# HighQ

# Keep your teams connected when working remote

**eBook**

# Keep your teams connected when working remote

More and more law firms and corporate legal teams are making the decision to have their staff work remotely. They face the challenge of keeping teams connected and work moving forward. In order to work efficiently, people need to be able to connect, and email simply doesn't cut it when your entire firm is working virtually.

People need to share large, sensitive documents with one another instantly. They need to communicate in the open with colleagues. They need to work with external collaborators seamlessly and securely. And they need tools to help them keep track of projects without complications.

Cloud-based tools can enable efficient and secure remote collaboration and communication. This technology enables globally dispersed colleagues to work together within the same environment. Colleagues anywhere in the world can work on the same documents, share files, and communicate with one another through a cloud collaboration platform, unimpeded by physical location.

Working in the cloud enables internal and external parties to work together without any concerns about security, compatibility, or excessive administration. Legal teams can communicate with clients, suppliers, or business partners through a cloud collaboration platform

just as easily as they could if they were in the office or at a face-to-face meeting.

Having one system for both internal and external collaboration simplifies working, as files, documents, and correspondence are not emailed, duplicated, or transferred between systems. External users can participate as if they are part of the organization – subject to permissions – making the process secure and efficient for both parties.

Many leaders fear a loss of productivity with teams working remotely. Cloud collaboration offers peace of mind that your teams have a reliable platform that can scale to support your immediate and long-term needs.

To help you decide whether cloud collaboration is right for you, we've created this guide. It also offers some detailed considerations that will help you choose a solution and make sure you get exactly what you need to keep your business running.

The most immediate need may be to preserve firm operations, but it's important to consider your long-term objectives and the impact a rollout like this may have on the people using it. Be sure to select a vendor that understands the complexities of your current situation. You need a solution that your teams can begin using right away, but that can't come at the cost of your

## A few strategic questions

While it's tempting to rush out and buy the first product you can find, first ask a few strategic questions about the vendor:

– How quickly can the technology be deployed and how quickly can employees onboard?
– Does the technology align with core business objectives?
– What steps will be taken to ensure maximum adoption across the business?
– What impact will the technology have on employees?
– Change starts from the top. Has your leadership bought into this new way of working?

# 10 considerations to help you choose a cloud collaboration vendor

Once you've considered these questions, the next step is to decide which platform is right for you. We've put together a list of considerations that can help you choose from a bustling market of collaboration tools, where it can be difficult to identify exactly what you want and what will meet your needs.

**Features and functions**
There are many different collaboration tools that address specific use cases. The main ones are secure file sharing, enterprise social networking, external collaboration, and project management. There are platforms and tools available for each of these use cases. Decide which features your firm needs today and select an application – or combination of applications – according to your needs.

Many of these solutions are modular, allowing you to use only what you need right now and grow your capabilities over time. Far from a stop-gap solution, CIOs have begun to see integrated solutions for these use cases as strategically important to enabling new ways of working within their organizations.

Standalone tools made by separate vendors are beginning to converge around core functions, attempting to bring these use cases together to meet the demands of businesses and users. Consider a solution that incorporates all the tools for true collaboration into one platform for the most return on your investment.

Look for an integrated platform that provides users with a holistic, seamless, and easy-to-use system that helps them get their work done, reduces cost, and eases the administrative burden.

**Social built-in**
Social networking has fundamentally changed the way people communicate and collaborate.

There is a need and expectation from business users for social media. This is based on the reliance of consumer social tools such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter influencing the way we communicate outside of work.

A true collaboration platform needs to have file sharing capabilities as well as other collaborative tools such as microblogging, wikis, blogs, tasks, and events that are deeply ingrained and integrated into one secure, social platform. Social can't be an afterthought anymore and must be a core part of any technology offer.

As Pete Williams from Deloitte Digital said, "If what you're doing in IT or knowledge management doesn't have social in it then stop and start again. It's as simple as that." A collaboration platform is a long-term investment; you might not need social today, but plan for the future. It is key to leveraging the knowledge of the people in your organization. Social tools break down information silos, help people share knowledge, and build professional relationships – even across physical distances. All this will help businesses be more productive.

Choose a platform where social tools are not a bolt-on to file sharing capabilities. Instead, they should be deeply integrated into the core of the application.

**User experience**
More than almost anything else, a collaboration tool must be easy to use. It's the only way to ensure your teams can keep work moving. Make sure that any shortlisted vendor has given serious consideration to the user experience. After all, people will only use software if it's easier to use it than to not use it.

