



A go-to change management  
plan for productive, happy  
technology users



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## Productive or stressed?

In an age of hybrid work, productivity is increasingly hard to define, much less measure. Conventional wisdom suggests that productivity equals the number of tasks completed or products delivered.

But conventional wisdom may be wrong.

Increasingly, employees are confronting fluid boundaries between their work and home life. Nearly half of fully remote or hybrid respondents in a [global study](#) report working longer hours and feeling more stress since the start of the COVID pandemic. That's significant.



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*“A key aspect of making hybrid work productive is finding a compromise between individual workstyles and team needs.”*

**—Jaime Teevan,  
Microsoft chief scientist**

## **Redefining productivity and change management**

According to Microsoft scientist Jaime Teevan, a hybrid environment may increase work silos, which in turn hinders innovation, transfer of knowledge, and productivity. To counter these effects, Teevan suggests that employee well-being, collaboration and innovation also factors into [productivity](#).

What about technology? How does it help—or hurt—productivity? This guide will help you pinpoint the answers and empower end users to change the way they work with their productivity tools.



# 1

## Technology isn't the problem

These days, technology tends to be blamed for all productivity problems.

Some of the blame is justified. After all, it only takes a split second for an audio alert or annoying pop-up to drive focus away from work. But technology isn't going away. A [McKinsey report](#) predicts that emerging technologies will quintuple by the year 2025.

McKinsey also points out that “technology is not intrinsically good or bad, but it can produce positive or negative outcomes—and often both—depending on how it used. In general, actions by business leaders and policy makers need to accompany technological innovations to ensure that the overall effects, and how they are distributed, create a positive balance.”



## Know the enemy

According to a [1E report](#), in the United States alone, business organizations are burning through billions of dollars trying to “equip employees with the tools they need—as soon as they need them.”

Most IT teams can barely keep up. Software gets deployed—and then much of it remains unused because employees prefer their own shadow IT apps or are not willing to change their behavior.

What should overwhelmed IT teams and change practitioners do?

A technology audit is the first obvious step. Polling end users about their software preferences is another. But it’s also important to empower the productive behaviors your organization wants to see.

The first step is to identify the daily habits that are draining productivity.



## Identifying common productivity drains

# 2

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Employees today face plenty of distractions. A [CareerBuilder survey](#) reveals mobile phones as a top productivity killer. Surfing the web is a close second, with email, meetings, noisy co-workers, and snack breaks rounding out the list.

Unsurprisingly, even small distractions can cause frustration and stress, leading to poor quality, longer completion times, and a pattern of low productivity. [Business News Daily](#) notes that employee job satisfaction and overall company culture can take a hit if ongoing distractions aren't resolved.



## Baby steps to the elevator

Some organizations may ban specific websites or cell phone use altogether. Fortunately, most businesses don't need to take Draconian measures to improve productivity. Baby steps still work.



For the record, short breaks and 10-minute walks can improve employee well-being and productivity. Do certain employees have similar working styles? Consider seating likeminded people together.



Also, productivity features abound in most office suites. Some departments might love using Microsoft To Do or Planner to keep them accountable and successful. Others may prefer OneNote or blocking off time on their Outlook calendar. But more on that later.

First, let's discuss the number-one threat to productivity.



# Meetings

*The number-one productivity killer*





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## *Would you believe that 83 percent of meetings are unproductive?*

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According to [Harvard Business Review](#), an “overwhelming consensus (of) US-based professionals rated meetings as the (top) office productivity killer.” Unproductive meetings cost more than \$37 billion each year, yet most organizations don’t question the status quo.

Typically, executives average [23 hours per week](#) in meetings. Back in 1960, the average was 10 (or fewer) hours. That number has grown exponentially since 2020, with video meetings increasing by over [50 percent](#).

## **The fascinating psychology behind meetings**

If people hate meetings so much, why do they schedule and attend so many?

Leading behavioral scientists suggest fear of missing out (FOMO) as a common reason. No one likes to feel judged for skipping a meeting—even for legitimate reasons, like completing work on time. When meeting organizers worry about leaving someone out of the meeting, they’re also exhibiting FOMO.

Other causes of meeting overload might be ‘selfish urgency,’ as evidenced when meeting organizers focus only on their own business needs and perspectives, often at the cost of focused work.

