THE FUTURE OF COLLABORATION SOFTWARE - A QUALITATIVE STUDY

15 Thought Leaders Share their Predictions for Future Trends & Challenges
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INTRODUCTION

The cloud collaboration software industry is a rapidly developing sector with new key players breaking into the market each year looking to upset the status quo, and changing how we work and communicate. Furthermore, the uptake of collaboration technology by companies worldwide shows no sign of slowing down. Forecasts have shown that the global cloud collaboration software market will reach a value of up to $5.9 billion by the end of 2018.

This comes as no real surprise. Collaboration software enables companies to streamline their business processes, better manage projects of all sizes, and boost productivity across the board. The collaboration software market is hard to ignore as it produces business services used by companies of all sizes on a daily basis. As companies adopt new forms of collaboration software each year, the question we ask ourselves is: What comes next?

We asked industry experts from 15 global collaboration software companies for their thoughts on the matter. These thought leaders are known and respected as pioneers at companies that in recent years have developed some of the greatest collaboration tools.

The following study will give interested parties unique insight into what the world’s leading collaboration software companies think about the current state of online collaboration, and importantly what we can expect in the future.

Each thought leader gave their predictions for 2015 regarding the following:

1. What trends and developments will we see in 2015 in the online collaboration software market?
2. What benefits will this bring to businesses that adopt online collaboration software?
3. What challenges can businesses expect to encounter when employing such software?
4. How can businesses utilize online collaboration software to its greatest potential?
What trends and developments will we see in 2015 in the online collaboration software market?

Collaboration software isn’t useful unless it helps customers achieve their goals. So you see a move up from a feature-centric approach (how do we share files? how do we send group messages?) to a more purposeful collaboration (how do we map our company’s workflows? how do we plan our goals? how do we achieve them faster?).

What benefits will this bring to businesses that adopt online collaboration software?

This means that collaboration tools will be able to help people manage their existing work in one place. It means that teams can be more effective at working together and that information and updates will be available any time. In addition, management will be able to see if work is being completed and where the bottlenecks are. Overall, businesses will be able to move faster.

What challenges can businesses expect to encounter when employing such software?

The biggest hurdle in deploying any software is adoption. First of all, collaboration software needs to be user-friendly, flexible and integrated. Secondly, management
needs to set the expectation that the tool is the one place where work will happen. Lastly, training and support can't be underestimated.

How can businesses utilize online collaboration software to its greatest potential?

Take the time to select a scalable and flexible tool and get buy-in from key stakeholders (management and employees). Once the tool is selected, move the focus to training and adoption and take advantage of support and training provided by your vendor. Make sure everyone gets in the habit of using your new tool and it will provide significant returns in terms of increased productivity for your organization. When done right, the outcomes often exceed best expectations, and we see it working every day.
What trends and developments will we see in 2015 in the online collaboration software market?

I think we will see three main collaboration trends in 2015:

Visualization Tools to see the Big Picture across the company: It’s one thing to see a list of people who are working on a project -- their assignments, responsibilities, and roles. But, an interactive, visual map where you can see each employee, who they’re working with and what they’re working on offers an entirely new look at the way we work. We can now identify patterns in team collaboration, visualize hubs of activity, track team priorities, and identify top performers. Combining people, work, and content in a visual framework uncovers valuable insights about the patterns of work collaboration that we’ve never had before.

Mobile Will Enable more Outside-the-Company Collaborators: We see an average of 35% of collaborators on work getting done come from users outside the company. Customers, vendors, contractors, and partners are all key contributors to the work getting done. Mobile access to your online collaboration tools is a very efficient way to keep them enrolled.

Consumption-based Pricing: CIOs and CFOs as well as line of business owners can now ‘see’ who’s using which tools and how often inside their
companies. That visibility will put huge downward pressure on the traditional seat-based pricing, and elevate consumption-based pricing. Why pay rack rate for something 90% of the employees rarely access if ever.

**What benefits will this bring to businesses that adopt online collaboration software?**

Collaboration tools that easily conform to any team’s work processes and also enable easy enrollment of all needed participants will dramatically increase productivity. These tools can provide a better big picture view of the state of all initiatives. And, they enable cross-initiative coordination resulting in a more synchronized company.

**What challenges can businesses expect to encounter when employing such software?**

Businesses should avoid “an app for that” approach to every individual collaboration need. Each group can easily find a purpose-built app that perfectly suits their individual needs. But, the irony is that this “app for that” way of thinking will actually make companies less productive. Few teams operate in their own silo. Most need to collaborate with other departments and external vendors. Each new tool is a new island of software learn and new information to be isolated from other systems.

The key is to find one shared tool that allows you to coordinate anything. And, you can build upon that tool with integration to other, selected apps that are critical to your or other’s work. But, your homebase doesn’t change. Your work stays in the same place.