Also, consider whether the solution is designed to be responsive to any screen size. This means it can be accessed from mobile devices and tablets as easily as on a laptop or desktop.

And ensure that the user interface is intuitive so that the platform requires minimal training. Users – both internal to the company and external collaborators – should be confident with using the system right from the start.

## Mobility

In the past decade our personal lives have become augmented by tools designed to keep us organized and help us interact with people. They do this by enabling the instantaneous exchange of information and the ability to connect with anyone in real-time. These tools have become essential in the enterprise too, as business users now expect to be able to access their information and stay connected wherever they are and from whatever device they are using.

According to a study* in 2018, there were 2.53 billion smartphone users worldwide and 52.2 % of all online traffic was through a mobile phone. There has been dramatic growth in the acceptance of BYOD (bring your own device), which has required a new set of security measures for many businesses.

It is vital that whichever tool you choose works on all mobile devices and isn't tied to any manufacturer or operating system. A mobile-optimized web application, rather than a native application, is the best solution here, which can be accessed via an internet browser on any device.

## Security

Any cloud platform will store your organization's content and potentially your clients' content too.

You can't take any risks when it comes to guaranteeing the security of a chosen provider. When selecting a platform, ensure that the cloud provider is fully audited and accredited to meet information security standards.

Look for vendors that are ISO27001 certified, which ensures that controls and processes are in place to protect your data. It's important to note that the vendors themselves must be accredited, not just their datacenter, as the vendor will have access to that data too.

Other security features to look out for when choosing a provider include disaster recovery, data back-up, and fully redundant infrastructure to guarantee uptime.

You may also like to consider whether you want single or multi-tenancy hosting, whether the provider performs independent penetration tests on their platform, and whether you can choose which jurisdiction your data is hosted in.

## Administrative controls

It's vital that the software allows management of all aspects of the platform, including user and content permissioning and the ability to turn features or modules off or on. Permissioning is key to the internal security and privacy of business software and should be provided as standard by any vendor on your shortlist. Feature administration is often overlooked but can be the most important control. The administration interface must give you the flexibility to tailor features that allow your users to work the way your organization works. It also future-proofs the platform to enable it to adapt and grow with your business.

## APIs and data migrations

Ask prospective vendors what kind of application programming interface (API) functions they offer. This will reveal any extra flexibility within the platform. The ability to integrate the power of internal and external collaboration into your organization's existing system provides a wealth of benefits.

These include interoperability, expediency, efficiency, and familiarity. All lend themselves to a smooth transition to new ways of working together.

Similarly, a solution that accommodates information from old systems will make for a smoother transition process. Look for a platform that is compatible with your existing systems to enable seamless data migrations and, if you need it, a vendor that will manage your data migrations for you.

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* statista.com/statistics/241462/global-mobile-phone-website-traffic-share/

**Know your vendor**

As with any provider, service, or agency you engage with, you'll want to be confident you're dealing with a reputable business. Research and find out who they are, what experience they have, what their reputation is like in the market, and who their clients are.

Some cloud collaboration platforms are designed with the needs of specific industries in mind. Others may have broader functionality appropriate for most businesses. Look into vendors that target the legal industry as well as non-vertical-specific platforms to get an idea of what features you need that you may not have considered already. Vendors who cater for clients in the legal industry are your best bet, as they will better understand your needs and can help you fulfill them.

**Support and maintenance**

A major benefit of choosing cloud software is the fact that you don't need a dedicated in-house IT support team to maintain it. As a result, cloud service offerings are much more cost-effective than on-premise when it comes to maintenance.

Ensure you are selecting a vendor that provides a fully managed service. This means they will maintain and upgrade your instances of their applications for you. Also make certain that the vendor offers training and 24/7 technical support so that you and your users can contact them at any time if any technical problems arise.

# Embracing virtual collaboration

As the COVID-19 situation evolves, there are many competing priorities for you to juggle. From client service to the well-being of your employees, you need help wherever you can get it. A secure cloud collaboration tool can help you ensure your business can continue to thrive. This means one less thing to worry about.

It's important to choose the right solution for today with the right combination of tools to aid collaboration specific to the way your organization works. If the system is easy to use and sincerely helps people get their work done, they will use it, love it, and keep using it.

Once things get back to normal, your teams will still need some form of virtual collaboration – for teams in different locations or employees travelling. Think of collaboration tools as a great solution for your pressing challenges with the added benefit of long-term productivity gains for your business.

It may take some adjustment, but with the right vendor and training you can get your teams up and running at nearly peak productivity no matter where they are.