Collaborative Work Management Powers Innovation At Leading Enterprises

Augment Productivity Of Distributed Teams With Lessons From Collaboration Leaders
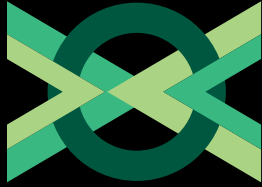
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ABOUT FORRESTER CONSULTING

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Executive Summary

For years, many firms have aspired to become digital-first companies, and the current workplace outlook may make it an imperative for all. As teams, partners, and customers adapt to working together while being physically distant, effective collaboration is growing in importance as an engine of business agility, speed, and quality.

In March 2020, Atlassian commissioned Forrester Consulting to evaluate global collaboration capabilities and use of collaborative work management solutions. Forrester conducted an online survey with 250 decision makers responsible for collaboration initiatives at global companies with $500M+ in annual revenues to explore this topic. We found that companies with more advanced collaboration practices have dedicated collaboration facilitation teams, utilize automation, and have best-of-breed solutions to prioritize more complex business goals and drive greater business benefits.

KEY FINDINGS

› **A centralized team drives advanced collaboration practices.** A cross-functional team in charge of collaboration facilitation and strategy is an important component of firms with higher collaboration maturity. These teams can ensure that collaboration processes and capabilities are aligned to organizational goals and priorities, consistent across the business, and empowered by the right technologies.

› **Task automation is an engine of collaboration efficiency.** Three out of four decision makers see automation as a critical capability for real-time collaboration. Automation enables both improved productivity and quality by making processes easier, faster, and less prone to human error.

› **Best-of-breed solutions empower tailored collaboration strategies.** Collaboration strategies and needs vary greatly depending on industry, workforce, culture, and several other factors. To match collaborative work requirements to these company-specific strategies and needs, decision makers at firms at all levels of collaboration maturity prefer to adopt multiple best-of-breed solutions rather than full product suites.

Companies with more advanced collaboration practices have dedicated collaboration facilitation teams, utilize automation, and have best-of-breed solutions to prioritize more complex business goals and drive greater business benefits.

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Collaboration Allows Businesses To Thrive, Rather Than Just Survive, In Today's Physically Dispersed Work Environment

Growing a business in an increasingly digital world is challenging in normal circumstances, but it can be crippling in a pandemic. Organizations that previously focused primarily on growth via customer acquisition and retention are now forced into survival mode, having to adapt to new methods of working to maintain productivity while nonessential employees work from home. As businesses accelerate the digitalization of their practices, cross-functional teams — now even more physically dispersed — require solutions that reduce business friction and enable real-time collaboration. This allows workers to accomplish complex tasks and perform strategic work to meet business goals. Our survey shows:
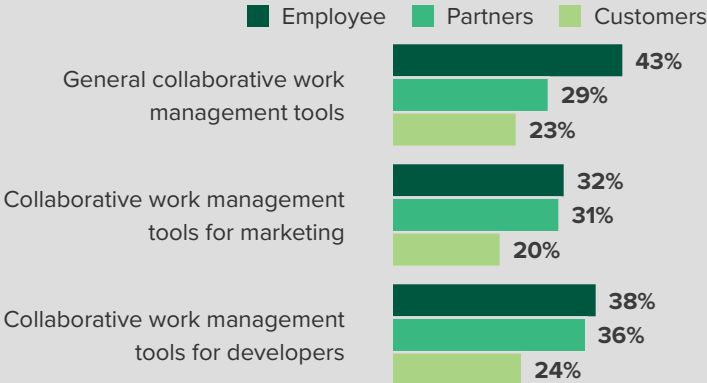
› **Remote work makes efficient collaboration even more important — and challenging.** For many organizations in the short term, new or expanded work-from-home (WFH) policies are a necessary adaptation for social distancing. External collaboration with partners and customers is top of mind for many decision makers we surveyed, but as companies navigate new WFH policies and an influx of remote workers, strong internal collaboration capabilities will be more important than ever — and more challenging. These WFH practices may have lasting impact beyond the pandemic as well, which only makes digital collaboration with employees, partners, and customers an even more important priority.