**How can businesses utilize online collaboration software to its greatest potential?**

The key to best utilize online collaboration software is intrinsic in the path to adoption. Bottoms-up adoption will significantly out-perform top-down deployments almost every time. Bottoms-up means tools that can be deployed by each team on their own, largely without I.T. support and without consultants running a lengthy process deployment and training project to get there.

Teams that can deploy tools on their own are also teams that can quickly flex those tools to match their ever changing responsibilities and priorities. And, because Smartsheet does this so well, I have to mention the powerful impact of lightly stitching processes together between these morphing work management tools. It creates a very nimble organization that is still very aligned.
What trends and developments will we see in 2015 in the online collaboration software market?

More companies will realize they need tools and processes to facilitate collaboration. Right now, lots of teams within companies are using tools on an ad hoc basis, but we see that companies want teams across different departments using the same tools. So there will be more companies trying to find a tool or two that their companies can use.

As remote work gets more prevalent, companies will be adopting these tools on a faster basis to facilitate remote team collaboration. This will lead to more integrations between tools.

Regarding mobile, companies will build and improve upon mobile tools as project management solutions move beyond web interfaces to help people stay informed on the go.

What benefits will this bring to businesses that adopt online collaboration software?

More integration between tools means greater flexibility for teams to pick tools and have an understanding that they will work together. For example, time tracking software
will be integrated into project management software. Chat software will integrate into project management software, etc.

**What challenges can businesses expect to encounter when employing such software?**

Getting everyone on board is a challenge - especially standardizing processes across different teams. There is also a challenge in setting expectations for how the software is used. For example, developers and designers may not be keen to use chat tools that interfere with the concentration needed to do their jobs.

**How can businesses utilize online collaboration software to its greatest potential?**

Be very clear in expectations, and provide education to employees who have not worked with similar tools in the past. Make sure to over communicate the processes for using tools, and which tools are used for each type of situation. Decide and commit to tools so employees know they have to go on board for the long haul, it's not just a temporary change.
Molly is Quip's COO. She manages sales, marketing, partnerships, and internal operations. She previously spent over four years at Facebook where she helped develop and lead Facebook's long-term mobile strategy, and create the company's “hacker brand”.

What trends and developments will we see in 2015 in the online collaboration software market?

Since the iPhone was introduced in 2007, phones and tablets have transformed the way we interact with technology and each other. To call this shift disruptive is understating its impact on our industry and the world. We will look back in 10 years, and every piece of software we use will have changed dramatically. The next generation of companies will be defined by embracing mobile. That doesn't mean just making existing products work on touchscreen devices — it means embracing what makes these devices truly different. They're always connected to the internet. They can notify people when things change. They're social. Within the course of a day, people use smartphones, tablets, and personal computers, often within minutes of each other, and the experience should be seamless.

What benefits will this bring to businesses that adopt online collaboration software?

The opportunity is to build a workplace where people enjoy the tools they use to get work done. We started Quip because we were dismayed by the state of 'enterprise'
software. The software we use outside of work — like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter — is simple, elegant, and convenient, and, most importantly, integrated with our phones, so we can communicate whether or not we are near a computer. The software we are forced to use at work is just the opposite.

Most of the software we use at work — whether to submit an expense report or share a document — is tethered to the PC on our desk, a relic of an era when the state of the art was a Nokia flip phone. The user interfaces are frequently barely functional and almost completely devoid of emotion. More often than not, it feels as if you are interacting with a database rather than the other human beings on your team.

Quip, along with a number of other promising young startups, is trying to reverse this trend. People's expectations for software have fundamentally changed in the age of devices like the iPhone. If the software you use at work doesn't work well, you'll just download a different app from the App Store and use something else. For the first time, a great product matters a lot more than a great sales team. In this age of mobile apps, enterprise software will be driven by the experiences of the great products we all love as much as they will be driven by IT requirements.

What challenges can businesses expect to encounter when employing such software?

Companies like Quip were born in the era of smartphones and tablets, and our products have completely different values. We're a productivity suite, and yet we don't have footnotes or margins, but we do have push notifications so you know when people open the document you shared. Quip didn't even support printing until six months after our launch, but we've always supported read receipts and presence so you can see who's online and who's seen your changes in real-time. The challenge and opportunity of embracing this new world is that it will require a shift to prioritize a different set of features that make it faster and easier to work together, but leave some features that have been with us for 30 years in the dust.

How can businesses utilize online collaboration software to its greatest potential?

