

# Safe social collaboration in the enterprise





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With social collaboration stalwarts such as Microsoft, Facebook, Zoom, Slack and Google G Suite now offering enterprise versions of their platforms, the way we collaborate and communicate at work is changing — and during the current COVID-19 global pandemic, it has had to change instantly for many workers.

To aid the dramatically increased ranks of home-based/remote workers in collaborating more efficiently, all the main software and app vendors are now offering months of free trials. User growth is a testament to this global uptake. Microsoft recently reported that 44 million users were signed up for Microsoft® Teams. Usage of conferencing collaboration software Zoom quadrupled in the first 3 months of 2020.

These enterprise social collaboration platforms allow users to interact and collaborate in wholly new ways, sharing ideas, experiences, and views quickly and broadly. When implemented correctly, enterprise social collaboration can have a positive impact on productivity and the entire company communication process, from chief executive officer to manager to employee. With these platforms now seen as the cornerstone of business continuity plans, companies are deploying the solutions rapidly. These tools enable teams to collaborate on projects seamlessly, and important communications — whether product recalls or health alerts or event announcements — can be sent out instantly.

But enterprise social collaboration has its risks. The social collaboration forum can quickly turn private venting of a personal grievance into a global company slur, harming the company's reputation and potentially costing the employee their job. Other risks include: misuse of confidential information, disparaging remarks about the business or employees, cyber bullying, inappropriate nonbusiness use and other inappropriate conduct.

Meanwhile, the wider misuse of the internet and social collaboration by corporate workers costs the economy billions of dollars every year. Checking social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram during working time is a growing trend that diverts employees from their work. Many employers are grappling with issues of not only time theft but defamation, cyber bullying, freedom of speech and the invasion of privacy.

As a result, companies are establishing social collaboration policies and adding them to their contractual terms with employees.

### **Develop a good policy**

A company's social collaboration policy should address email, smartphones, BYOD devices, corporate laptops, desktops and social collaboration tools. It should encompass employee usage, content, safety monitoring and legal considerations.

**Business and personal use.** The policy should make the distinction between business and personal use of social collaboration tools. If the policy allows limited personal use in the workplace, it should state clearly what this means.

**Content guidelines.** The policy must give clear guidelines for what employees can and cannot say about the organization. The employer, staff and unions or staff representatives (if any) should agree on guidelines that give the company confidence that its reputation will be protected. One badly worded tweet or post can undo years of work on brand-building and awareness.

Employers should apply the same standards of conduct for online matters as they would for offline matters. Employers should give examples of what might be classified as defamation and list the penalties that would be imposed. Employers should also outline clearly what is regarded as confidential in the organization, and spell out the penalties for breaching confidentiality.

For blog posts, tweets and other social posts, set appropriate rules for what information employees may disclose and the range of opinions they may express. Share relevant legislation on copyright and public interest disclosure.

Overall, employees should have clear guidelines, giving the company grounds for challenging an employee who expresses a view that violates company messaging or standards. Enforced work-from-home policies have challenged companies to clearly communicate these guidelines and provide training to ensure all employees are aware of the pitfalls and advantages.





**Safety.** Employees should feel safe on social collaboration sites. The policy should ensure that employees feel protected, not gagged, in relation to cyber bullying. The organization should include its cyber bullying policy in its overall policy on bullying.

**Monitoring.** If the employer plans to monitor social collaboration activity in the workplace, the employer should inform and consult with employees. This topic should be integrated not only into the onboarding process but also into supervisor–employee one-on-ones and team meetings.

Employers should set rules on the use of social collaboration in recruitment. When recruiting, employers should be careful if assessing applicants by looking at their social networking pages, as this can be considered discriminatory and unfair. A study by SHL found that 69 percent of the human resources professionals surveyed use informal social media searches and web searches when assessing candidates.<sup>1</sup>

**Legal considerations.** Employers need to factor in legal considerations. Case law suggests that employees have a reasonable expectation of privacy in the workplace. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) governs use of European Union citizens' personal data, giving them more control over it. Organizations are limited by law on the extent to which they can use covert surveillance.

