandemic. The ramifications of a workplace turned on its head can lead to a lack of clarity, confusion over expectations, and a general uneasiness as people worry about job security.

Blurred Work Boundaries

Besides feeling lonely, remote workers may also feel like work boundaries are blurred as there is little (if any) division between their workspace and their private environment. To get things done, the number of video calls, emails and even texts may extend beyond normal working hours with workers feeling pressured to be responsible and accountable 24/7.

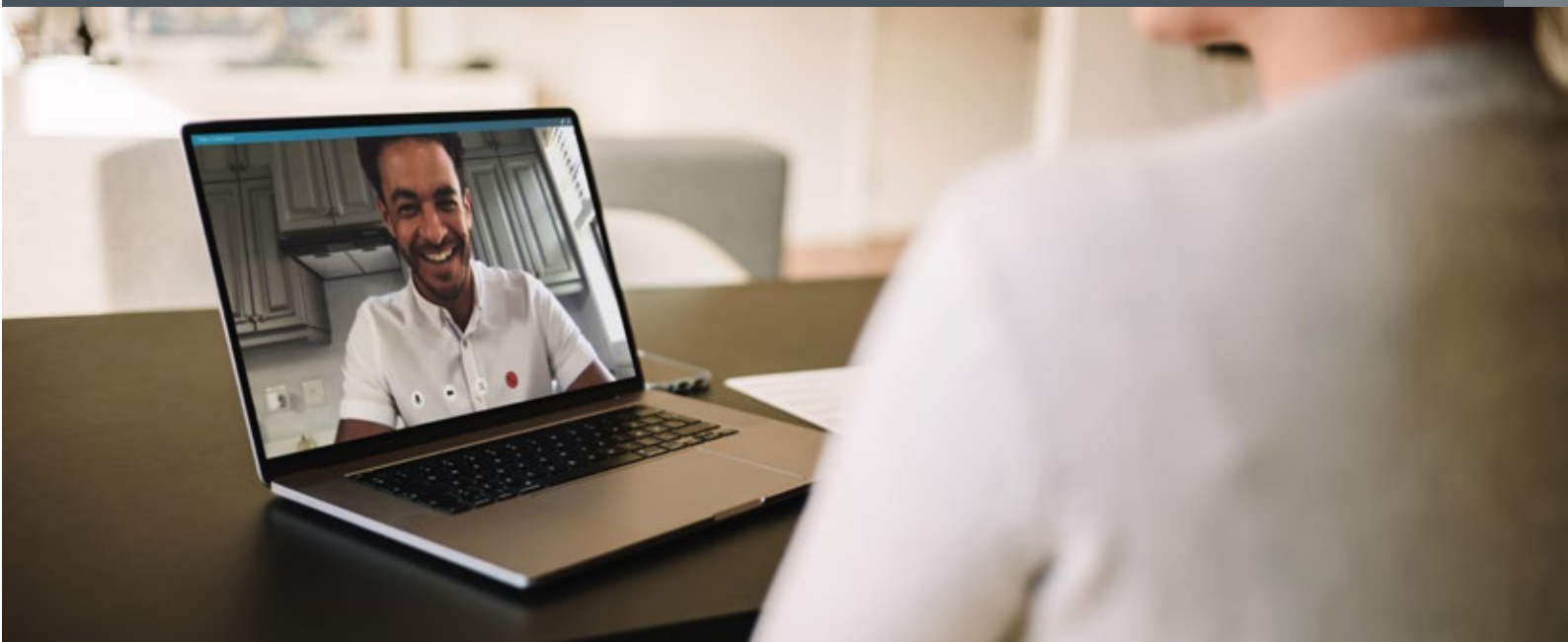
QUICK TIPS

- Reset expectations about how work is performed and communicate goals regularly. What was true during pre-pandemic days is no longer applicable. Even “normal” is expected to look different after the pandemic subsides or effective vaccines are broadly available.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities by keeping in mind that “one size fits one, not all.” Not everyone will pace themselves the same way, so cut them (and yourself) some slack.

- Observe boundaries – especially during times of great change (as in not expecting an immediate response to your email) and encourage your team members to do the same. Lynda Gratton, in an article for MIT-Sloan writes:

Maintaining boundaries instead of blurring the line between when you are 'on' for one role and 'off' for the other means that distraction is minimized. Creativity and flow can happen more quickly. With whole families quarantined (as in the COVID-19 pandemic), the boundaries for workers are dissolving. In place of two transitions (home to work, work to home), there are now multiple transitions (work, look after a child, work, prepare lunch, work, play with infant, etc.). Each transition adversely affects concentration and productivity and, ultimately, creativity.

- Communicate important information via a video conference call (Teams, Zoom, GoToMeeting) but pay attention to overdoing it. “Zoom Gloom” is a real thing and can leave people feeling exhausted when the video chat ends.





EFFICIENCY

What Works

Sift and Sort Important Communication Exchanges

Adobe, the well-known software company, conducts an email usage study every year. According to their latest research (in which they surveyed over 1,000 American workers), the average person spends more than five hours per day checking their email. Gulp.

Now to be fair, that's three hours for work email and two hours for personal email. But here's the kicker – people engage in email at all hours of the day (every day) and from all sorts of places – like the living room couch, waiting to get take-out for dinner or taking their dog Sparky for a walk.

Sifting, sorting, and hunting for email takes up valuable time. When used properly, online collaboration tools can act as a hub for dedicated project transactions, communiques, and document sharing. Rather than people sending out a project status report via email (which often gets buried), they can use their team portal where all project-related data is safely stored and in which project members have immediate access. Similarly, team leaders can post important messages to ensure goals and any course correction directives are received by all members quickly and uniformly. In plain terms, this can equate to better, more efficient communication.

What Doesn't

Same Clutter as Before if the Tool is Not Configured Correctly

If notification settings have not been adjusted for online collaboration tools in use, an email tsunami can quickly flood a worker's inbox. If that is the case, there is not much point in having the tool.