The most overused collaboration tool in the world is email. People don't write and send memos anymore, they just send emails. Trying to get a press release approved usually requires a 20-email chain. But there is a switching cost to try to move any process to a new tool — people default to what they know. The opportunity is to find tools that make any process so much more efficient that the switching cost is worth it. Tools like Quip and Slack can help your email inbox go on a diet by creating spaces to work together efficiently. You don't have to worry about having an old copy of an attachment, or
emailing around an updated file— these products automatically keep everyone in sync, regardless of where they are or what device they are using.
What trends and developments will we see in 2015 in the online collaboration software market?

At Mikogo, we see three major trends shaping the online collaboration software market in 2015: Usability, mobile, and vertical solutions. **Usability** - Times are over in which users were satisfied with ‘just’ features. While in the past the most complete feature set had the best chances to win customers, the combination of the right features and outstanding usability is increasingly becoming the winning formula. There is a trend towards putting the focus back on usability. This will lead software vendors to overhaul their usability concepts in general and rework their user interfaces and user flows in particular.

**Mobile** - Today’s workforce is more and more on the go and they expect their software vendor to support them in this shift. Software vendors have to accommodate for this by offering easy-to-use mobile apps for both smartphones and tablets. They may even rethink their entire models to (re-)make them mobile first.

**Vertical Solutions** - Besides generic collaboration software products we see a trend towards vertical solutions putting the emphasis on specific use cases and their particular processes and user flows. In some cases, this will lead to a reduced number of features on the one hand but better product-market-fit on the other hand.
What benefits will this bring to businesses that adopt online collaboration software?

Improved usability will lead to companies not only purchasing online collaboration software but an increased number of co-workers actually using the software and hence achieving the benefit of a higher productivity. Intuitive user interfaces and user flows will make activation and continuous use as easy as possible. Mobile will help companies to support their co-workers while on the go ensuring that those not in the office work efficiently with those in the office. Vertical solutions will enable businesses to choose the best collaboration software for their use case, which in turn will make their co-workers more efficient at what they do.

What challenges can businesses expect to encounter when employing such software?

One of the major challenges businesses face when employing online collaboration software is change management. If co-workers are not involved early on in the process, they may be reluctant to adopt the new software. Another challenge businesses face in this context is to tightly integrate online collaboration software in their daily communication and collaboration processes. Very often businesses purchase online collaboration software, however, they miss to define and implement clear processes as to when and for what purpose to use it. This in turn leads to co-workers not using or not adequately using the software.

How can businesses utilize online collaboration software to its greatest potential?

Firstly, businesses should find the best online collaboration software for their specific use case or use cases even if this means employing multiple products. Compromise is not a good choice in this context. Secondly, businesses should communicate clearly the benefits of such software to their co-workers to get their buy-in. This will help facilitate a broad adoption and usage. Thirdly, businesses should define and implement clear processes as to when and for which purposes to use the online collaboration software. Last but not least, businesses should invest in training their co-workers as to how to collaborate online and to make them aware of the differences between online collaboration on the one hand and face-to-face collaboration on the other hand.
What trends and developments will we see in 2015 in the online collaboration software market?

Online collaboration software will continue to take outdated and manual processes and fully automate them. Technology adoption will be catalyzed by partnerships across vendors and the bundling of services, making new technology easier to implement and scale. Instead of relying on several different vendors to create a digital transformation within organizations, companies will seek out solutions paths that support integrated technologies. A great example of this is the Salesforce partner ecosystem - you can find just about any solution to integrate with Salesforce (DocuSign, Apttus, InsideSales.com, etc.) to achieve your business needs.

Decision makers and technology implementers want to adopt technology that's not only secure and reliable, but more importantly that their end users actually like to use. That means collaboration software has to be easy to use and integrate with current systems/processes.

What benefits will this bring to businesses that adopt online collaboration software?

The need to connect people and ideas across countries and across platforms is even more crucial as teleworkers, contractors and mobile workforces become more
prevailing. Enabling your workforce with online collaboration software will benefit not only internal success, but customer success. These successes include:

a) Faster communication: With a unified approach, communication is disseminated faster through all channels.

b) Scalable processes: When everyone in an organization has adopted the same processes for collaboration, working across departments and externally becomes seamless.

c) Administrative control: Secure and reliable platforms that are evaluated for global scale will increase adoption and trust.

What challenges can businesses expect to encounter when employing such software?

Administrative control will be top of mind this year. Lots of options and easy-to-use tools enable employees to seek out what works for them and adopt their own best practices instead of relying on a unified technology plan. When employees choose what works for them instead of considering the bigger picture, collaboration software is silo-ed by business department. When it comes time to scale ideas and collaborate across departments, the processes and systems break. Without a concrete, thoughtful model for successful interaction across departments and externally, businesses will struggle to grow their workforce and customer footprint globally.

How can businesses utilize online collaboration software to its greatest potential?