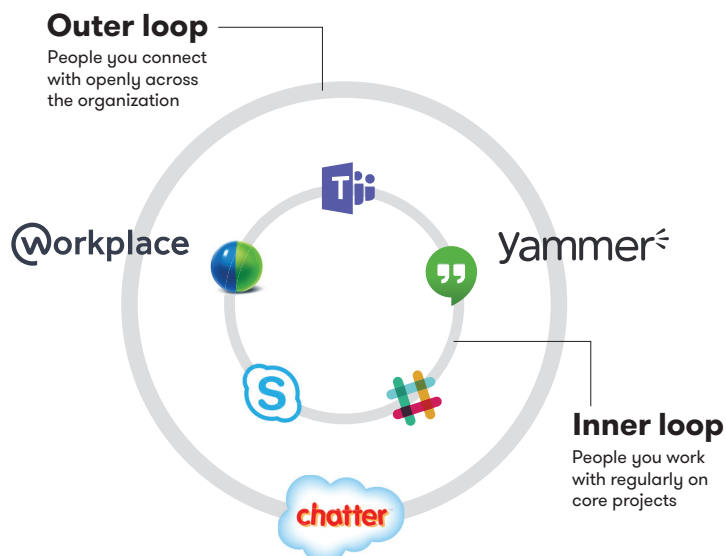
## Right tools, right training

An effective social collaboration strategy encompasses not only policy but also tools and training. Employees need to know when to use which tool to best communicate their message.

**Figure 1** shows several social collaboration and collaborative tools available to corporations. (Note: Wikipedia lists more than 120 social and collaborative tools currently in production.) The figure's loops, outer and inner, refer to the range of people you collaborate with.

- **Outer loop:** These are people you collaborate with or wish to connect with on a broad basis. The outer loop is about general broadcasts to a group of people rather than a direct recipient, something akin to a bullhorn or megaphone. Tools include Microsoft Yammer, Workplace by Facebook, and Salesforce Chatter.

**Figure 1.** Enterprise social collaboration tool landscape



<sup>1</sup> SHL's 2018 Global Assessment Trends Report ebook, p. 5. <https://www.shl.com/en/c/north-america/assessment-trends>

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- **Inner loop:** This is where a more focused message can be delivered. The inner loop is about specific information for a project or individual and is generally aimed at people you collaborate with regularly. Tools include productivity suites and their associated portals such as Microsoft Office 365, Skype for Business and Microsoft Teams, Google G Suite and Google Hangouts Meet, Slack, and Cisco Webex.

Email also plays a role here. Despite the newer social collaboration functionality, email is still ingrained in corporate culture as a mission-critical application. However, email can sometimes be unfocused and sent to a general list of recipients, incorrectly formatted with “all recipients” in the “to” field and suffering from improper use of the “cc” (copy) and “bcc” (blind copy) fields. Despite this, email remains a staple in the enterprise user’s toolbox.

Companies should provide employees with social collaboration training to ensure that tools are being used properly and social collaboration guidelines are understood and being followed. For example, companies can encourage employees to check the privacy settings on their social networking sites regularly and consider the appropriateness of sharing profile information with coworkers or others.

### How DXC can help

DXC Technology can advise and assist organizations in choosing and deploying the correct social collaboration tool for the job, as well as in creating appropriate policies. If implementation is done incorrectly, it could hamper productivity rather than nurture it as intended. When office-based workers are suddenly faced with working remotely, companies will have to decide if a retrospective change management program is to be instigated or whether people will learn on the fly with communication guidelines sent out separately.

Based on years of working with clients and our experience at DXC with social collaboration tools and our own social collaboration policy, DXC has devised a proven method of deploying social tools aimed at cultivating productivity and ensuring that the user community is informed every step of the way. We know well that simply pressing a button to enable access to these tools, with no communication and no playbook on how to use them, will result in the tools not being used to their full potential or not being used at all.

Social tools represent a paradigm shift in the way people work, so change management is critical. DXC consultants are primed to ensure that adoption concerns are addressed prior to going live with a phased deployment. DXC provides a wide range of workshops and transformation programs aimed at making the adoption and integration of these tools seamless and transparent, with a social collaboration policy designed specifically for your business.

## Let the collaboration begin

Changing the way we work will always be a challenge. Change is hard.

Social collaboration at work, using enterprise versions of consumer social collaboration tools, is coming our way, and companies need to plan for it. Social collaboration represents a huge shift in the way people work as individuals and in teams, cutting across hierarchies and geographical boundaries and enabling spontaneous connections with colleagues previously unknown.

To implement social collaboration successfully in your organization, it is advisable to understand your business objectives and determine which social collaboration tools are the best fit. Craft an effective social collaboration policy and communicate it to employees. Manage change as employees adapt to the new tools, and let the collaboration begin!



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### About the author

**Rich Owen** is a workplace advisor, consultant and DXC Technical Master in DXC Technology's Digital Transformation Center. With a career in IT spanning 29 years, he focuses on social collaboration in the modern enterprise, Google G Suite, Microsoft Office 365 and organizational analytics.

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