QUICK TIPS

- Help reset your company's email culture. First, avoid the "CC:" feature unless you absolutely need to copy someone in on the message. Most will thank you for cutting them out of the loop.
- To minimize confusion, change the subject header to a relevant theme when the email thread outgrows the original title.
- Adjust settings and permissions for the online tools as this reduces unnecessary clutter by controlling the number of emails each team member receives from the collaboration tool. Only necessary notifications are sent implying that people will spend less time scouring their inbox for that important file.

COST

What Works

Month-to-Month SaaS Models

Most online collaboration tools offer a month-by-month licensing arrangement referred to as a Software as a Service (SaaS) model with many including discounts for annual sign-up. Fees are typically based on the total number of users rather than a prescribed set of users which allows for people to come in and go out without having to modify the arrangement.

What Doesn't

Limited People Have Access

Do your homework when looking for an online collaboration tool including the pricing structure. While you want to avoid being pushed into buying licenses for users who do not need access, you do want to ensure that all who need the tool will have entry. If some employees are blocked from access, this could lead to a gap in information transparency and communication free flow.

QUICK TIPS

- Assess what the collaboration, communication and document sharing needs are and who the key stakeholders are for making decisions on which tools to onboard.
- Work with your IT department to compare, and contrast, the features of at least three online collaboration tools. Price is only one aspect so do your due diligence in identifying the overall list of criteria for the key features needed to serve your organization.



02

WHEN IT COMES TO TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE, BE READY WITH A SMART RESPONSE



While flexibility, efficiency, and cost are formidable criteria, you can underscore your credibility for acquiring digital tools by being prepared with an even broader response. When you are asked how the acquisition of digital tools can address concerns of rampant change, take your cues from Deloitte- the largest professional services network in the world (based on revenue and number of professionals).

Deloitte's white paper "The Digital Workplace: think, share, do" tackles the upending of traditional work environments by promoting the digital workplace in its stead. In their opinion piece, they highlight several principles supporting the business value attained when an effective digital workplace strategy (capable of driving cultural change) is implemented.

Specifically, they emphasize that transforming the employee's experience through digital tools can:

- Support changes in working styles to enable employees to work more transparently and to better leverage social networks.
- Unify offline, and online communications, by keeping employees connected through their technology devices to provide anywhere, anytime access to tools and corporate information.

- Provide choice, flexibility, and personalization.
- Support virtual work environments which allow employees to stay connected in distributed and virtualized work locations while balancing company (or customer) privacy and operational risk.
- Minimize spending and enhance productivity by providing employees with the right tools and the right information at the right time.
- Win the war on talent by offering the kind of progressive and innovative environments top candidates now expect.

“By connecting employees beyond the boundaries of their geographies or departments, the digital workplace empowers people to direct their efforts from the bottom up, build communities of interest, drive knowledge management and collaborate in ways that make sense to them and delivers measurable business value.”

- Deloitte. “The Digital Workplace: Think, share, do.”

03

COMMUNICATION





Most online communication tools go beyond the simple act of instant messaging by incorporating qualities associated with team collaboration like screen sharing, project review and file sharing.

COMMUNICATION

Dedicated platforms, laid out in an easy-to-navigate (and visually pleasing) format, welcomes members to participate in – and communicate about – projects or tasks that have been assigned.

Add in the abilities for employees to personally connect with one another (not to mention being able to view up-to-date information), and you have the quintessential ingredients for heightened productivity and efficiency.

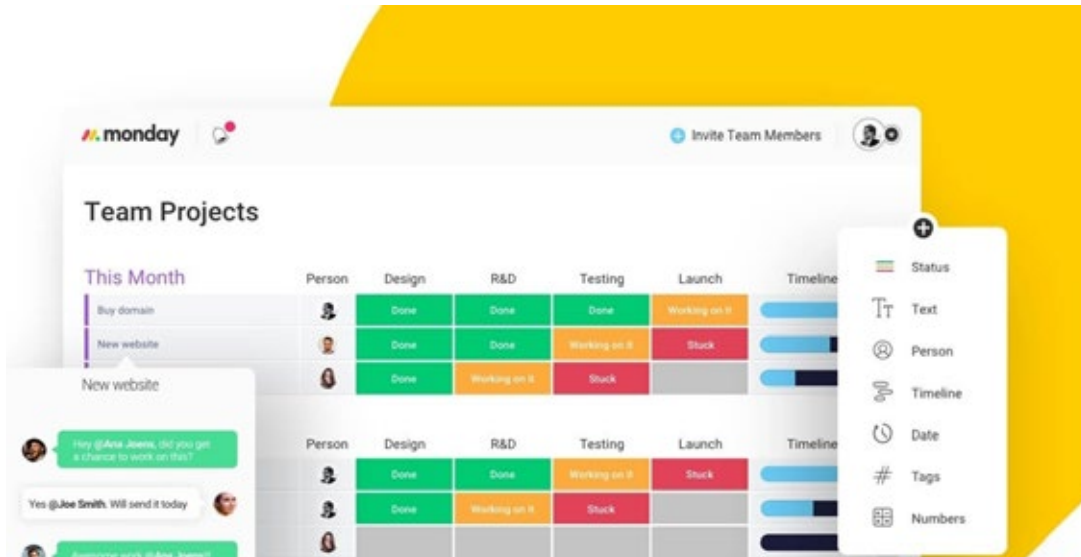
If you want to keep your digital toolkit simple, spend time and energy researching a communication platform with an extended set of features that can serve more than one or two work requirements.

Features to Look for:

- A shared workspace platform, acting as a digital “project home base” for employees.
- Responsive design that fits any device with scalable visual graphics easy on the eye.
- Customizable user groups.
- Customizable personal dashboards on a shared platform.
- Templates to accommodate a variety of projects.
- Intuitive user interface.
- Big picture views of multiple projects in progress.
- Deadline views to see what is pressing.
- File or document management.
- Collaborative capabilities that include team assigning and messaging (work-flow routing).
- Chat or discussion forums.
- Third-party app integration.