› **Adoption of real-time collaborative work management remains limited, especially for external collaboration.** To enable better collaboration both internally and externally, firms must adopt collaboration practices and technologies that enable continuous communication and fast feedback. The data shows that firms are still in the early stages of adoption of organization and planning tools, like collaborative work management (see Figure 1). This is especially true for real-time collaboration and communication tools for external parties like partners and customers.

As companies navigate new work-from-home policies and an influx of remote workers, internal collaboration will be more important than ever — and more challenging.

Figure 1

"Which of the following solutions/tools does your organization use today for collaborating with the following groups?"

■ Employee   ■ Partners   ■ Customers

General collaborative work management tools
- 43%
- 29%
- 23%

Collaborative work management tools for marketing
- 32%
- 31%
- 20%

Collaborative work management tools for developers
- 38%
- 36%
- 24%

Base: 250 decision makers responsible for collaboration initiatives at global companies with $500M+ in annual revenues
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Atlassian, March 2020

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Improve Your Collaboration Practice With Lessons From Today's Leaders

A modern collaboration practice is more than just its tools. Organizations must understand the specific contextual requirements of their knowledge employees and construct a collaboration ecosystem to support them. The success of enterprise collaboration depends on the processes, strategy, and organizational structure that underpins and enables technology solutions.

To understand what successful collaboration looks like, we assessed survey respondents based on their adoption of 12 best practices across collaboration process, culture, strategy, and technology (see Figure 2). We then grouped respondents into three maturity groups based on how they scored on the assessment — beginner (38%), intermediate (32%), and advanced (30%). Looking at differences in how higher-maturity and lower-maturity groups approach collaboration, how they prioritize collaboration initiatives, the challenges they face, and the benefits they receive can be helpful for collaboration leaders trying to create collaboration roadmaps or prioritize their own initiatives for the coming year.

> "[Collaboration solutions] make decision-making processes and corrective actions quicker and more effective."
>
> *Finance/accounting manager at a German transportation and logistics company*

Figure 2

Enterprise Collaboration Maturity Model

Each statement scored on a scale of 1-5.

Process	Workflow	We have a formally defined set of processes for collaboration
	Process agility	We regularly employ fast feedback loops to manage projects and processes
	Process effectiveness	We regularly practice continuous improvement on our projects and processes
Culture	Dedicated collaboration facilitation	We have a team dedicated to facilitating collaboration capabilities
	Intraorganizational collaboration	We have established enterprisewide collaboration capabilities in a center of excellence
	Executive support	Our executives fully support our vision for collaboration and support activities
Strategy	Customer focus	We have put a collaboration strategy in place to improve customer experience
	Employee productivity	We have put a collaboration strategy in place to improve employee productivity
	Agile strategy	We have incorporated Agile techniques to improve collaboration
Technology	Cloud	We use cloud-based tools that can easily scale to help us work together more effectively
	Ease of use	We have established a collaboration tool set that is easy to use for nondevelopers in our organization
	Automation	We have established technology to automate work processes

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Atlassian, March 2020

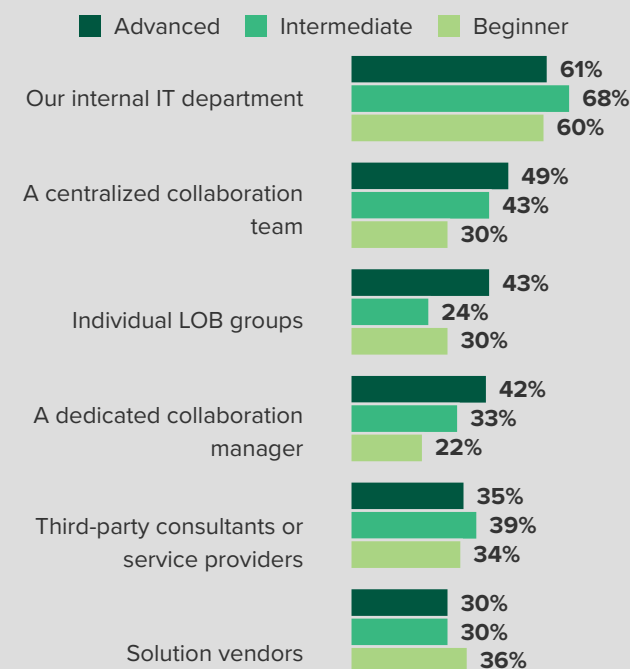FORRESTER®

KEY COLLABORATION MATURITY LESSONS

Our analysis of lower (beginner) versus higher (advanced) levels of collaboration maturity revealed some key differences in how firms organize and prioritize collaboration. Lessons that organizations can learn from this include:

› **Dedicated resources that facilitate collaboration drive better outcomes.** Internal IT departments are most likely to manage collaboration initiatives today, regardless of collaboration maturity. However, decision makers at advanced companies were more likely to also involve a centralized team, individual line-of-business groups, and/ or a dedicated collaboration manager (see Figure 3). In addition, close to 40% of leaders at intermediate and advanced organizations said that expanding their teams dedicated to facilitating collaboration capabilities is a top priority, compared to just 27% of respondents at beginner firms. Forming a centralized, cross-functional team to facilitate collaboration enables firms to build their planning and delivery capabilities. Investing in the right collaboration technology furthers these capabilities by cutting down time spent waiting on decisions or critical actions.

› **Advanced firms can shift focus from tactical practices to tackling more complex challenges.** Mature collaboration capabilities enable firms to prioritize more complex and challenging goals that affect both the business' top and bottom line; through collaboration, they better understand which strategies, such as digital transformation or innovation, will allow differentiation while aiding in achieving bottom-line goals.

> Advanced collaboration capabilities enable firms to prioritize more complex and challenging goals that affect both the business' top and bottom line.

Figure 3

"Who manages your collaboration initiatives today?"
(Select all that apply.)

"Ideally, who would manage them?"

Base: 250 decision makers responsible for collaboration initiatives at global companies with $500M+ in annual revenues
Source: a commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Atlassian, March 2020
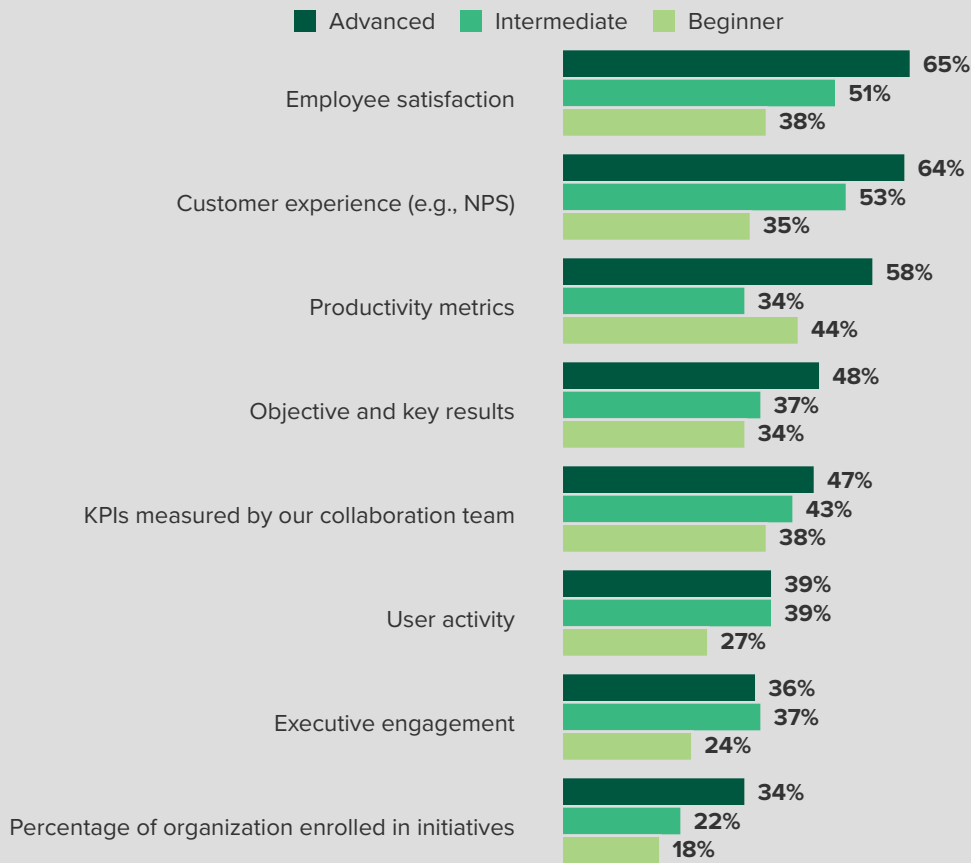
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For example, decision makers at advanced firms were 20 percentage points more likely to have innovation as a top business goal than beginners (38% vs. 18%) and 10 percentage points more likely to have a business goal of digital transformation (38% vs. 28%). Digital transformation and innovation require velocity — fast feedback, continuous improvement, increased speed-to-market, all of which can be enhanced by investment in collaboration tools that drive best practices. On the other hand, beginners were 21 percentage points more likely to say growing revenue is a top business goal than respondents at advanced organizations (53% vs. 32%) and 25 percentage points more likely to say cost reduction is a top goal (47% vs. 22%).

