Switching to Google Workspace? Here's your survival guide for a smooth transition.

Learn how to transition to Google Workspace in this digital guide.

Google Cloud

Introduction.

65% of enterprises have at least partially (if not fully) deployed SaaS collaboration software across their organization, according to Forrester's Global Business Technographics Software Survey, 2017.[1] Following this trend, a third (33%) of enterprises plan to replace most, if not all, of their company's collaboration software with SaaS within the next 2 years.[2]

Whatever your business's reasons for considering a switch in collaboration tools — a merger or acquisition, the desire to become a more collaborative, innovative and transparent organization, or simply a technology audit — change can provoke anxiety and disruption, even when it is for the better. You've probably already heard from team members who are not yet on board and might even have experienced moments of doubt yourself.

Team members might worry about their relevance, job changes, or their ability to adapt to new tools. It is the responsibility of leaders to recognize those initial concerns, and help to dispel them. Only then can you move on to tackle the technology side of the change.

It helps to keep your eye on the reasons for the change, at all times: What are your goals, and what makes one technology solution the best fit? Internalize the answers, and make sure to concisely communicate them to team members who have legitimate questions, excitement or concerns.

Here are some insights that can help facilitate a smooth transition to new workplace productivity tools at all stages — with specifics on Google Workspace — from decision to preparation to deployment to upkeep.

Deciding which collaboration toolkit is right for your company.

Take a close look at your work flow and culture

When considering a change, ask yourself what kind of workplace and work culture you have, and what technology best fits it. You don't want to waste your time (or money) on tools that won't go to use. Make sure you have a handle on how people currently communicate, and what would help improve workflow.

"The best way to find out about the culture of a business is by talking to people," Kim Wylie, customer change and culture lead at Google Cloud says. "You can also learn a lot by observing. If you walk into any office you can get a sense of the culture by the way people interact with each other and whether people are locked away in offices or are in an open plan."

Anonymous surveys and interviews are also effective ways to take the temperature of your business on these issues.

Consider how the tools will fit your specific tech needs

When deciding to make a change, be sure to thoughtfully consider your specific needs, and ensure that the changes implemented directly address them. For example, let's assume your business is expanding globally. The decision to adopt new technology would be largely motivated by a desire for international teams to collaborate effortlessly, no matter where they are in the world.

With so many different locations, an expanding team would need capabilities that tools like Docs — with version control and editing access — and Hangouts — with face-to-face communication across offices — could provide.

While the technology need is driving the change, and the specific tools help address the upcoming challenges, the overall impact is so much greater: changing the way your team works.

Make sure executive buy-in is in place

In order to roll out a new company technology, leaders must first believe in it themselves. If migration is in the case of a merger or acquisition, C-level support and communication become especially important. "All employees look to their manager to see how they're talking about the merger as an indication of they should behave," Wylie says.

Managers can't expect a positive result if they impose a new technology and order everyone to get on board with no additional support. They also have to be enthusiastic and helpful.

Anxiety and worry around change is completely normal and expected. But, with solid support from leadership, many concerns can be addressed before things get started. Be sure executives communicate not only the business reasons for the change, but also convey excitement for what this new technology means for the future of the company.

Preparing your company for **the migration.**

Acknowledge that the change will make some team members anxious

Given this uncertain climate during a time of transition, it is worth keeping in mind and proactively preparing/addressing that employees might be especially reluctant to change tools, even if the change is for the better.

"When people are facing change, the main reason they become resistant is not necessarily because they think the new technology is bad, but more that they're afraid of letting go of what they've got," says Wylie.

For example, if someone has built their career on being an expert on another set of communication tools, the move to Google Workspace will naturally raise anxiety about their value and job security. "Once you get past the point where people are,

'Okay, I have a job' — then you can start thinking about things like merging teams, changing managers, and using new technology," Wylie says.

In other cases, showcasing the value that employees will gain with new tools and adequate training will serve to make a smooth transition.