In order to capitalize on the potential of online collaboration software, businesses need to ensure trust across the organization and to their customers. With a unified technology plan and integrated systems that employees can adopt throughout the organization, collaboration will not seem like a burden, but rather mission-critical and value add. Making sure that trust extends from the people to the business processes and technologies they rely on will be critical in this new year. Our go-to collaboration tools include: Office 365, Salesforce, and DocuSign.
What trends and developments will we see in 2015 in the online collaboration software market?

People's attention span and their willingness to spend time on getting to know a tool are going toward zero. This means that tools will have to find ways of becoming even more intuitive and reducing the learning curve further. Because this is quite hard with complex tools that offer a huge number of features, tools will become more and more focused on doing one thing and one thing well, while at the same time looking to improve their interoperability and adding more integrations to ensure a smooth workflow between individual apps.

What benefits will this bring to businesses that adopt online collaboration software?

Businesses will save a great deal of money on training their staff to use the various tools they work with. Adding a new tool to their workflow will become so simple that there is no need to involve a special IT department, because anyone from CEO to office manager can easily do it with a few clicks.

What challenges can businesses expect to encounter when employing such software?

Challenges may arise when company policy dictates that data has to be stored on internal servers, because they fear that the security of cloud storage is still an issue.
How can businesses utilize online collaboration software to its greatest potential?

Businesses often limit their online software's potential by keeping it exclusively inside their core team, when they could be utilizing it to collaborate with a number of other parties, such as external contractors, clients, investors or simply other departments from within their company. They also often overlook the many integration options most online tools offer, which could save time and improve their workflow drastically.
What trends and developments will we see in 2015 in the online collaboration software market?

Collaboration software vendors will continue to support lightweight processes and ad hoc projects through task and project management functionalities.

Real-time collaboration such as coediting, instant messaging, and video calls will integrate deeper into collaboration suites.

I also think the continuation of collaboration across devices and locations will allow workers to be productive in any situation.

Another important trend as social business matures in enterprises is the integration of business events that come from other business apps into collaboration software. Imagine a CRM app that would fire an event in the activity stream when a deal is closed, so that your finance team is notified that it can proceed to invoice and the product marketing team can reach out to the customer to prepare a case study.

What benefits will this bring to businesses that adopt online collaboration software?

The boundaries between work and home are blurring, so collaboration software must allow people to work seamlessly across devices and locations. For example, I could
submit a draft report from my desk at work, leave for home and receive notifications of my colleague's comments on my phone while I'm commuting, and then do the final edits in the evening on my personal computer back at home.

The benefit for workers is more flexibility--i.e., you don't have to stay late to finish a job and miss the last train. And obviously, employers will benefit from having happier and more productive staff.

Other benefits that social collaboration software can bring are employee/crowd-sourced innovation, better employee and customer loyalty, and smarter and faster decision-making.

**What challenges can businesses expect to encounter when employing such software?**

Integration with business apps and legacy in-house systems is still necessary to provide a global integrated work experience. However, online solutions can run into challenges in doing this due to security and privacy concerns about enterprise data, knowledge, and trade secrets.

Information overwhelm is another real concern. While collaboration software provides many ways to capture and generate micro-signals, it may also send tons of information to end users, which can lead to interruptions and confusion about priorities. Software vendors usually provide powerful search and filtering mechanisms, but they need to be smarter about presenting the right information at the right time, to avoid distracting noise.

**How can businesses utilize online collaboration software to its greatest potential?**

Keep an open culture. Refrain from implementing restrictions in the software. The more data they can access and the more they can do, the more the employees will feel empowered and committed to the company's success.

Collaboration tools can be powerful, but they can also confuse less tech-savvy users with their advanced functions: there can be multiple ways to do things. So companies need to start by defining a set of short, clear business use cases for these collaboration tools and implementing them properly. And of course these use cases must be business-oriented. They can add more use cases gradually, as the maturity improves.

While many tools focus on a conversational style of collaboration, this can easily be misused and misunderstood as a time-waster, when in fact the tools should help businesses to achieve better results. So, defining and publishing business KPIs for the use cases could help companies understand the real value the tool can deliver.
What trends and developments will we see in 2015 in the online collaboration software market?

Cloud storage has become commoditized; in this competitive space all the major players are rapidly dropping prices in order to outbid one another for customer acquisition. We can assert that cloud storage vendors must now create more differentiated value by moving beyond file storing/sharing and evolving into true collaboration platforms. We’re seeing a lot of acquisitions and announcements in the space that confirm this trend. We see cloud collaboration technology evolving to include more context in addition to content. People want to share ideas, conversations and content in real time, not just files or instant messages; being able to maintain that connection between file content and the discussion around it is something that is missing from today’s main collaboration tools such as file store/share and email.

What benefits will this bring to businesses that adopt online collaboration software?