Meeting amnesia can compound the problem, since most people forget what got covered in a previous meeting—so they schedule another meeting.



## **Changing the meeting mindset**

*While changing a culture around meetings might seem impossible, a few simple strategies can help.*

1

### **Get attendee input first**

Chat everyone about your agenda and proposed goals—and ask whether a meeting is necessary to accomplishing those goals.

2

### **Pick a better metric**

Your most productive team members attend fewer meetings—so, if you're trying to track engagement, use a different metric.

3

### **Count the opportunity costs**

Even a single meeting for managers can add up to millions of dollars a year, not to mention the mental costs.

4

### **Default to ending early**

If the meeting is still critical to organizational success, make an early stop time your default.

5

### **Share a brief synopsis**

Follow up important meetings with a concise list of action items for relevant attendees who couldn't be there.

6

### **Request feedback**

Listen to input from the team so you can identify (and cancel) meetings that are unproductive.



## 4

### **An empowering change management plan**

*What's the top strategy for increasing technology productivity? A change practitioner might say, "plan carefully."*



## The Seven R's of Change

A good change management and adoption plan incorporates several key elements, such as understanding what stakeholders need the technology to accomplish.

Enterprise Systems Journal calls these the '[Seven R's](#) of Change:

*What's the **reason** for the change?*

*Who **raised** (and authorized) the change?*

*What's the expected **return** on investment?*

*What **risks** are involved in this change?*

*What **resources** are necessary for the change?*

*Who's **responsible** for implementation?*

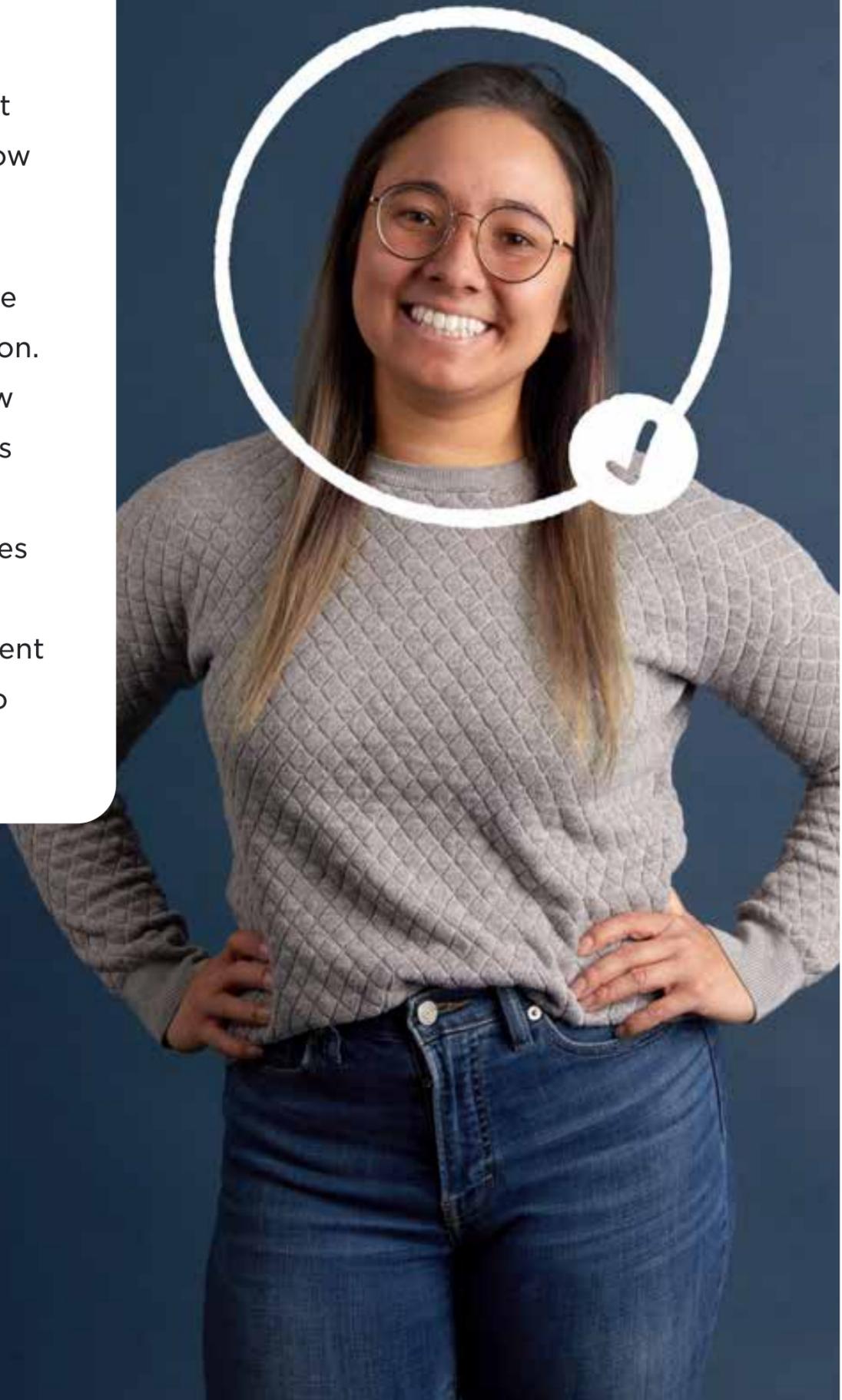
*What's its **relationship** to other initiatives?*