› **True indications of success require employee and customer measures.** Collaboration's impact is much greater than productivity, and firms must measure it as such. To fully understand how collaboration is benefiting an organization, a balanced scorecard of metrics covering both internal and external parties must be established. Decision makers at advanced organizations understand this and are close to twice as likely as beginners to routinely involve customer experience (CX) metrics to determine the success of their collaboration initiatives (see Figure 4).

Decision makers at advanced organizations reported they are close to twice as likely as beginners to routinely involve CX metrics to determine the success of their collaboration initiatives.

Figure 4
"How do you measure the success of your collaboration initiatives?" (Select all that apply.)

Legend: ■ Advanced ■ Intermediate ■ Beginner

Employee satisfaction
- Advanced: 65%
- Intermediate: 51%
- Beginner: 38%

Customer experience (e.g., NPS)
- Advanced: 64%
- Intermediate: 53%
- Beginner: 35%

Productivity metrics
- Advanced: 58%
- Intermediate: 34%
- Beginner: 44%

Objective and key results
- Advanced: 48%
- Intermediate: 37%
- Beginner: 34%

KPIs measured by our collaboration team
- Advanced: 47%
- Intermediate: 43%
- Beginner: 38%

User activity
- Advanced: 39%
- Intermediate: 39%
- Beginner: 27%

Executive engagement
- Advanced: 36%
- Intermediate: 37%
- Beginner: 24%

Percentage of organization enrolled in initiatives
- Advanced: 34%
- Intermediate: 22%
- Beginner: 18%

Base: 250 decision makers responsible for collaboration initiatives at global companies with $500M+ in annual revenues
Note: Net Promoter and NPS are registered service marks, and Net Promoter Score is a service mark, of Bain & Company, Inc., Satmetrix Systems, Inc., and Fred Reichheld.
Source: a commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Atlassian, March 2020

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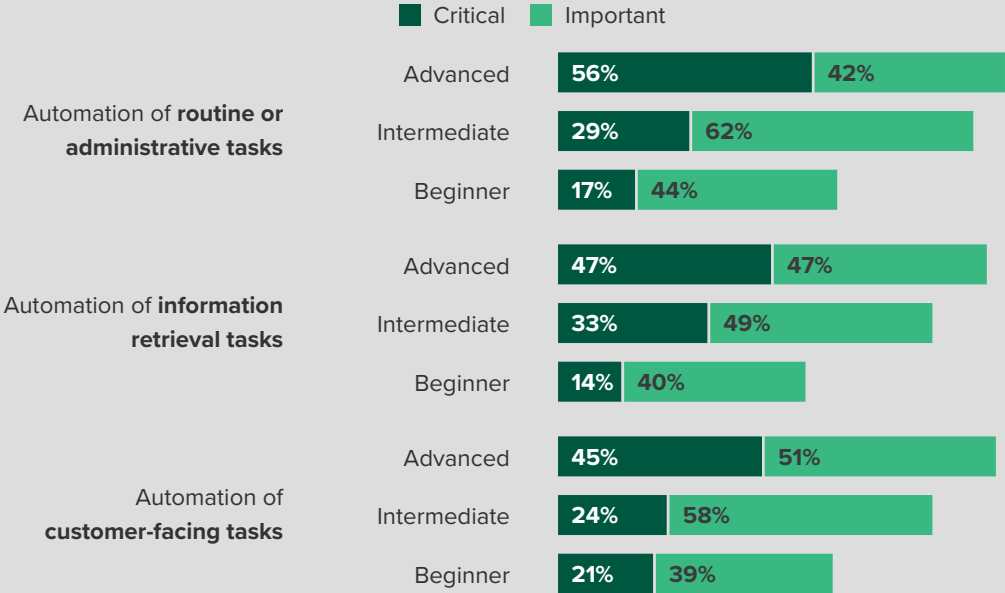# Automation, Extensibility, And Purpose-Built Solutions Unlock The Benefits Of Real-Time Collaboration

