

# Agile Mobile Collaboration Software

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Welcome to Futurum's *Business Technology Briefing* series. Futurum briefings are designed to convey critical and time-sensitive insights to decision-makers in the most concise and time-effective format possible. While our reports offer deep dives into new and emerging business technologies and critical Digital Transformation topics, our *Briefings* identify new opportunities and threats in the market, highlight shifts and trends most likely to impact your business, and prioritize insights to paint the clearest possible picture in the shortest amount of time.

## Agile Mobile Collaboration Software Gets Serious

With mobility now squarely at the center of business productivity, and 42% of the global workforce (1.75 billion people) qualifying as mobile workers by 2020 (for the US, those numbers are 73% and 105 million), we note a definitive shift towards mobile-centric agile collaboration technologies and processes in both the enterprise and the SMB space.

### What to expect:

- The proliferation of cloud-based, portable, mobile-friendly collaboration solutions like *Slack* and *Cisco Spark*.
- An acceleration in the replacement of legacy PC-based collaboration solutions by these new collaboration solutions.
- End-point agnostic design: These applications work equally well on PCs, laptops, tablets and smartphones, regardless of the operating system, and allow users the ability to switch seamlessly between their devices with no loss of functionality.
- Thread-based messenger design for teams and projects, mimicking popular messaging apps.

2020:

**42%**

of the global workforce  
**(1.75B people)** will be  
mobile.

**73%**

of the US workforce **(105M  
people)** will be mobile.

- One-touch video conferencing capabilities.
- Push notification capabilities to alert users to new messages and activity on discussion threads.
- Frictionless calendar integration for meetings and deadlines.
- Secure encryption layers to protect confidential communications and valuable IP.
- We attribute this shift to a confluence of factors:
  - The ubiquitous growth of mobility and smartphone adoption around the world
  - The positive impact of mobility on productivity
  - The growing influence of mobile app-savvy millennials in the workplace
  - The availability of portable and secure cloud solutions that far outperform older, slower, less agile collaboration products.

With communications giant Cisco entering the space with Spark – a Slack-like solution with enterprise-class end-to-end encryption and powerful videoconferencing capabilities, we expect to see not only a marked acceleration in adoption but a corresponding evolution in business collaboration protocols, methodologies and best practices in both the enterprise and the SMB space. Organizations that adopt flatter, faster, more agile collaboration solutions will find themselves at a marked strategic advantage over organizations that do not.

### **As agile collaboration finds an eager market, the competition heats up**

Notable new entrants in the category are Amazon *Chime*, Microsoft *Teams*, and Facebook *Workplace*, which all just released their own agile collaboration platforms in the last few months.

As business technology giants like Cisco, Microsoft, and Amazon were edging their way towards the collaboration platform space, Spark, which already enjoys 4 million daily users, and whose 700+ app directory sees more than 400,000 installs per month, quickly turned its attention towards the enterprise market with a new product christened *Enterprise Grid*.

While none of these solutions appear to be quite as enterprise-ready as Cisco Spark, they each bring their own unique mix of possibilities for category disruption, must-have features, and advantageous strategic partnerships. It is likely, for instance, that Facebook Workplace will be the first to integrate VR and AR into their collaboration capabilities. Microsoft's natural integration with its own productivity ecosystem could also help facilitate the adoption of its *Teams* offering over less obvious choices. As for Amazon Chime, its initial focus on meetings and video conferencing appears to be competing mostly against *GoToMeeting*, *Zoom*, and *Skype* for now, but we expect to see the product evolve into a more collaboration-focused offering in the next 18 months.

The only enterprise-ready collaboration platform on our list that *also* offers an agile, all-in-one, integrated, and IT-agnostic video-conferencing/digital whiteboard/conference-room solution is Cisco. Its new *Spark Board* product is powerful, easy-to-use, and attractively priced. Because of this, and Cisco's strong reputation and established channels in the enterprise, we expect that its new pain-free, plug-and-play, all-in-one approach to Unified Communications and Collaboration (UCC) will give Cisco Spark a definitive advantage over its competition.



## Security as a key differentiator: Look for end-to-end data and communications encryption

With cybersecurity being top of mind for every IT department and decision-maker managing Digital Transformation initiatives, we expect to see end-to-end encryption quickly become standard in all business cloud solutions.

Justification: It is not enough to merely protect IT infrastructure (devices, wifi, servers, data centers, the cloud). The data itself must be secured along its entire lifecycle – end to end – from the moment it is transmitted to its final destination. Any gap in security and encryption presents a vulnerability for the client, and cloud solutions providers understand the need to eradicate any and all vulnerabilities in their clients' data transmissions and storage in order to remain competitive. Although some degree of end-to-end encryption can already be found built into devices themselves (example: Apple iOS), cloud solution vendors are already starting to incorporate end-to-end encryption into their software as well, which follows their core endpoint-agnostic strategy. (Remove common device vulnerabilities by incorporating the security layer in the product itself.)

A good example of this is Cisco's Spark Board: All communications passing through Spark Board are protected by end-to-end encryption, with the encryption key residing on the client side. As organizations learn to appreciate this pain-free approach to data security, we expect this model to become the industry by 2018.

### Conclusion

- Email is no longer the center-piece of digital collaboration for business teams. Advanced messaging and instant mobile communications are.
- Because short messaging-style discussion threads are less interruptive and more fast-paced than email discussion threads, agile collaboration products like Slack, Spark, Workplace and Teams should naturally lead to improvements in operational velocity and productivity.
- Endpoint-agnostic solutions (solutions that work on any and all devices) are the new standard in the world of collaboration technologies.

- Mobile-driven anytime-anywhere meetings are quickly working their way to the center of agile collaboration.
- Cisco, with its Spark and Spark Board offerings, appears to offer the most complete enterprise class (and SMB-friendly) agile collaboration ecosystem, at least for now.
- Because end-to-end client-side encryption built right into the collaboration layer bypasses typical hardware vulnerabilities, it effectively solves a major data security pain point for IT departments. We expect that this will become a standard feature of all collaboration, professional messaging, and video conferencing solutions by 2018.