## Focus on end users

The Rs of change are important—but they're missing a critical element: how users will react.

Too often, organizations focus on the technical side of change and adoption. But smart change practitioners know they won't get anywhere if end users are resistant. Some users—the early adopters and other change advocates—will be right on it. But typically, unmotivated users make up 84 percent of the workforce. What will it take to get them excited?





## Vision, plan, and scale

The first step is to align change and adoption milestones with your organization's objectives. The initial charge could be adopting Microsoft Teams without disrupting business. But what's the real vision? It could be increasing adoption by 40 percent to reduce travel costs. Or maybe the overall goal is to cut 5 percent of costs across the company—and all other technology goals will lead to that.

Once the vision is established, move to the planning stages and begin scaling communication to users. These might include an executive sponsor video that outlines the initiative and gets the whole company excited about what happens next.

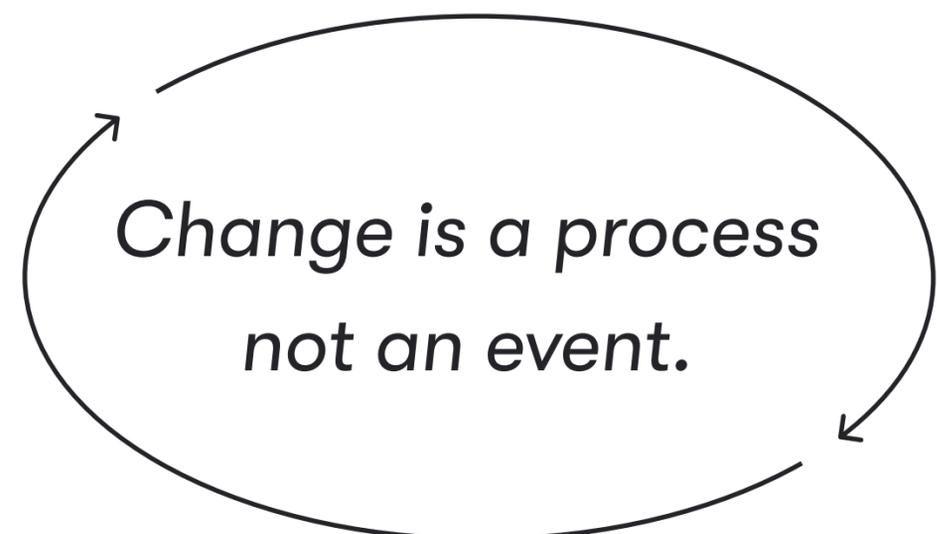
## Technology champions to the rescue

To help get everyone on board with the change, organize champions groups. Depending on the size of the organization, a team of [technology champions](#) can be invaluable in leading out on more productive ways of working. Champions demonstrate the most productive behaviors around technology and others adapt those same productivity behaviors.

## Establishing a culture of self-learning

Change is a process, not an event. It takes time to get users from multiple backgrounds to full productivity with their technology, especially as their technology evolves.