To the swiftest goes the race. True collaboration improves a business’ competitiveness by enabling better communication and work-flow between employees, partners,
vendors and customers. It increases business process efficiency, individual and team productivity and fosters innovation.

**What challenges can businesses expect to encounter when employing such software?**

Once a collaborative software tool has been rolled out and adopted by a team, it's smooth sailing. The challenge is at the front-end—getting people to adapt new habits, using a new technology that will save time and make for clearer communication.

**How can businesses utilize online collaboration software to its greatest potential?**

At Samepage, our parent company has more than 60,000 business customers. We've been listening to customers’ collaboration needs and built Samepage from the ground up to meet them. Samepage brings together content from cloud solutions such as Office 365, Google Apps, Box, Dropbox and YouTube on one easy-to-create page that enables people to have an ongoing conversation around that content. No more hunting for old emails for attachments or conversations. No more searching through cloud file folders for the right file. From conception, we built Samepage as a contextual engagement platform—to unite the content and conversation in a "post-file" (cloud applications based) world.
What trends and developments will we see in 2015 in the online collaboration software market?

Online collaboration software and tools are a natural extension of the communication toolset as technology progresses deeper and deeper into the way we work. Some of the first rudimentary collaboration tools provided basic functions of communicating, or possibly one-way sharing. The collaboration tools of today provide a more robust feature set, enabling deeper levels of ongoing communication and knowledge sharing.

The trends for 2015 will likely focus on the usability and convenience, making the tools not just easier to use, but actually advantageous to use over traditional mediums such as email. Additionally, the collaboration tools of tomorrow will be more convenient, as they’ll tie seamlessly into our mobile devices and integrate into common platforms we’re already using for other reasons. As a necessary and ubiquitous function in both work and personal life, collaboration’s purpose is to facilitate getting work done. Trends in 2015 will be geared towards making the work feel more like play through convenience and usability.

What benefits will this bring to businesses that adopt online collaboration software?

The dependency a business has on collaboration tools depends on the industry and product or service they sell. However, regardless of the nuances across industries and
companies, it's a fair assumption that every business communicates and collaborates to some degree. The baseline benefits of adopting a collaborative tool or software is that a task is completed, or knowledge is transferred faster, better, or cheaper. This implies reduced operating costs, saved time, and increased productivity and quality. Additional benefits of utilizing collaboration tools are some of the less visible aspects, which could be viewed as equal or even of greater importance – compliance and the user experience. Whether it's a B2B or B2C business, there is a relationship with a customer, and likely several other entities (e.g. suppliers, partners, distributors, etc.). The quality, trust, and depth of the relationship is constantly redefined by the level and quality of the interaction as both sides are conducting their business. Collaboration tools are intended to improve the experience as both sides share information, documents, knowledge, etc. By providing a great tool that improves the interaction, the business has just improved the overall relationship. In addition to improving the user experience during the interaction, the business providing the tool (depending on the tool) is likely offering the other party the security and peace of mind knowing the communication is secure and compliant. Email is inherently not secure, whereas enterprise-grade collaboration tools are behind authenticated walls and SSL.

**What challenges can businesses expect to encounter when employing such software?**

As with any technology, there should be a keen understanding of the requirements, tradeoffs, and limitations of what the software or tool does and does not do. The deployment of new technology is not always a smooth endeavor. If it's a companywide initiative, there will be those who choose not to adopt the new technology, opting instead to stay with the status quo. There is also the risk that the other, collaborating party e.g. customer, client, business, will not adopt the technology. Whether it's aversion to another username and password, or the lack of technical aptitude to navigate a new interface, when one side of the collaboration breaks down, collaboration doesn't happen.

**How can businesses utilize online collaboration software to its greatest potential?**

Purchasing or subscribing to an online collaboration tool or software is exciting, especially if the business previously didn't use any. However, the extent of the value realized from the new software or service depends on several key factors:

1. The deployment across the business, as well as to the collaborating parties, needs to be well thought through, planned, executed, and monitored. The implementation is not a one-time project, but rather an ongoing process to
reiterate the importance of using the tool, understanding its value, and the productivity and cost saving benefits reaped from a good tool.

II. Proper use and training should be conducted internally, and for the collaborating parties. With varying degrees of technical ability across the tool's users, live training, documentation, step by step guides, and videos will also solidify the message and key functions of the tool.

III. Increase usage of the tool through ongoing communication and encourage through gifts or gamification. Change in a business process is hard, and there will inevitably be individuals who attempt to avoid the new technology or process. By creating consistent companywide messaging, including visibility and recognition to those using the new technology, the business will maximize the collaborative tool's potential.
What trends and developments will we see in 2015 in the online collaboration software market?