Popular Tools



1 Monday.com was voted as the favorite platform among the 1,273 professionals surveyed by SnackNation. This tool allows users to manage everything in one workspace – “one platform for better teamwork.” Teams can customize, plan, track, communicate and collaborate through this easy-to-use (and easy on the eye) tool.

This application features dashboards which are used to facilitate workflow, ensuring that team members are kept up-to-date on what is happening. Users can create summaries, reports and get a high-level view of important tasks, projects, and programs. At its core, Monday.com is an intuitive (and seamless) tool when it comes to communicating, tracking work progress, and reviewing team performance.

2 **Chanty** is another solution enabling teams to communicate and share knowledge via a single hub. This tool asserts a simple user interface with chats, tasks, files, and links put together in an easy-to-use format. Members can get quick access to an entire message history and easily find people from their team, share multiple media content, and save innovative ideas with pins. For deadline driven teams, features include the ability to assign and filter tasks by status, dates, and people.

3 **Slack** is known as a focused collaboration tool where everything related to a project, topic or team can be assigned a channel. Everyone in a channel sees the same messages and stays on the same page. This tool also enables teams to share files, connect on calls (through a click) and send direct messages to individuals as well as groups. Slack also integrates with apps like Google Docs and Dropbox for a more rounded user experience.

NOTE: Technology changes so rapidly that the examples listed throughout this book may be obsolete by the time you read this article. Always do your own due diligence before purchasing any digital tool.

04

DOCUMENT AND FILE SHARING TOOLS



A decade or so ago, if you tried to share a large file, you had two options. 1: Use a file-sharing service like YouSendIt (brand spanking new at the time), or 2: Copy the file to a disc and hand (or mail) to the recipient, a practice referred to as “sneakernet.”

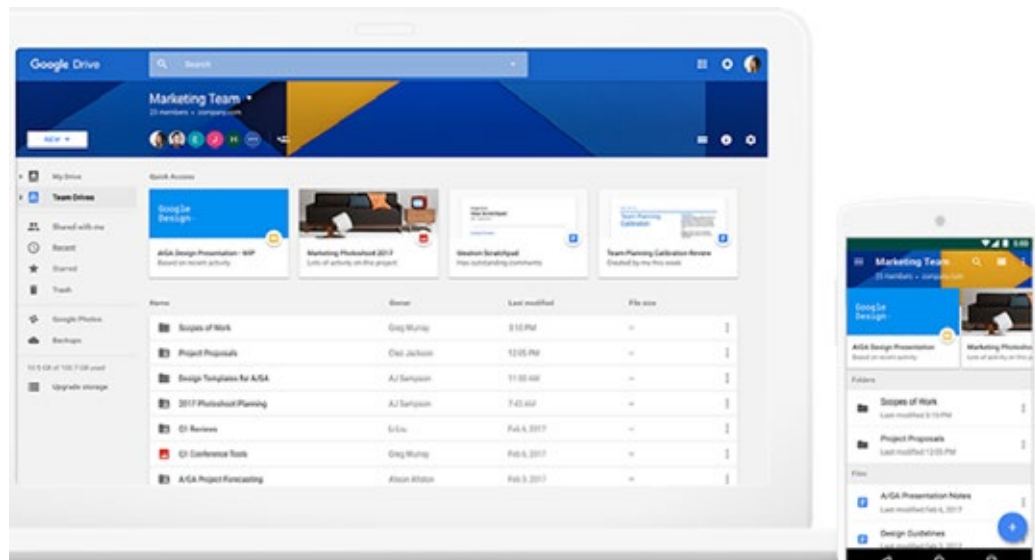
Today, document and file sharing apps pave the way for team members to make changes, share files and secure them in an easy-to-access repository. Many of these tools permit users to both collaborate with others on shared documents as well as send and store files (especially large ones).

The better platforms offer version control – an important feature since employees referencing the same document need to know if they are viewing the latest and greatest rendering. Accessing files in real time, editing documents, and storing all of these in one location speeds up productivity and minimizes the risk of files being misappropriated (or misplaced) as is often the case when sent as attachments in an email.

Features to Look for

- Cloud-based.
- Data safeguards (with advanced security for GDPR and HIPPA compliance).
- Built-in tracking and review capabilities.
- Revision history- all changes made on documents can be automatically saved.
- Multiple collaborators on a document can see content edits in real time.
- Extended collaboration features.

Popular Tools



1 **Google Drive** offers flexible storage options with plenty of space for any sized file. With centralized administration, and data loss prevention, users can easily be managed, and file sharing implemented to meet compliance needs. This tool uses Google AI to predict and surface what is important to the user in real-time through its Quick Access feature which recognizes important content, collaborators, and events for each user.

Drive is part of Google's G Suite which includes Gmail, Docs, Calendar and Meet, making this a one-stop shop for digital tools promoting team productivity.

2 **Bit.Ai** is a smart document collaboration platform enabling teams to create and engage on multi-faceted internal and client-facing documents. According to Bit.Ai, their comprehensive tool is intended for “teams and individuals to create, collaborate, and organize their work in one place from anywhere in the world.” The tool allows users to make fast dynamic notes, documents, wikis, knowledge bases, projects, client deliverables, training guides and client portals, while integrating across apps.

3 Formerly YouSendIt, **Hightail** features an interface built around shared Spaces, making this tool copacetic with team collaboration. When a new Space is created, the project is defined, and its goals detailed. Users can request approvals on video, photos, and other files found in a Space, track recent activity, and keep drafts private but still be able to share them with access codes. This application offers two types of plans: file sharing (intended for individuals) and creative collaboration, which includes file sharing and additional features that teams can take advantage of.