To create a culture of learning, ensure that learning content is available when users need it—not just when you're able to provide it. Engage users through challenges, polls, and assessments to improve retention and encourage productive habits. Use the [BrainStorm platform](#) to track their progress.





# 5

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## **Efficiency tips for 4 common Microsoft tools**



Many organizations leverage Microsoft 365 as a productivity suite. But chances are, most users aren't fully efficient with key Microsoft applications like Teams, Outlook, Excel, and PowerPoint.

Are users aware of these simple efficiency, focus, and productivity features? Here's a sampling.



## Excel efficiency

Excel is your data's best friend. And with shortcuts like AutoFill or Flash Fill, it can be your users' best friend, too. Get started with these efficiency tips:

**Simplify lists.** Use AutoFill to create a consecutive or repeating list of days, months, or numbers.

**Suggest entries.** Use Flash Fill to detect data patterns and suggest potential entries.

**Grouping.** Select a sheet and press CTRL to insert a formula in the same cell of multiple sheets.

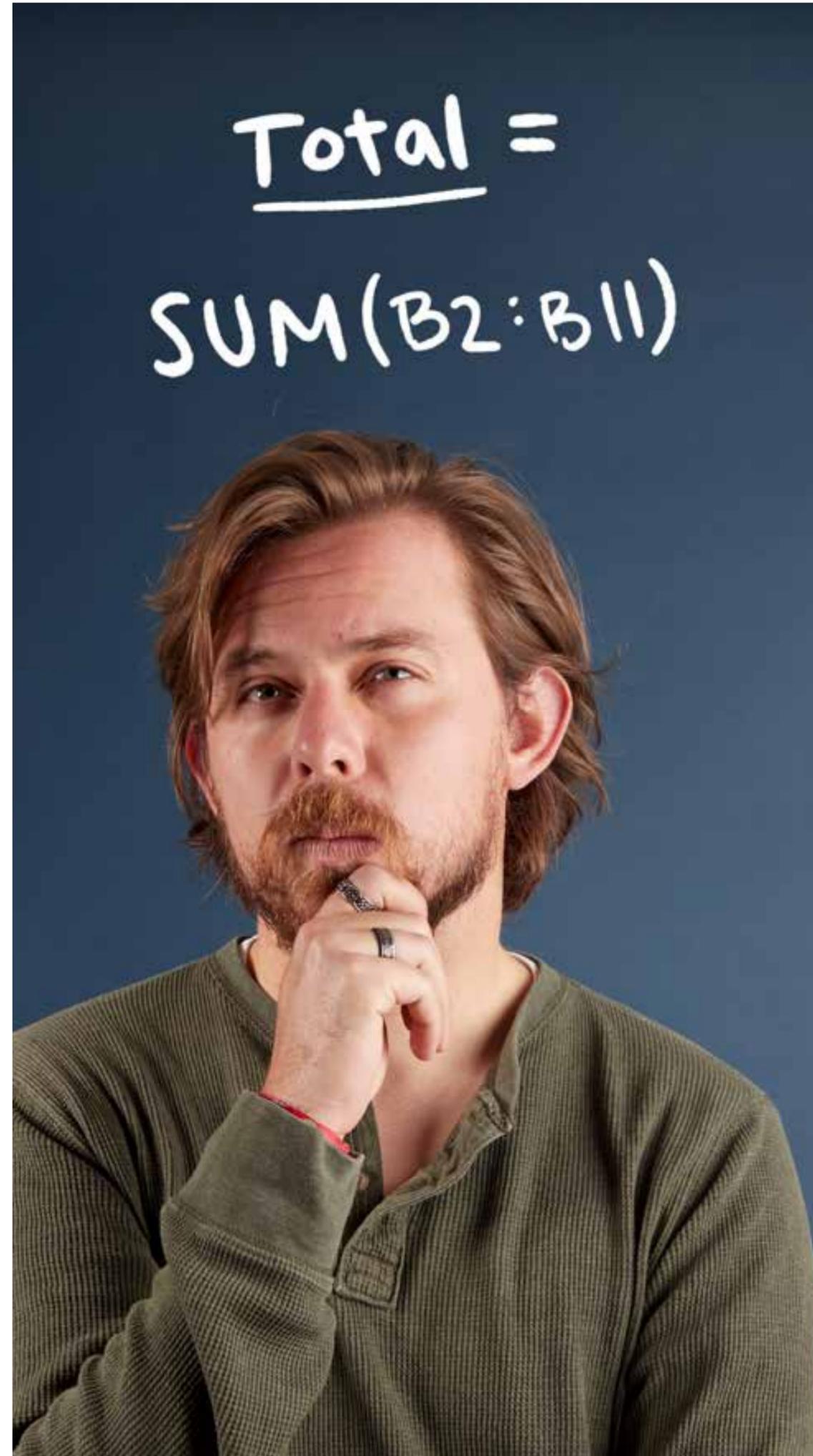
**Auditing.** In the Formula tab, audit cells that impact your formulas (and improve accuracy).