We see the convergence of several adjacent areas of enterprise technology that we believe is going to radically change the shape of the market and significantly disrupt existing players. Enterprise file sharing and synchronization, team collaboration, social software in the workplace, enterprise content management are increasingly overlapping and converging. The race is on for vendors that have traditionally operated in one of those spaces to crossover into the adjacent spaces and provide more holistic offerings to clients that are struggling to deal with multiple point solutions and a mix of legacy on-premise and newer cloud-based solutions.

What benefits will this bring to businesses that adopt online collaboration software?

There is a fundamental shift taking place in the way that organisations share information and collaborate. With the explosion of mobile devices in both the consumer and enterprise worlds, users expect to be able to access their information and stay connected wherever they are and from whatever device they are using. In our personal lives we are increasingly using tools which make our lives easier by keeping us organised and able to interact with people we know much more effectively; enabling the
instantaneous exchange of information and the ability to connect with anyone in real-time. We believe these benefits should be available in our work lives and we are bringing these concepts and experiences to the enterprise to help people get their work done.

What challenges can businesses expect to encounter when employing such software?

The biggest challenge of moving to cloud collaboration software will be for information security professionals, who are responsible for ensuring that the data that is stored in the cloud stays there and stays secure. A number of high profile security and privacy breaches in recent months (such as Apple’s iCloud leaks and Microsoft’s subpoena) only serve to highlight the importance of having the ability to control what data goes into the cloud and where it goes. Data sovereignty is an issue that is raising its head of late, and is of particular importance to non-US companies who want to ensure their data stays out of the jurisdiction of the US government. Some enterprise cloud software providers offer data centres in different jurisdictions and give their customers the option of choosing which country their data is hosted in. Some also offer hybrid solutions, which allow customers to split their data over several data centres in different jurisdictions and choose exactly which data is hosted where.

How can businesses utilize online collaboration software to its greatest potential?

The move to the cloud is inevitable for enterprises. The demand for technology that enables people to work on the go and from their mobile devices has driven this move in recent years, as the enterprise cloud allows for remote workers to access documents and collaborate with colleagues or clients on the go in a secure environment. It is also increasingly valuable for businesses that have multiple office locations in different countries, allowing for easy communication, collaboration and knowledge sharing between teams. There are so many different ways to use collaboration software that it really depends on what the business requires; whether that’s project management, social networking, file sharing or external collaboration, all businesses can find use for it. However, the way to use it to its maximum potential is to ensure that everyone participates. Get everyone working within the system and the greatest benefits will be reaped.
What trends and developments will we see in 2015 in the online collaboration software market?

Nobody will put up with bad integrations anymore, Apps like Slack.com are showing us that the new generation of collaboration apps are literally just ways of bringing not only people but applications together to collaborate and this will make us all more powerful.

What benefits will this bring to businesses that adopt online collaboration software?

You won't just be connecting people but the apps underneath those people which will have a scaling effect per employee as well as at the project level.

What challenges can businesses expect to encounter when employing such software?

You'll have stacking issues, the easier it is to combine software together the better the collaboration software will be. Make sure you look at software that at its core is an API.
How can businesses utilize online collaboration software to its greatest potential?

Whether you're working remotely or in person, act like a remote company. Make sure everything you do is documented and performed through your collaboration software, only by measuring can you manage more effectively.
What trends and developments will we see in 2015 in the online collaboration software market?

1. Seeing that more and more people prefer using portable devices such as mobiles, tablets, etc. these days, it is quite predictable that mobile UI will take the front seat and desktops might have to take a back seat.
2. The tired old email trend will be superseded by better internal collaboration tools, which would be a great relief.
3. File sharing will be seen as a major feature in the collaboration tools. These tools will act as a centralized access point for disparate file sharing tools like Dropbox, Google Drive, etc. Even at ProofHub, we’re coming soon with more third party integrations amidst Google Drive and Dropbox integration provided already.
4. Reporting options in online collaboration software will enable organizations to analyze how their projects are faring.

What benefits will this bring to businesses that adopt online collaboration software?

- Collaboration and participation within a team becomes easy, which encourages teamwork.
- It helps users evolve from the traditional trend of emailing.
- Team members can communicate from the remote locations and even on the go.
- Organizing data and information becomes easy through file uploading and sharing.
- Businesses can better schedule their tasks and can ensure timely delivery of projects.
- Lesser security concerns due to secure data in online collaboration software. At ProofHub, we keep customer data safe and secure through SSL encryption.
- Less paperwork as files and documents can be shared by all members of the team in a company.
- New employees can quickly catch up with the ongoing workflow through relevant discussions, chats, files, etc. already stored in the software.

What challenges can businesses expect to encounter when employing such software?

Team members, clients and other stakeholders might resist the change as they are pretty happy working in the old way. So technical guidance is required at the initial stages.

Downtime (i.e. when software undergoes maintenance and malware attacks) can also affect businesses using it in a big way. So there should be some appropriate offline version.