Increased productivity is often the initial reason for investing in collaborative work management tools. However, organizations are finding other benefits, especially in these challenging times. The sudden shift to remote work has forced organizations to rethink the tools and processes needed to maintain that productivity while reaching planned operational goals. Firms may now need to formalize once-informal practices — for example, spontaneous conversations now need a scheduled time for teams to gather for brainstorming.

Our survey found that organizations on average use 10 different types of collaboration tools. Some solutions and capabilities enable real-time collaboration better than others. Organizations look for solutions that:

› **Use automation to eliminate routine tasks.** Three in four survey respondents said automation is important to enabling real-time collaboration for their organizations. Automating tasks that are routine, or meta-tasks like information retrieval, make it easier for work to be done and speed up the rate at which it can be done, which increases productivity and efficiency. Routine task automation can also improve quality by reducing human error that results from manual processes. Firms with greater collaboration maturity see automation as more important to driving real-time collaboration (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

"How important are the following capabilities to enabling real-time collaboration at your organization?"

Legend: ■ Critical   ■ Important

Automation of routine or administrative tasks
- Advanced: 56% Critical | 42% Important
- Intermediate: 29% Critical | 62% Important
- Beginner: 17% Critical | 44% Important

Automation of information retrieval tasks
- Advanced: 47% Critical | 47% Important
- Intermediate: 33% Critical | 49% Important
- Beginner: 14% Critical | 40% Important

Automation of customer-facing tasks
- Advanced: 45% Critical | 51% Important
- Intermediate: 24% Critical | 58% Important
- Beginner: 21% Critical | 39% Important

Base: 250 decision makers responsible for collaboration initiatives at global companies with $500M+ in annual revenues
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Atlassian, March 2020

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› **Offer both out-of-the-box features and the ability to configure personalized workspaces.** Out-of-the-box functions include content collaboration, templates, standard workflows, and common schemas. Customization is delivered by features that allow end users to build out additional workflows and notifications that support their governance structures. Collaboration with internal teams requires different processes and data than collaboration with partners or customers, with different access controls and governance. These flexible solutions can be quickly modified to fit and enable a variety of internal and external use cases across departments.

› **Provide increased extensibility through open integration with other collaboration and business tools.** Part of improving how work is done is making data and information more accessible to workers who need it to do their jobs. By having collaboration tools that easily integrate with one another and other business tools, information becomes easier to access and use when needed, which can improve productivity. Respondents indicated that integration capabilities are a top feature of an ideal collaboration solution, with decision makers at advanced organizations saying it is the most important feature.

› **Are best-of-breed solutions.** Every business has different and specific collaboration needs based upon industry, maturity, and corporate culture. While working with fewer vendors may be simpler, using that as a primary reason for selecting a solution may prevent a company from building the best solution. Teams have different ways of working — skills, processes, and technical expertise — that make selecting a single solution extremely difficult. Selecting tools that can fit different needs and offer open integration API structures for sharing relevant data helps firms create a bespoke solution. Decision makers, regardless of their firms' maturity, prefer to adopt best-of-breed collaborative technologies rather than end-to-end solutions to have comprehensive coverage that is purpose-built and matches the requirements and goals of the company (see Figure 6).

