The Power of Online Collaboration Tools

Presented By:

Scott Weisman
LaunchPad Lab
Chicago, IL

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Scott Weisman
LaunchPad Lab
Chicago, IL

Scott Weisman is a lawyer turned software developer. Scott is a co-founder of LaunchPad Lab, a web and mobile development development firm in Chicago. Working with a variety of businesses, from startups to Fortune 500 companies, Scott helps clients find creative solutions to technical problems. With a passion for law and technology, Scott has collaborated on technology issues with a variety of law firms, legal organizations, and legal startups.
LaunchPad Lab

The Power of Online Collaboration Tools

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Prepared by:
Scott Weisman
LaunchPad Lab, Partner
launchpadlab.com
scott@launchpadlab.com
About online collaboration tools
Online collaboration tools such as Basecamp, Slack, Trello, and many more have exploded in popularity. These modern collaboration tools are hosted, cloud-based applications, making it possible for your entire team to access them from anywhere.

Your organization may already have subscriptions to these services, however, you may not be using them to their full potential, or not using them at all.

Benefits of using collaboration tools
Online collaboration tools can make your organization more efficient and streamline your projects. If you’re not using a collaboration tool, you’re probably still using email to manage projects. While email is a powerful personal collaboration tool, it wasn’t designed for collaborating on projects.

Some of the issues teams run into when trying to use email to manage projects are:
- Emails get lost
- People get dropped from messy threads
- No clear project history
- Lost file attachments
- Hard for new employees to catch up

Online collaboration tools can help your team get projects under control. The benefits of using collaboration tools include:
- All project information in one place
- Easy to track project progress
- Ability to refer back to older projects
- Have in-depth discussions around project issues and tasks
- Manage and prioritize notifications
- 3rd Party Integrations
How to choose the right tool

With so many tools on the market it can be difficult for teams to choose which one to use. One effective way to help decide is to create a process map for your organization or team. Process mapping is an eye-opening exercise that your team can complete in just a couple hours.

There are four key steps to create your process map:

1. Brainstorm all activities required to complete a project
2. Figure out boundaries of your process (what is your team responsible for)
3. Determine and sequence the steps
4. Draw flowchart

You can create your process map with nothing more than a pen and paper. But if you’re looking for a more robust tool to help with your process mapping, take a look at Lucidchart.

Comparing popular collaboration tools

Basecamp, Slack, and Trello are some of the more popular online collaboration tools. Let’s take a look at the pros and cons of each.

1. Basecamp

Basecamp is one of the original online collaboration tools. It’s one of the easiest tools for teams to adopt and use. Basecamp can replace project-related email by giving a familiar interface for anyone on the team to post and read messages. Basecamp’s messages encourage thoughtful discussion.

In addition to messages, Basecamp’s shared to-do lists and schedules make it easy to keep projects on track.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROS</th>
<th>CONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Team messages</td>
<td>● Limited live chat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● To-do lists</td>
<td>● No nested to-dos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Schedules</td>
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2. Slack

Slack is a live chat application quickly gaining adoption by all types of businesses. With Slack you can create chat rooms for each of your projects and send direct messages to individuals within your organization.
Slack allows you to share files and create posts, however, it lacks any formal project management structure. For example, you can’t outline a project plan or create a shared to-do list in Slack. Slack is probably better suited as a compliment to a more project-focused tool, such as Basecamp.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROS</th>
<th>CONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Live chat</td>
<td>● Difficult to keep up with conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Multiple chat room</td>
<td>● Can be distracting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Powerful integrations</td>
<td>● Not ideal for project management</td>
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3. Trello
Trello is a unique project management tool based on the concept of Kanban, a lean inventory management system developed by Toyota. The central idea is that a project’s to-dos move through different phases - from left to right on the board.

You can customize Trello’s lists to fit your team’s workflow. Trello is a great fit for managing well-defined workflows, such as publishing an article. In a publishing workflow, an article may move through different stages such as ideas, in progress, editing, and published. Trello works well for this type of flow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROS</th>
<th>CONS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Flexible</td>
<td>● Can feel like lack of structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Easy to setup</td>
<td>● Difficult to know project status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● To-do lists</td>
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Conclusion
The best collaboration tool is the one that your team will use. Look for simple tools that will be easy for your team to adopt.

Even the best collaboration tool won’t cover 100% of your current workflow. It’s better to choose a tool that covers 80-90% of your workflow really well than a feature bloated tool that tries to cover 100% of your workflow.

It’s unlikely that you’ll find one collaboration tool to fully manage your entire workflow. Don’t be afraid to adopt more than one collaboration tool, using each for what it does best.
The Power of Online Collaboration Tools

Scott Weisman
LaunchPad Lab
What’s a Collaboration Tool?

- Basecamp
- slack
- Trello
What We’ll Cover

1. Why use collaboration tools
2. How to choose the right tools
3. Closer look at some of the more popular tools
Why Use Collaboration Tools?
Problems with Email Collaboration

- Emails get lost
- People dropped from messy threads
- No clear project history
- Lost file attachments
- Hard for new employees to catch up
The Power of Collaboration Tools

- Information in one place
- See project progress
- Refer back to projects
- Have real discussions
- Manage notifications
- 3rd Party Integrations
How to Choose the Right Tools
Process Mapping

1. Brainstorm all activities

2. Figure out boundaries

3. Determine and sequence the steps

4. Draw flowchart

www.lucidchart.com/pages/process-mapping
Collaboration Tools

Basecamp
Slack
Trello
**PROS**
- Team messages
- To-do lists
- Schedules

**CONS**
- Limited live chat
- No nested to-dos
**PROS**
- Live chat
- Multiple chat rooms
- Integrations

**CONS**
- Difficult to keep up
- Can be distracting
- Project management
PROS
• Flexible
• Easy to setup
• To-do lists

CONS
• Different organization
• Project status
THANK YOU

QUESTIONS?

scott@launchpadlab.com