05

PROJECT MANAGEMENT



Today's organizations require that their projects be delivered on time, and to budget while simultaneously producing high quality deliverables. This requirement equates to managers working together with their team members to initiate, plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate (close-out) projects.

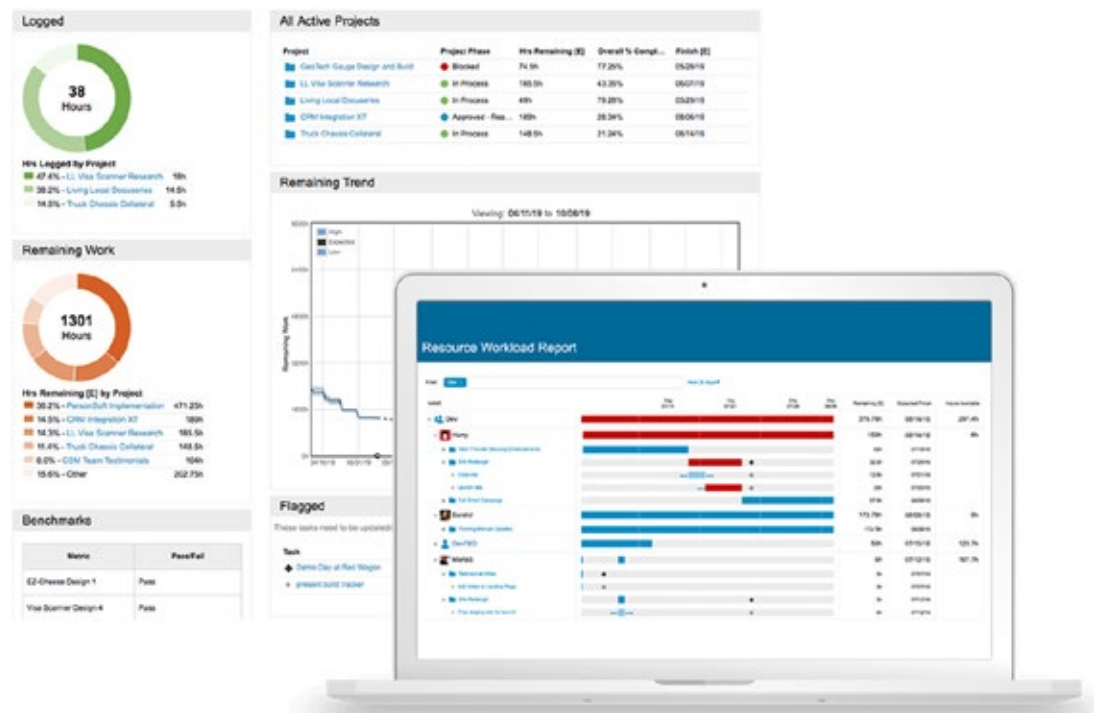
When team members are geographically dispersed, frequent interaction is non-negotiable. Digital project management solutions help reduce the geographical divide by enabling team members to communicate (and schedule) the various planning stages with the added benefit of socializing ideas among themselves.

The right digital tool can also help the team make better decisions by putting all project details in one place. Decent apps allow individuals to share their ideas, provide feedback, but also give input to critical information about the project's status, work item or task. These tools can also enable the team to easily (and clearly) share goals, see work, and understand all project facets.

Features to Look for

- GANTT charts (visual timelines).
- Cloud-based; no installation required.
- Easy-to-set-up and use.
- Boards, lists.
- Deadline reminders.
- Powerful collaboration elements.
- Large enough to handle the biggest projects dealt with.
- Straightforward and reasonably priced based on need(s).

Popular Tools



1 **LiquidPlanner** is an elegant tool for teams looking to manage a high volume of projects in which thorough planning is required. It includes interactive Gantt charts and roll-up reports, as well as automated scheduling tools that reassign work as necessary when a team member is out of the office unexpectedly. This tool is known for managing uncertainty (estimation of effort in scheduling), and in adapting to change.

This is a useful application for teams who need to plan and prioritize a hefty number of projects and track how changes to one project will impact others – as well as analyze the associated resources (and risks) that accompanies change.

2 **Zoho Projects** is a cloud-based project management tool that assists teams to plan work, track it efficiently and collaborate regardless of location. This tool includes features like Gantt charts for building out project plans and task schedules that help members visualize deviations between planned and actual progress. The drag-and-drop interface makes workflow easy to visualize and deploy, and their project timesheet module makes it possible for members to log billable and non-billable hours.

3 **Trello** is, at its core, a type of online corkboard. Teams use it to organize cards into lists. Cards can be tasks, notes, projects, shared files, or anything else that enables the team to work together. The tool's visual Kanban boards are flexible, shareable and allow users to add a hefty amount of detail to each card. Trello is not just for work. This is a tool that can be used for anything that requires a "list of lists with a group of people."

06

MIND MAPPING



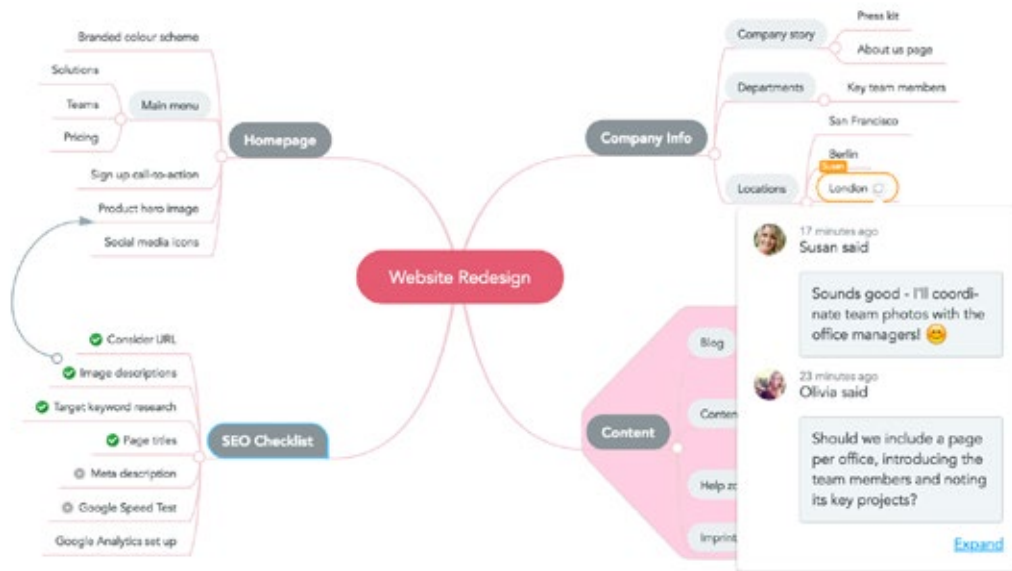
A mind-mapping application allows users to visualize, share and present their thoughts via the cloud. It is both a creative, and logical, means of brainstorming that results in ideas being mapped out.