> "[Collaboration solutions] give us constant real-time access to live sales numbers and trends and allow us to use customer-specific data in real time for customer presentations and conversations."
>
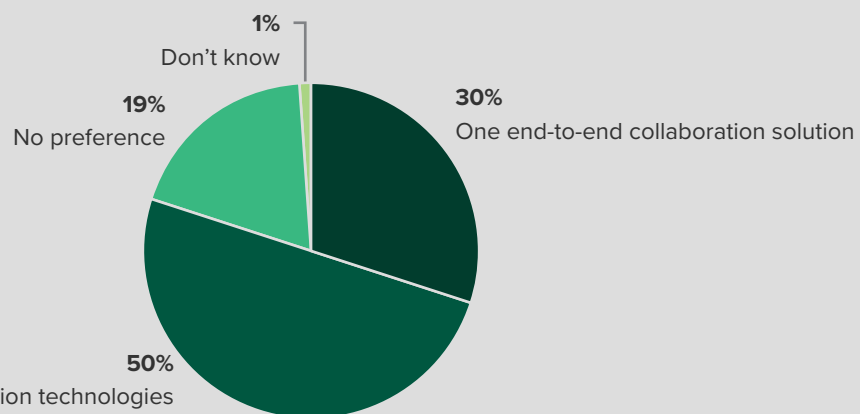> *IT/developer manager at a German technology/tech services company*

> "[Collaboration solutions] allow us to tailor a specific product to our client on the spot."
>
> *C-level executive at a technology/tech services company in the US*

Figure 6

"How do you prefer to purchase your collaboration or collaborative work management solutions?"

- 1% Don't know
- 19% No preference
- 30% One end-to-end collaboration solution
- 50% Multiple best-of-breed collaboration technologies

Base: 250 decision makers responsible for collaboration initiatives at global companies with $500M+ in annual revenues
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Atlassian, March 2020

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Benefits Of Collaboration Scale With Maturity

Sixty-six percent of survey respondents said their collaboration strategies have led to major, quantifiable benefits in CX. Sixty percent reported improvements in productivity, and 53% increased innovation and improved products and services. All of these directly map back to top business goals at every level of maturity. Our survey shows:

› **Benefits from collaboration increase with maturity.** Decision makers at advanced firms reported greater benefits from their strategies compared to beginners (see Figure 7). This is especially true for benefits like increased brand recognition, improved products and services, and improved innovation, where advanced decision makers were at least 30 percentage points more likely to report major, quantifiable benefits than beginners. Improving collaboration drives quantifiable business benefits at all levels of maturity.

› **Improving collaboration drives increased productivity.** One of the main drivers of collaboration investment is improved productivity. And in today's challenging work environments, improving productivity is more important than ever, but also more challenging. This makes improving collaboration even more important to business success. Three-fourths of advanced respondents reported major quantifiable benefits to productivity, compared to just 46% of beginners.

› **Firms can differentiate themselves with strong collaboration.** The benefits to innovation, brand recognition, products and services, and CX seen from collaboration improvement demonstrate the power that collaboration has on differentiating a company from competitors. In this way, collaboration is an engine of both top- and bottom-line business growth.

Three-fourths of advanced respondents reported major quantifiable benefits to productivity, compared to just 46% of beginners.

Figure 7

"What business benefits has your organization seen as a result of your collaboration strategy to date?"
(Major quantifiable benefits)

	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced
Increased brand recognition or market influence	23%	42%	66%
Reduced costs	35%	57%	56%
Increased revenue	38%	49%	61%
Improved products and services	39%	53%	69%
Improved innovation	34%	53%	75%
Improved employee experience	44%	48%	73%
Productivity benefits	46%	63%	75%
Improved customer experience	53%	70%	77%

Base: 250 decision makers responsible for collaboration initiatives at global companies with $500M+ in annual revenues
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Atlassian, March 2020

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Key Recommendations

The differences between how organizations with beginner and advanced collaboration practices organize, prioritize, and measure their collaboration initiatives reinforces the importance of laying a strong foundation for collaboration. Forrester's in-depth survey of collaboration decision makers yielded several important recommendations for organizations looking to strengthen their enterprise collaboration practice:

Use digital workspaces as home base for distributed teams who can't be face-to-face. Collaborative work management, especially in today's challenged environment, supports individual work practices while fostering corporate standards. Governance plays a distinct role in building practices that support effective collaboration. The outcomes a business wants to achieve require the prioritization of specific business or technology processes and the social interactions that clear the way to complete those processes. Direct facilitation from centers of excellence helps teams build competencies in both collaboration and governance practices.