Yet another major factor is cost. Since it seems that there is no direct revenue generated with the use of a collaboration software, it is therefore important to portray the true picture of its efficacy so that businesses can understand its potential.

Privacy of data could be another major concern for businesses. Some online collaboration software do not have adequate privacy options which means data on the system is visible to all the clients and stakeholders, even if a business does not wish to do so.

Poor customer support by the service provider can frustrate a business. So providers have to improve their response time and provide their users with timely, effective advice and solutions.

How can businesses utilize online collaboration software to its greatest potential?

To bring a project to successful completion, businesses need to best utilize the features of collaboration software right from the beginning itself. During the initial phase of a project i.e. planning, the primary need is to discuss and create an estimate of how things
will flow. At this point, collaboration software with features like discussions and time estimation would be good to kick-start a project.

While organizing things, it is important to ensure that time is spent on doing tasks rather than managing them. Timesheets can help record time spent on various tasks and create invoices for client billing.

Features like online reports with graphs can help track project progress and ensure that goals are achieved on time. The visual mode helps in pinpointing where exactly resources are being under-utilized and identifying the areas for improvement.
What trends and developments will we see in 2015 in the online collaboration software market?

1) Lean will continue to gain popularity
2) Mobile collaboration drives Enterprise deployment
3) Visualization will dominate the user experience development
4) Online collaboration software will continue to merge into larger solutions
5) Cyber-security will be a must-have

What benefits will this bring to businesses that adopt online collaboration software?

Lean will continue to gain popularity in organizations driven by an increased pace of change. 2015’s winners will work faster through transparent and accessible information by capitalizing on online collaboration throughout the Enterprise. Today, mobile exceeds PC internet usage. That trend will continue to grow, allowing an operational flexibility with higher productivity as a result.

Changes make companies more innovative and new faster ways of managing information will emerge. Visualization of the user experience allows people to use the brain more efficient and the transformation of the marketplace will continue in that
direction. Online collaboration platforms built on ease-of-use are very deployment-friendly. As a consequence of that these platforms are great enabler of other more complex solutions within an organization.

**What challenges can businesses expect to encounter when employing such software?**

The main challenge is often related to the initial usage period. It's crucial that stakeholders, decision makers and especially the end-users experience an instant value realization. Easy-of-use is the key.

Online collaboration software further becomes a part of the regular Enterprise application portfolio which arise challenges related to the security. In conjunction to an increasing amount of cyber-attacks, security will get a higher priority.

**How can businesses utilize online collaboration software to its greatest potential?**

The most important aspect of successful utilization is to enable the online collaboration software in the whole Enterprise and gather all information and communication in one place. The time savings are vast for any organization.
What trends and developments will we see in 2015 in the online collaboration software market?

This year we will see more and more collaborative software integrate with other tools. For example, task management tools integrate with time tracking, invoicing, chat and expense tracking tools. Over the years I am seeing more and more Brightpod customers want their tool of choice to be feature rich - even if they don't use all the features from day one. With Brightpod, we are focused on adding new features as well as integrating with the best apps out there. In addition, everything is going mobile. People want to collaborate from their phones - video messages, chat, messages, task management etc.

What benefits will this bring to businesses that adopt online collaboration software?

The biggest benefit will be to use one tool as opposed to many. Our customers use a bunch of tools and would rather just pay for one tool. I think the initial euphoria of using apps is over and people are slowly consolidating what they have. Think about it - in a large team it is easier to onboard 1-2 tools than 5 tools.
What challenges can businesses expect to encounter when employing such software?

The biggest challenge for collaborative tools has always been on-boarding since you have more than one person using the tool. Plus, the more people use the tool the more valuable it gets. However, not every team member is enthusiastic about checking off their tasks online.

How can businesses utilize online collaboration software to its greatest potential?

I would ask - how can collaboration software vendors help businesses utilize software better? By making their software simple yet feature-rich. In the end, this boils down to design. Your app needs to have most of the things people want and also be ridiculously easy to use. Now, that's a big challenge!
Trends and Developments

- We are witnessing a shift away from feature-centric towards tools which are more intuitive, convenient, and purposeful. Tools must offer outstanding usability and must satisfy business goals. Rather than focusing on having the most complete feature set there will be greater focus on specific use cases and user flows.
- Collaboration software will not be limited to select departments, but rather different departments (and businesses) will be collaborating via the same tools.
- Further integration and overlapping of tools is expected. Collaboration software must not only integrate between different individual apps and collaboration suites, but also integrate with business processes. This will result in more “holistic” collaboration suites.
- The next generation of tools will be defined by mobile, and software vendors must provide intuitive, convenient mobile apps and services. Mobile collaboration keeps anyone on the go informed and is facilitating collaboration outside the company e.g. with clients.