All mind maps have some things in common such as an illustrative structure that radiates from the center and uses lines, symbols, words, colors, and images which translate words into “brain-friendly concepts.” The conversion of hyperbole into a colorful (yet highly organized) diagram can jump-start a team’s creativity by making the brainstorming process more organic versus trying to ideate in a traditional word-by-word linear format.

Features to Look for

- Intuitive, easy-to-use interface.
- Unlimited possibilities for brainstorming.
- Multiple colors, themes, and map styles.
- Cloud-hosted; no installation needed.
- Should contain-
 1. The main idea, subject or focus summarized in a central image.
 2. Main themes radiating from the central image as “branches.”
 3. Branches that can comprise a key image or key word drawn or printed on its associated line.
 4. Topics of lesser importance that can be represented as ‘twigs’ of the relevant branch.
 5. Branches that form a connected nodal structure.

Popular Tools



1 **MindMeister** is an online mind mapping tool which enables users to capture, develop and share ideas visually. This tool lets the user manage meetings, scope out projects and ideate business plans with others by creating an environment that prompts teams toward greater brainstorming and the requisite planning that ensues.

The tool works by facilitating users to share their mind maps directly with others in real time or by making them public for everyone to see. Collaborators can quickly comment on topics, vote on ideas, or discuss changes in their integrated chat section. Housed within the platform are multiple templates for organizing work that users can select from.

2 **Microsoft's Visio** is a more elaborate and comprehensive tool that allows users to draw flowcharts, diagrams, org charts, floor plans, engineering designs, and more. For those already using Microsoft Office, this tool continues that experience as Visio is part of the Microsoft Office family (though it is not included in the basic Office 365 package; an extra fee is required). Users can draw a flowchart, map out an idea, build an organizational chart, document a business process, or connect flowcharts and diagrams to real-time data.

3 **SmartDraw** is an easy and powerful flowchart maker, drawing program, floor plan creator and org chart maker. For those looking for an affordable alternative to Visio, this is a tool worthy of consideration. It can run on a Mac, online, and on Windows. SmartDraw also touts being more powerful and easier to use than the standard drawing tools included in Microsoft Office and G-Suite. It is also worth noting that any SmartDraw drawing can be inserted into Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Google Docs.

07

NOTE-TAKING



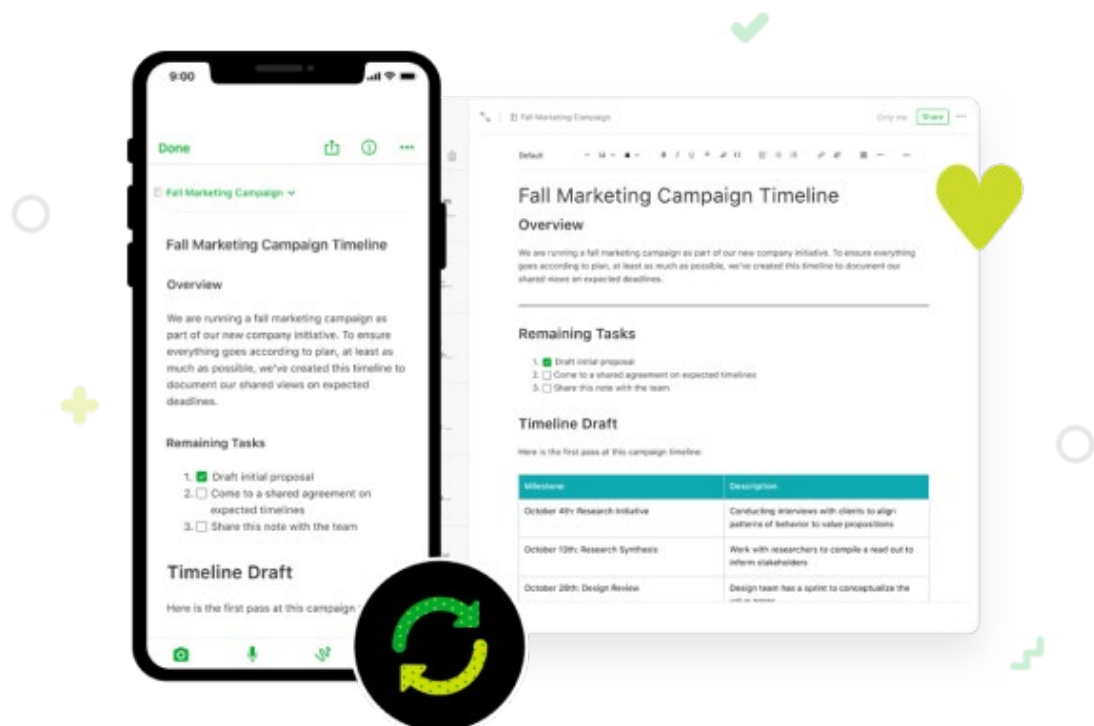
Note-taking apps are the online equivalent of notebooks, and since they are digital, can help users capture more than using paper alone ever could. Like most digital tools, they use the cloud to store and sync across any one user's multiple devices. For the most part, note-taking apps also include text search making it possible to instantly locate whatever notes are needed.