Prioritize best-of-breed when investing in collaboration technologies. Let's face it: Email won't go away any time soon, and it still will be the most effective way of reaching out to part-time or external collaborators to bring them into a collective workspace in a collaborative environment. Building a high-value collaboration solution means finding tools that support collaboration and oversight of activities, automate repetitive processes, and provide transparency into work progress. This will require a best-of-breed solution. When thinking about a long-term integration strategy, companies must consider solutions that offer flexible integration via robust APIs, predefined connectors, or partnerships with integration platforms that are regularly updated to account for product change or expansion.

Use collaboration to optimize practices, not add to them. Too often, decision makers view collaboration as purely a technology problem when it is far more complex. Assess how your teams are working together to identify what works and what is missing. Survey to identify current productivity and comfort with current collaboration practices. Companies succeeding in this challenging time recognize that collaboration complexity merits investment in expertise, coaches, and a center of excellence to build capabilities. When teams must work remotely or are distributed, they need to understand how to work together effectively — how to share information and communicate in the context of the work being done. Investment here builds a culture of collaboration necessary to reduce wasted time and rework.

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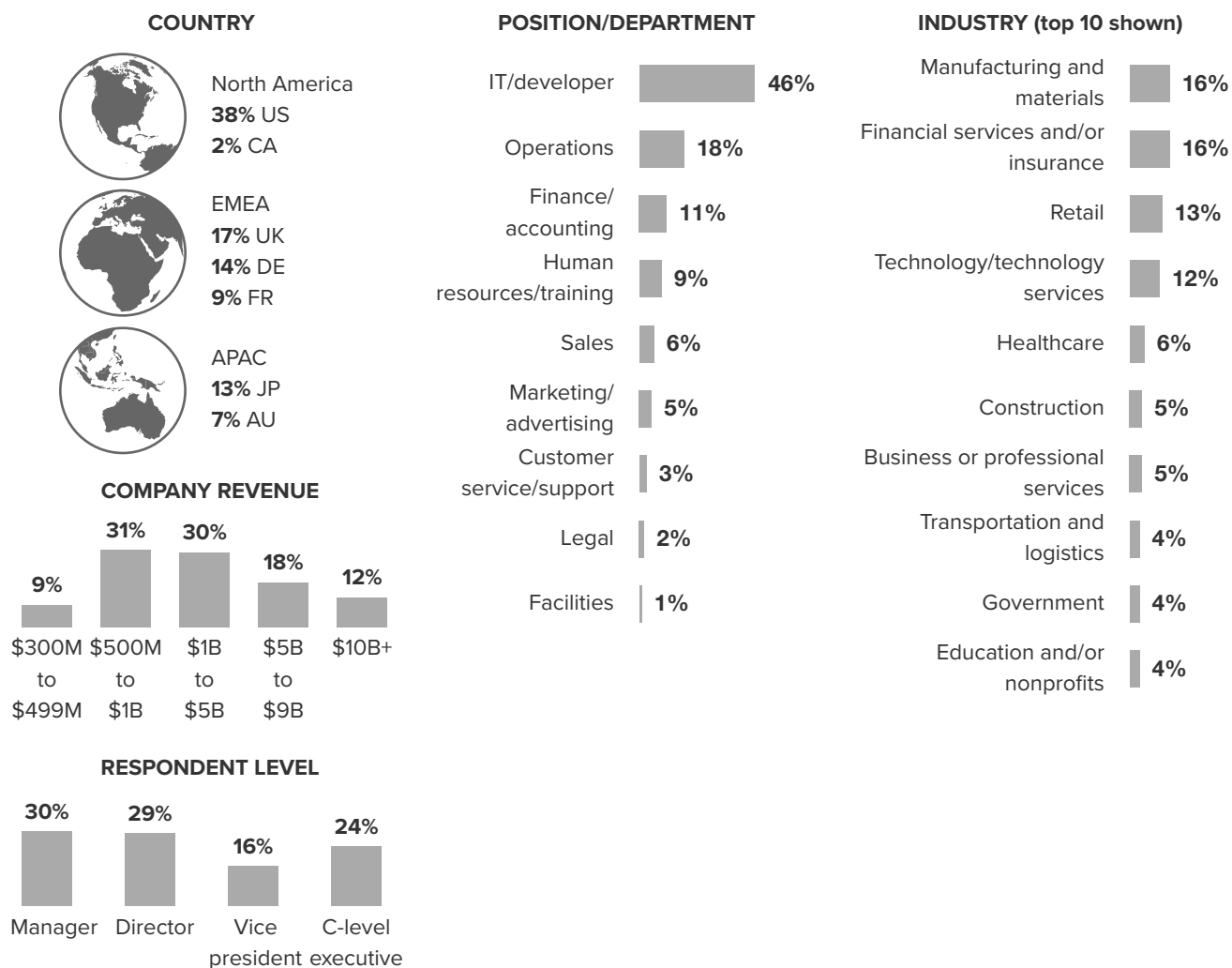
Whether it's Atlassian Cloud and/or our Managed DevOps SaaS Platform, we've got you covered!
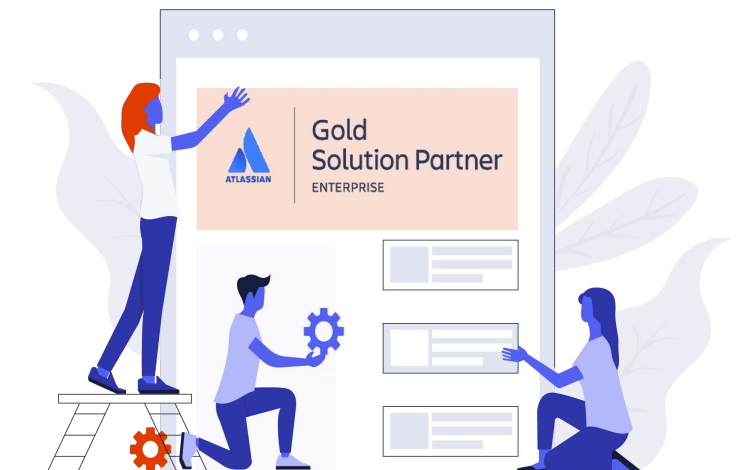
Appendix A: Methodology

