



## Driving Collaboration throughout the Enterprise *Huddle Rooms Make All the Difference*

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A Frost & Sullivan White Paper

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## INTRODUCTION

**Today's successful companies know one thing for certain:** they are only as good as their people. And to be their best, those people must be able to work together whenever and wherever they need to, sharing expertise and information to drive productivity, improve outcomes and expand the bottom line. Because if the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the Information Age, the 21<sup>st</sup> is fast becoming the Innovation Age—one in which collaboration is king—and companies must enable real-time and offline communication for all.

There is a need for collaboration to be more fluid as the boundaries between work and life become less distinct and meetings are more frequent, less structured and less formal. Meetings also involve a wider range of geographically dispersed participants, inside and outside the organization. And they are increasingly limited in size as companies realize that small group sessions are where productive work gets done. Given these trends, workplaces and technology must combine to enable flow and momentum throughout a project or individual work session, making it easy for employees to access the tools they need when they need them and thereby enable seamless innovation.



As a result, rich audio, video and content are moving beyond large conference rooms and individual desktops to so-called huddle rooms. Huddle rooms (sometimes called *huddle spaces*, depending on where they're located) are among the best enablers of critical thinking and teamwork. These video-enabled, ad-hoc collaboration hot zones support the kind of business transformation that will define successful companies in 2018 and beyond.

This paper will discuss the state of the workplace today, outline the need for advanced collaboration, suggest best practices for effectively creating and supporting huddle spaces, and offer criteria for selecting a vendor partner.

## THE MODERN WORKPLACE: COLLABORATION IS KEY

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The 20<sup>th</sup> century was the Information Age, in which companies with access to the most relevant and timely information would see a significant competitive advantage. But while data still matters for business success, it—and real-time access to it—is becoming increasingly commoditized. Today, what sets successful organizations apart is what they do with the data they have—and that makes the 21<sup>st</sup> century the Age of Innovation.

The goal, as always, is to enable better decisions, products and services, and customer experiences. And for that, employees need to continuously collaborate with one another, as well as with partners, suppliers and customers. When people work together to analyze and act on information in real time, they innovate in ways that one person can rarely pull off alone. Smart companies are looking for ways to empower their people and make the flow of such interactions routine, effective and efficient.



What's more, most businesses already have a leg up on the process thanks to a millennial cohort that, by 2020, will make up the majority of their employee base. This “sharing generation” has grown up in an environment that encourages and rewards the exchange of knowledge, insight and expertise. As a result, employees today are not just looking out for Number One. Instead, they are seeking ways to improve their reputation by becoming thought leaders in the organization. Companies can leverage that instinct to drive collaboration throughout the business.

Of course, in today's dispersed workplace, meaningful interactions can be difficult to come by. Frost & Sullivan research reveals that year over year, more than half of all knowledge workers routinely work from a location other than a corporate office. That offers multiple benefits, but it also poses challenges, especially when it comes to enabling fast, easy and continuous collaboration. For these remote workers to stay connected with one another—as well as their far-flung business partners and customers—they must leverage technology that lets them interact in real time. Tools that let users leverage video and audio conferencing, mark up documents, and share screens or applications as needed help maintain the flow of information and innovation that sparks and enables creativity.



## WHY HUDDLE SPACES ARE TAKING OFF

Companies have been deploying basic conferencing and communications technology to their employees for years. A recent Frost & Sullivan survey of almost 2,000 IT decision makers around the world shows that almost two-thirds of all organizations have deployed web, video and audio conferencing. Almost half have also deployed digital team spaces, including persistent chat, document markup and storage, and robust search capabilities. And fully 50% have deployed huddle rooms today—with another 30% planning to do so in the next year.

The trick is leveraging those, and other tools, to enable true collaboration, making it possible for employees to actually work together, rather than simply communicate or share information. And don't be fooled: there is a difference between letting people "meet" in a virtual environment and making it easy and intuitive for them to work together across time and space. Doing that requires access to video so that participants can make eye contact and gauge facial expressions and body language, as well as high-quality audio, allowing everyone to be heard. It's also important to recognize that these tools are most effective for collaboration when they are used by relatively small groups—anywhere from two to eight participants, working together to flesh out a new business idea, launch a marketing campaign, or develop an innovative product or service.



Almost **two-thirds** of all organizations have **deployed web, video and audio conferencing** to most or many of their employees



Almost **half** have also **deployed team spaces**, including **persistent chat, document mark-up and storage, and robust search capabilities**

Source: Frost & Sullivan

Although many businesses have invested in large-group conference rooms for both virtual and in-person meetings, in many companies, small teams simply do not have a good place to meet. As a result, more organizations are carving out small team spaces by converting executive offices, large closets and even open bullpens into communal meeting rooms, where up to eight employees can collaborate on projects on an ad-hoc basis.

While such huddle spaces make it easy for small groups to work together, they must come outfitted with a full suite of unified communications and collaboration (UCC) technology. After all, it's those applications and services that can turn a wayward meeting into a successful session, ending with clear action items and measurable deliverables. It's also important to support both in-person attendees and those who are joining from a remote site. Frost & Sullivan research shows that for the past several years, more than half of all knowledge workers regularly work outside of a corporate office; they need to be able to join meetings from anywhere, on any device or network.