Before buying, check out your mobile device as it could very well include a note-taking app that was bundled for free when your phone was purchased. Still, if you find yourself wanting deluxe features, there are several available apps to choose from including those that can mimic a word processing experience or imitate a paper notepad (but in digital form) all of which allows you to sketch out your thoughts or handwrite your notes.

Features to Look for

- Intuitive, easy-to-use interface.
- Ability to sync across devices.
- Sort content across notebooks, sections, and pages.
- Highlight notes according to importance and priorities.
- Illustrate thoughts and annotate notes, using a stylus or finger.
- Record audio notes, insert online videos, and add files.
- Ability to share notebooks with coworkers, friends, and family.

Popular Tools



1 **Evernote** is a popular choice because it syncs across devices making notes available on-the-go while also offering additional features for organizing, archiving, and listing tasks. According to Zapier in “The 9 Best Note-Taking Apps of 2020,” this tool is “one of the most capable services you’ll find, supporting a wide variety of note types (text, images, audio memo, sketches, scanned documents, checklists, and clipped web pages).

It also has excellent tools for organizing and searching your notes. It has apps for all the major platforms, and with a Business account, you can even use Evernote for real-time chat and collaboration with colleagues.”

In the plainest of terms, users can type notes, add attachments, scan documents, clip web pages, or record memos all in one place. Their powerful search feature helps note-takers search documents to find what they need quickly. According to Evernote, users can “manage everything from big projects to personal moments, capture ideas and inspiration in notes, voice, and pictures, and never lose track of tasks and deadlines.”

2 **Microsoft 365 OneNote** boasts features of getting organized in notebooks which can be divided into sections and pages. With easy navigation and search, users can easily find notes, and they can click anywhere on the page and add content to that spot, just as if they were working with paper. According to their site, you can “revise your notes with type, highlighting, or ink annotations.” OneNote also enables users to share ideas with others. Users can draw thoughts, annotate notes, record audio notes insert online videos, and add files.

3 **Notion** is not a typical note-taking app. What sets it apart is its ability to offer four tools in one: notes, knowledge bases, tasks and projects, spreadsheets, and databases. This digital tool supports basic elements like text, to-do lists, media images, web bookmarks, video, audio, and files. Those who take detailed meeting notes, edit documentation, create process notes, and want to share this information with others, should consider this note-taking application.

08

CORPORATE LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM



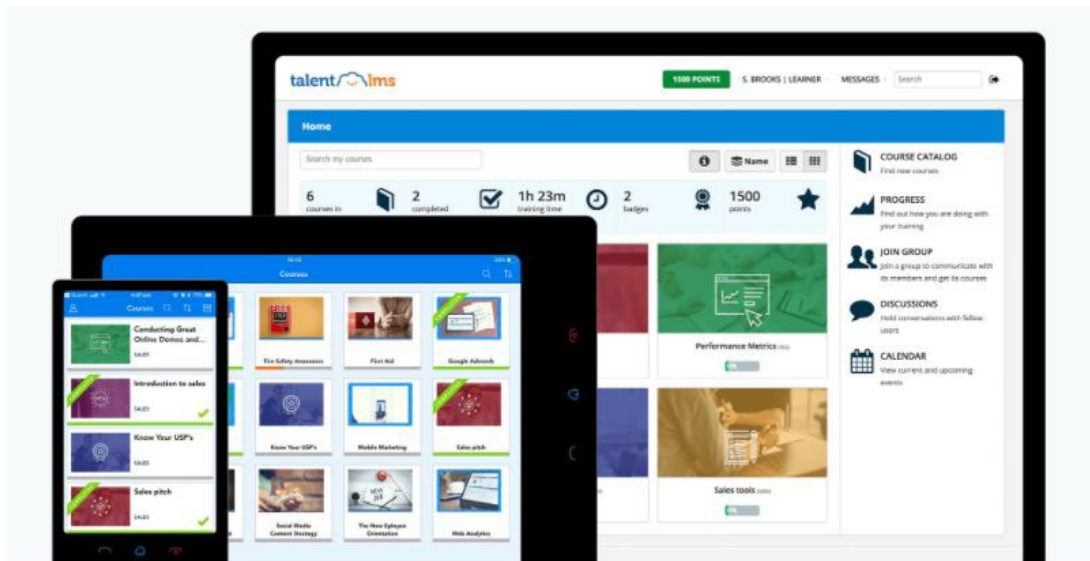
A corporate LMS is a learning platform designed for businesses to deliver a range of online training courses (including employee on-boarding resources), to workshops, and blended combinations.

These platforms differ from academic learning systems in that they focus on developing employee skills and knowledge, or in educating customers on product (service) features. A corporate LMS typically includes pre-built content and original authoring capabilities in addition to individualized learner dashboards displaying progress tracking. Plus, they allow for branding and customization enabling companies to effectively (and seamlessly) promote the learning experience to their employees.

Features to Look for

- Multiple forms of content creation.
- Personalized learner dashboards.
- “Remember me” functionality.
- Branding / customization.
- Progress tracking.
- Push notifications.
- Ease-of-use.
- Responsive design (Mobile Friendly).
- Security.

Popular Tools



1 **TalentLMS** is an easy-to-use cloud-based LMS designed to help learning and development professionals engage employees through facilitated training. According to Finances Online Reviews for Businesses, this tool offers “best-in-class features for course management, blended learning, gamification, and reporting.” This application also includes API (Application Programming Interface) and configuration options that are attractive to those looking for customization capabilities.