In this study, Forrester conducted an online survey of 250 respondents in the US, Canada, the UK, Germany, France, Japan, and Australia to evaluate global collaboration capabilities and use of collaborative work management solutions. Survey participants included business and IT decision makers who influence or are responsible for enterprisewide collaboration initiatives. The study was completed in March 2020.

Appendix B: Demographics/Data

COUNTRY

North America
38% US
2% CA

EMEA
17% UK
14% DE
9% FR

APAC
13% JP
7% AU

COMPANY REVENUE

- **9%** $300M to $499M
- **31%** $500M to $1B
- **30%** $1B to $5B
- **18%** $5B to $9B
- **12%** $10B+

RESPONDENT LEVEL

- **30%** Manager
- **29%** Director
- **16%** Vice president
- **24%** C-level executive

POSITION/DEPARTMENT

- IT/developer **46%**
- Operations **18%**
- Finance/accounting **11%**
- Human resources/training **9%**
- Sales **6%**
- Marketing/advertising **5%**
- Customer service/support **3%**
- Legal **2%**
- Facilities **1%**

INDUSTRY (top 10 shown)

- Manufacturing and materials **16%**
- Financial services and/or insurance **16%**
- Retail **13%**
- Technology/technology services **12%**
- Healthcare **6%**
- Construction **5%**
- Business or professional services **5%**
- Transportation and logistics **4%**
- Government **4%**
- Education and/or nonprofits **4%**

Base: 250 decision makers responsible for collaboration initiatives at global companies with $500M+ in annual revenues
Note: Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.
Source: commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Atlassian, March 2020

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Appendix C: Supplemental Material

RELATED FORRESTER RESEARCH

"Now Tech: Collaborative Work Management Tools, Q2 2020," Forrester Research, Inc., May 7, 2020

"COVID-19 Remote Work Just Broke Your Processes: Here's What To Do About It," Forrester Research, Inc., April 23, 2020

"Gain A Competitive Advantage Through Enterprise Collaboration," Forrester Research, Inc., June 10, 2019

"Setting The Technology Foundation For Your Enterprise Collaboration Strategy," Forrester Research, Inc., January 29, 2019

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