**Recommended charts.** Highlight data you want to visualize and see a recommended chart type.

**Pivot charts.** Use Quick Analysis to generate a pivot chart directly from a pivot table.

Some users are ready to move beyond the basics in Excel—but they may be confused about when to use Excel versus Power BI.

**To clarify 'which tool when,' direct users [here](#).**





## Outlook efficiency

There's a reason why Outlook integrates so easily with Calendar, To Do, and Planner. It's all about greater efficiency and flow. Use these simple suggestions to improve both:

**Conditional formatting.** Define inbox conditions by sender, category, or importance.

**Reduced conflicts.** Access the calendar pane to gray out non-working hours/days.

**Insight tab.** Use the Insight tab in Microsoft 365 to automatically schedule focus time.

**Default to calendar view.** To start Outlook in calendar view, visit the Advanced menu.

**View To Do.** For easier access to projects, add a To Do bar in Outlook (Desktop).

**Drag and drop.** Use Outlook online to drag and drop emails directly into tasks or meetings.

And of course, any meetings users schedule in Outlook will automatically be scheduled in Teams.

**Get more Outlook tips [here](#).**



## Teams efficiency

Toggling back and forth between apps can increase user downtime and interfere with efficiency. The Microsoft Teams hub reduces downtime for users and improves collaboration in simple ways:

**Search bar.** Enter relevant keywords to search for people, messages, and files.

**Relevant channels.** Follow channels you use often and hide the ones you don't.

**Pinning.** Pin often-used channels or chats so you never lose track of them.

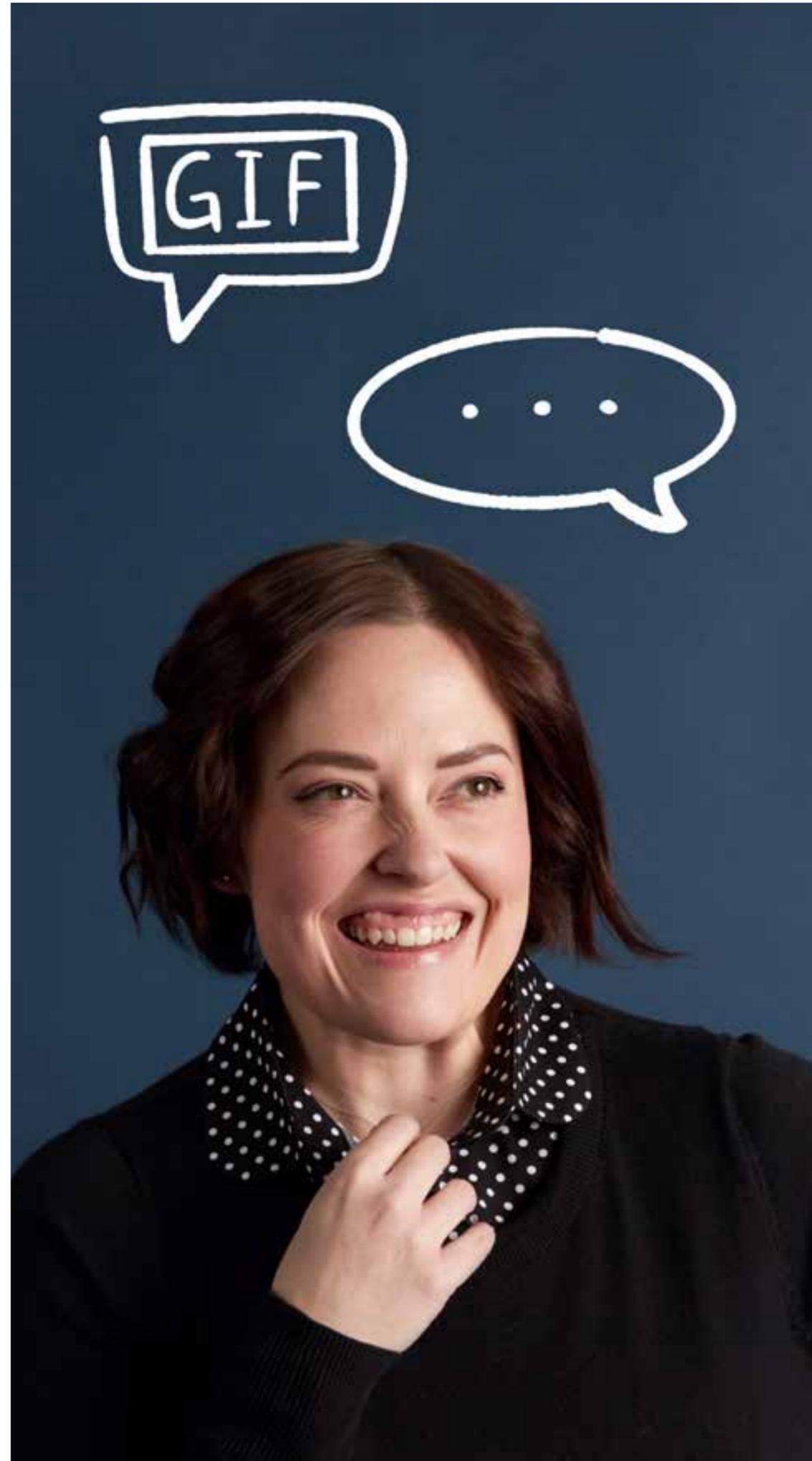
**Drag and drop.** Click any team to move it higher (or lower) in priority on your sidebar.

**Do not disturb.** Type /dnd in the search bar to adjust settings and prevent distractions.

**One stop.** Access other Microsoft and third-party applications without leaving Teams.

For additional time savings, schedule meetings inside a relevant Teams channel (e.g., like a campaigns channel) so all related chat and meeting notes are easy to find

**Get more Teams best practices [here](#).**





## PowerPoint efficiency

Creating a good slide presentation can test any user's skills, not to mention their time. These PowerPoint best practices can make the process easier:

**Branded themes.** If possible, work off a branded template with drag/drop content options.

**Duplicate slides.** To save time, add a slide from another deck to a new presentation.

**Open a new window.** To create two views of the same file, click New Window in View tab.

**Simple design.** Cluttered slides can distract an audience. Maintain white space and limit text.

**Backup slides.** Create a PDF version to ensure the deck looks the same on different devices.

**Use presenter view.** Create a natural flow with presenter notes and a timer/clock.

Because technical glitches can happen to anyone, it may pay to record everything before the meeting.

**Here's how users can [record a PowerPoint presentation to share later.](#)**



# 6

## **Getting help from BrainStorm**

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As technology continues to evolve, end users will face more challenges to productivity. Fortunately, BrainStorm knows a thing or two about helping overwhelmed, stressed, and unmotivated users.

Instead of making change a short-term goal, BrainStorm helps organizations make change a long-term priority with personalized learning experiences that match every user's skill level, job role, and unique needs.



## Motivating users to change happy

Nearly 50 percent of Fortune 100 companies have relied on the BrainStorm platform to enable meaningful change and software adoption, even companies that already have an LMS or free learning resources.

Why? It's simple. BrainStorm does more than encourage users to be more productive. BrainStorm simplifies user engagement, confidence, and productivity—with business outcomes like these:

**112%**

*Improved confidence  
in Teams*

**74%**

*Increased productivity  
with Teams*

**69%**

*Improved overall  
workflow*



# BrainStorm

Ready to transform your organization,  
activate change, and unlock productivity?

[See BrainStorm in action](#)