Its enterprise-ready interface can support multiple user access options, learning branching, single-sign-on solutions, mass action features, and more. Plus, it is equipped with robust security tools that let you put passwords on your courses and add watermarks to your content. The tool has a responsive design and comes across well whether on an iPhone, iPad, or Android mobile device.

2 **Skyprep** provides an intuitive user interface. And, as a cloud based LMS, it is designed to train but in a cost-efficient, convenient, and modern way. This tool allows for handy content management where learning and development professionals can upload, edit and reuse course material, directly create content in the app itself, link courses together to fit a learning syllabus, activate quizzes with automated grading, and more. The platform allows facilitators to use PowerPoint slides, videos, PDFs, rich HTML, and more when uploading materials. Plus, the tool includes customization to fit a company's branding.

3 **Tovuti** provides organizations with tools to create, manage and sell physical and digital content. As an LMS, this tool advertises course authoring, detailed progress monitoring, support for an array of course delivery, built-in (and integrated media course libraries), learner portals, and more. And, this tool offers an e-commerce functionality where physical and digital course content can be purchased, and where subscriptions can be managed. For those wanting to organize offline events, Tovuti's event management feature includes registration, attendance tracking, and admission charges.

09

VIDEO CONFERENCING



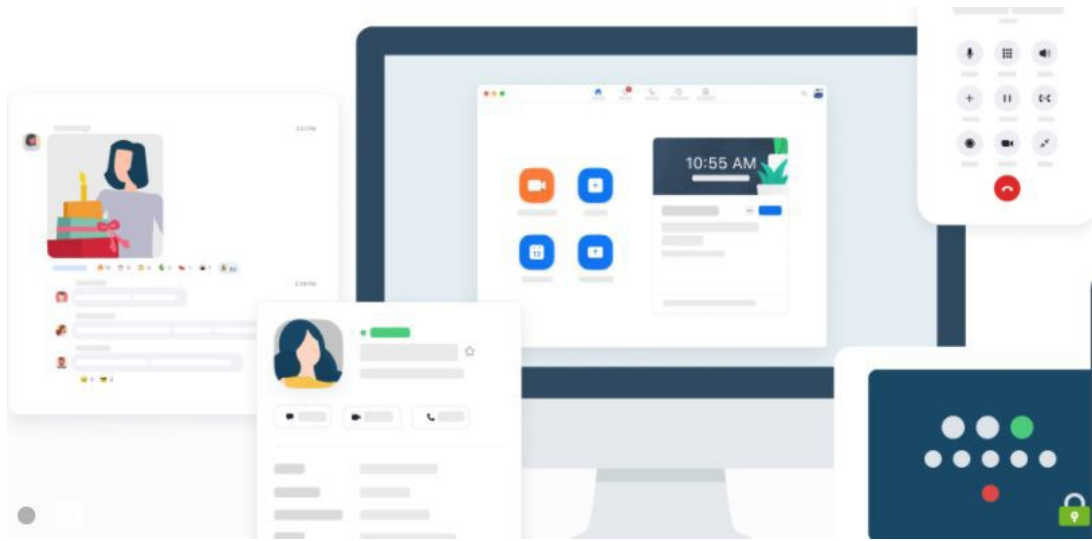
Remote work is no longer a trend. It is the new norm which makes video conferencing the must-have technology tool for both meetings and employee connection.

Video conferencing is the technology that allows individuals to hold meetings with others located in different geographical places while seeing and talking to them in real time. Current day tools offer file sharing capabilities, video recording to a user's desktop or to the cloud, messaging, shared whiteboards, group chats, break-out rooms, screen share capabilities, and other digital communication feature sets.

Features to Look for

- Screen sharing (share files and high-resolution imagery).
- Multiple webcam capabilities.
- VoIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol – phone service over the Internet).
- Chat features (instant messaging).
- Security and privacy protection mechanisms.
- Remote control.
- Unlimited recording.
- Shared whiteboards.
- HD video.
- Branding features.

Popular Tools



1 **Zoom** is known for virtual meeting performance, affordability, and available free plans. While some recent privacy and security flaws were discovered in the mad rush to use the tool during the COVID-19 pandemic, the company has been quick to remedy them. A representative for Zoom reportedly said to one researcher that the tool saw an average of 10 million daily meeting participants. In March 2020, that number was a staggering 200 million. Given the sheer volume of exponential use, it is no wonder there were some issues.

Overall, Zoom is credited with stability and reliability and is even a preferred option on the personal front. If you are in government, or healthcare, be sure to closely review Zoom's offerings for those sectors. PCMag believes that Zoom is among the best video calling apps as long as new users take a few moments to familiarize themselves with its features.

2 **Microsoft Teams** offers video conferencing, screen sharing, custom backgrounds, file sharing, the ability to integrate apps and workflows. Plus, it boasts its availability in 53 languages and 181 markets. Users can convene “teams of 2 or 10,000” via video conference and can use the chat features to share both their opinions and personality (via gifs, stickers and emojis). Collaboration is enhanced with Teams’ real time file sharing and editing which incorporates familiar apps like Word, PowerPoint, and Excel.

3 In addition to video conferencing, **Go-to-Meeting** includes screen sharing, conference calling, mobile conferencing, meeting recording and transcription and conference room equipment. Their well-honed feature set equips today’s teams to collaborate seamlessly – anytime, anyplace. They also offer newer functions like Business Messaging (chat capability with people both inside and outside of the company with instant transition into a full meeting), and Smart Meeting Assistant (easy search and share ability of automatic transcripts from recorded meetings).