Finally, it's increasingly common for employees who work in an office to start a meeting online in their personal workspace, and then carry it into a huddle space as needs require. So it's critical to enable seamless transitions, with no dropped audio or loss of quality or content.



## FOUR STEPS TO SUCCESS

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There's no question that companies willing to deploy huddle rooms and other advanced collaboration tools will see a competitive advantage: 69% of respondents who said they achieved 51 to 100% revenue growth were early adopters of digital transformation. The data is so clear, even the bean counters know it: 74% of the respondents who said they would increase their IT budget by more than 25% in 2018 were early adopters.

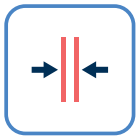
But while most companies want to increase collaboration across the organization, few know how to do so in a clear and effective way. The reality is that getting people to work together is often more art than science, involving a complex blend of incentives, cultural change and technology. But creating the right physical environment to enable such change is table stakes. Here are four steps business and IT managers should take to encourage and support collaborative work in 2018 and beyond: state your goals, benchmark your current environment, identify key gaps, and make a clear plan for action.



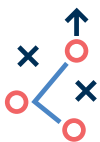
**Set Goals for Collaboration.** Every company has unique needs when it comes to collaboration. Work closely with employees and business unit managers to identify how they need to collaborate: which employees work together on projects on a regular or occasional basis? Where are they located? What tools do they currently use, and which would they like to have? What are the current roadblocks to collaboration? Are meetings mostly scheduled, ad-hoc, or both? How often do work sessions involve people outside the company? Is there a need to support global time zones or business travel? The only way to ensure your technology investments will meet the needs of your users—and the business—is to determine which tech and facility improvements will result in measurable benefits.



**Benchmark your Current Situation.** Before you can improve, you need to know what you're doing on the collaboration front today. Take a full assessment of every piece of technology that's used to support teamwork within the organization. This should include conferencing software and services, whiteboarding, team spaces, enterprise social and basic voice and video communications. What's nearing end-of-life and will soon need replacement? How many applications do you have that do the same thing? Where are the overlaps in otherwise disparate products? Then, inventory your facilities: how many conference rooms are available for employee use? How many small-group spaces are located around the office, and are they convenient to all? What's ad-hoc and what requires reservations, and how do you handle the latter? Finally, make sure you catalog the tools and spaces your employees use on their own (without IT or management support) to drive teamwork.



**Identify the Gaps.** You know what tech and tools you have in place, and you know what you'd like to add to improve outcomes. Now you need to fill in the gaps. Can you currently support advanced, rich-media collaboration throughout the company, across geographies and among remote employees? If not, what apps and devices are missing? If so, are all the tools integrated so that employees (and perhaps partners and customers) can have a seamless experience in every teamwork session? Can users have frictionless collaboration from laptop to mobile device to huddle room without sacrificing the meeting experience? How will they handle action items and post-event documentation?



**Make a Plan for Action.** As with any IT initiative, successful collaboration deployments take thoughtful execution. In conjunction with facilities managers and IT staff, prioritize new initiatives and investments to carefully map out the technology you'll need to buy or upgrade, the spaces you'll need to make available for use, and the business processes you may need to change. Locate the funding and other resources you'll need to implement. And don't forget end-user training; while a good collaboration service or application should be intuitive, employees won't be able to make the most of the new technology unless you show them how to improve their overall approach to teamwork. Cultural and incentive changes may be in order, too, so that employees know they will be rewarded for sharing information and expertise.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A PROVIDER

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Collaboration tools abound, but many are not designed to support small-group collaboration or to fit into a huddle-room environment. Look for the following when evaluating a partner:

- **Market Experience.** Huddle spaces are relatively new, but the technology that drives them isn't. Look for a vendor with deep experience in the collaboration market, with a wide variety of references and a proven track record of success.

- **A Range of Products.** Chances are you already have some collaboration technology deployed in your organization. But as you embrace small-group teaming, you'll want to be sure to deploy tools that can be used across all locations while providing your users with a seamless experience every time they use them. Make sure your vendor offers a range of applications and services to meet your needs today and into the future, and that your provider can enable integration with other applications.
- **Ease of Use and Deployment.** Collaboration can be hard, but the tools to support it shouldn't be. Look for apps and services that are easy to use, simple to purchase and fast to deploy, so that you can get your teams up and running immediately. Simplicity is key for end users, too. People want to spend time collaborating, not figuring out how to get the meeting started. And don't forget support; make sure your users can get help whenever they need it (especially if they're working on a deadline).



## CONCLUSION

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Today's successful organizations are quickly realizing that small-group collaboration allows them to innovate and create in ways that can deliver a significant competitive advantage. As a result, so-called huddle rooms, or small-group spaces, are growing increasingly popular in corporate campuses and small businesses.

To be effective, huddle rooms should leverage technology—including web conferencing, audio, screen and application sharing, team spaces and enterprise social—designed to drive collaboration and increase actionable communication. Incorporating rich video and professional-grade audio will make the effort even more worthwhile. The result: richer communication, more productive meetings, stronger outcomes and a clear return on investment.



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