Enlist enthusiastic team members to help

As you plan for the transition, be sure to identify team members who are excited about the move to Google Workspace. Invite these employees to an early pilot — give them an opportunity to preview the tool and polish their skills early. As Google guides, they provide peer-to-peer support to the rest of the employees — both training and encouraging members of their teams. Be sure to recognize these outgoing and helpful employees in support of their participation.
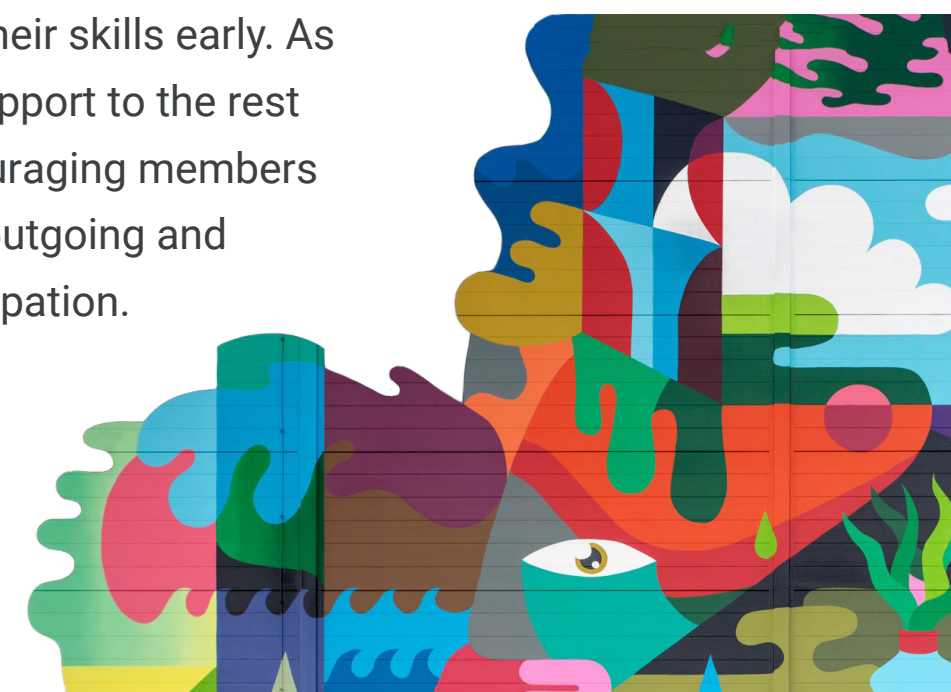
Using Google guides can help ensure everyone feels comfortable with the basics during that early adjustment period. And, by answering questions and demonstrating best use cases, Google guides offer a friendly, fast resource, while reducing the number of questions that get directed to IT teams during this critical period.

Determine how much time you will need

What is the right amount of time for a transition to Google Workspace, from decision to deployment? The answer depends on your company's size and needs, but don't drag it out too long.

Wylie suggests it can be done in 90 days, while acknowledging that larger business might need more time.

"Three months gives you time to do a lot of the technical work that needs to happen, the data migration and so on," she says. "But it also gives you time to do all the organizational analysis, the training, and getting the executive sponsors to communicate why they're doing this."

The goal is to find a sweet spot with a length of time that does not make people feel rushed, or force them to deal with two systems for a long period of time — which can undermine an otherwise smooth process.

Deploying your
new tools.

Offer continued support, and keep asking for feedback

Whether you decide to take three months, six months, or some other length of time to make this transition, keep in mind that the process doesn't end with implementation. Continued support and training are absolutely vital.

"Many leaders may think that once employees logs into the system for the first time, their work is done," Wylie says. "But the reality is, that's actually just day one of the change for those people."

Project teams spend months planning for thoughtful transition to a new system, execute flawlessly, and then can neglect to provide enough follow up support once the go-live period is over.

"And that's actually when people need the most support, both on the technical and cultural side," Wylie says. "One

of the things we've seen is not sharing enough ongoing communications, celebrating successes and reminding people why we've done this and what the benefits are to the organisation."

In every step of the process, from determining if a change is necessary in the first place to implementing new tools, it is vital to have your finger on the pulse of the employees in your company. This is how you solicit the feedback necessary to make a decision, and later provide the appropriate support.

No one would ever claim that change in technology will be easy, or without bumps. But leaders can help ease the burden of disruption — and create long-term benefits in employee engagement and productivity if they approach the journey with the appropriate thought and consideration.