10

INTRANET (CENTRALIZED HUB)



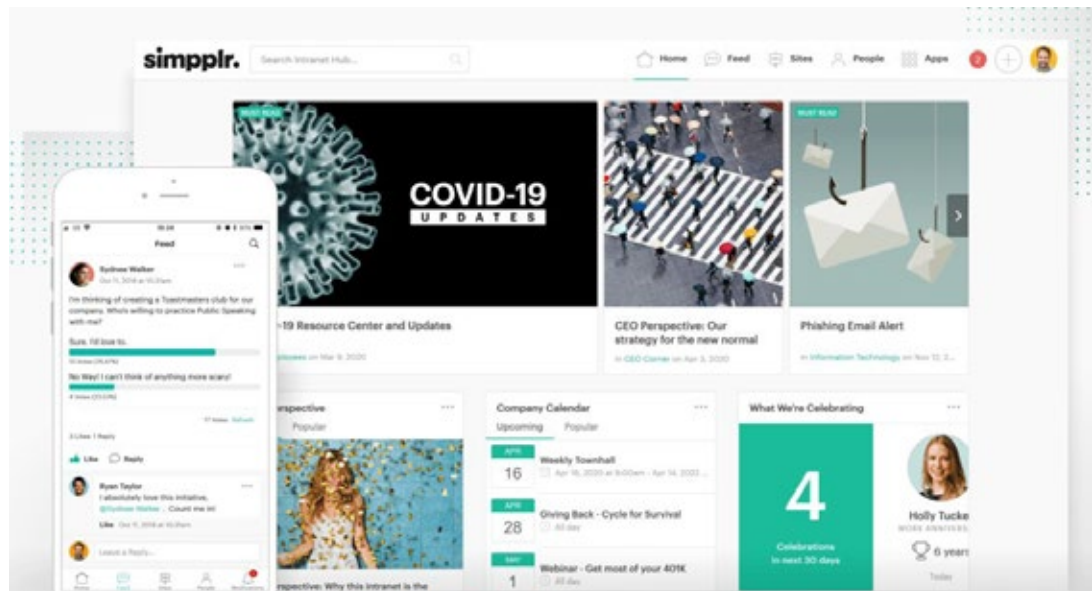
This is the spot where everyone in your organization can see what is happening. An Intranet is a private network that can only be accessed by the company's employees (usually by login and password).

Think of the intranet as the centralized communication and resource hub for your company. This is where a business can virtually engage with its employees by communicating updates and key information, promote team collaboration and even receive feedback from workers on key topics of concern. It is also the place where companies can post direct links to their other digital collaboration tools including repositories for important documents like self-service human resource forms, learning and development courses, events, employee directories and the company's holiday calendar.

Features to Look for

- Clean, functional, and easy-to-use design.
- Branding / customization.
- Employee directory with smart profiling features.
- Holiday / birthday calendar.
- Document repository with important links.
- Self-service forms.
- Single Sign-on portals to digital collaboration tools.
- Company updates including news and events.
- Search engine.
- Great content.
- Responsive design (mobile-friendly).
- 24-hour customer support.
- Cloud-based hosting.
- Security and permissions.

Popular Tools



1 **Simplr** is a modern intranet solution that helps connect and engage employees by prompting increased productivity, connect for retention and drive collaboration. Their user interface is simple (thus the name). They provide searchable content functionality and can integrate other digital tools for a company making the experience intuitive for team members.

Simplr prides itself in replicating the theoretical “watercooler conversation” so that employees (even if spread all over the world) can feel connected. Simplr also touts simple administration (no Ph.D. in IT required) and the ability to tailor user roles so that every employee gets a personalized intranet.

2 **Zoho Connect** is a bit pricier (per user fee) though does some heavy lifting in the intranet space. They advertise themselves as a team collaboration software aimed at bringing people (and the resources they need) to one spot which makes work easier to tackle and accomplish. According to their site “Users can share ideas, hold real-time discussions, contact anyone in the network, create their own apps, build their knowledge base, manage their work plans, and also access apps designed to make teamwork easy and quick.”

3 **Happeo** is an all-in-one social and collaborative digital workplace designed for those businesses which have adopted Google’s G Suite. Their platform combines the standard features of an intranet with collaboration and enterprise level social networking attributes into a unified solution. The Happeo app has been applauded for its “user-friendliness, workplace integrations, and ease of implementation.”

11

GETTING ON BOARD WITH DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION



George Westerman, MIT research scientist, and author of *Leading Digital – Turning Technology into Business Transformation*, writes:

“The exact shape of the future digital organization is not yet clear. What is evident is that new ways of working, powered by digital technologies, are evolving the cultures and work practices within organizations. And over time, they will also change how organizations are structured and function.”

What we can assume in this age of global change is that digital technology is prompting transparency, efficiency, productivity, and yes – collaboration – on an unprecedented level. There is a primal push for information sharing – whether explicit (documents, files, resources), or tacit (tribal knowledge). Online collaboration tools like video conferencing, intranet communities, mind-mapping tools, project management hubs, communication channels and learning systems now make it possible for employees to come together (regardless of location) and reimagine how work gets done.

George goes on to write *“Technology is reaching into every corner of the business world – bringing deep changes in how companies are structured and led, and how they perform and compete. Over time, it will create a new playing field with new rules...”*. All of this makes us pioneers in an uncharted landscape as we strive to embrace adaptability while simultaneously welcoming digital transformation.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Victoria Tucker is a work architect with a proven track record advising, presenting to, and/or coaching more than 20,000 individuals and consulting with the 100+ companies they represent to achieve optimal performance. She is a behavioral scientist by training, and a workplace development expert by practice. Victoria consults, advises, researches, writes, and speaks on how individuals, and companies alike, can reimagine how they work to thrive in an age of global change.

She is also the on-call *Work Architect Aficionado* at ZBglobal, a team of digital designers, builders and weavers who create a broad spectrum of custom web solutions from assessments to website design and everything in between. Additionally, Victoria is a program advisor and instructor for the University of California, Irvine Continuing Education department in leadership development, innovation, and workplace communication.

Mostly though, Victoria is all about building-up, and appreciating, her family. She has high hopes that someday they will let her join in on their ukulele jam sessions. Right now, she plays badly (very badly).

Connect with her on LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/vtucker/>

VICTORIA TUCKER
hello@zbglobal.com

www.victoriatucker.com