Benefits to Businesses:

- Different teams, departments, companies, etc. will find it easier and more effective to collaborate together as a result of tools which serve specific uses and are more business-oriented.
- Management and workers will receive a greater overview of the state of their work, making companies more synchronized and efficient.
- A greater choice in collaboration apps with even greater integration possibilities. Greater flexibility in choice as well as companies selecting tools for their specific needs (i.e. vertical solutions) will mean workers enjoying their tools and getting the work done.
- Software that is more intuitive, convenient and purposeful will elicit more widespread use across departments and between companies, therefore increasing productivity.
• True collaboration will not only improve your business’ competitiveness, reduce operating costs, save time and increase productivity and efficiency, it will also bring similar benefits to your customers.

• Workers will no longer be limited by location and devices. Collaboration software will encourage the instantaneous exchange of information and allow people to work seamlessly across devices and locations.

Challenges:

• The challenge is getting workers to adopt new habits and technology. Businesses must work to better communicate the benefits, requirements, limitations, and different feature set of their new collaboration software, and standardize the processes across teams e.g. for when and what purpose to use it.

• Involve the workers early on and encourage the integration of collaboration software with their daily communication processes.

• Avoid the “app for that” trap as it will result in companies actually being less productive. Select tools which encourage collaboration across departments and external parties and which truly meet the needs of your use case.

• Employing cloud collaboration services can bring with it security and privacy concerns about data storage. Some cloud software providers offer options to choose where data is stored.

How best to utilize collaboration software:

• Training and support in collaboration software cannot be underestimated. Make the most of the assistance offered by collaboration software vendors to ensure your team is up to speed and gets the most from your software investment. Deployment of the software needs to be planned, executed and monitored, possibly with the help of the vendor.

• Tools which are deployed by the end-users themselves (i.e. workers and not IT departments) are likely to be better utilized with greater enthusiasm.

• Find the best collaboration software for your specific use case which are purposeful and business-oriented. However do not necessarily limit yourself to using the tool with just one team or department. Greater participation will bring the greatest benefits.

• Encourage workers to get on board by clarifying expectations and showing commitment to the tools. Ensure trust with clear processes to communicate the value of the new software workers.
## COMPANY SUMMARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| **Wrike** | Wrike is a leading cloud-based collaboration tool for teams of any size. Thousands of customers use Wrike to collaborate, manage tasks, plan projects and to make teams more efficient.  
[https://www.wrike.com/](https://www.wrike.com/) |
| **Smartsheet** | Smartsheet is the one tool for managing all of your work, enabling organizations of any size to coordinate anything using a simple, familiar interface. The award-winning tool is trusted by more than 50,000 businesses and millions of users in over 160 countries.  
| **Trello** | Trello is the easiest way to organize anything with anyone. People all over the world use Trello to collaborate on projects ranging from building software to planning weddings.  
[https://trello.com/](https://trello.com/) |
| **Quip** | Quip is a beautiful mobile productivity suite that enables you to collaborate on any device. Quip combines chat, documents, spreadsheets, checklists, and more in a simple and elegant interface that makes collaboration easy. With Quip, you work with people, not files.  
[https://quip.com/](https://quip.com/) |
Mikogo provides 3,000 corporate customers and over 1 million users with a powerful means to meet, present, and collaborate together online. Any screen content can be shared in real-time over the Web via Mikogo.

https://www.mikogo.com/

DocuSign®, The Global Standard for Digital Transaction Management™, accelerates transactions for dramatic ROI, improved security and compliance, and better customer experiences with the easiest, fastest, most secure network for sending, signing, tracking, and storing documents. DocuSign helps companies securely collect information and payments, automate workflows, and sign anything, anywhere, anytime.

http://www.docusign.com/

MindMeister is the market-leading online mind mapping and collaboration solution. Unlike traditional mind mapping tools, MindMeister allows for real-time brainstorming sessions between an unlimited number of users and requires only a standard web browser.

http://www.mindmeister.com/

eXo helps companies of all sizes, locations and activities to transform their business through social collaboration. eXo Platform is an open-source social-collaboration software designed for enterprises. It is full featured, based on standards, extensible and has an amazing design.

http://www.exoplatform.com/
Samepage is a collaboration platform that is changing the way people share ideas and content. Anyone can create a free online page in minutes and collaborate with friends, family or co-workers to organize anything from business operations to epic vacations to school activities. For more information and to create a personalized Samepage page, visit:

https://www.samepage.io/

NetDocuments is the leading cloud-based document and email management service, helping firms decrease cost and increase productivity through anytime, anywhere, any device access.

http://www.netdocuments.com/

HighQ is a leading provider of cloud-based enterprise collaboration and publishing software. They provide innovative social software to some of the world's leading law firms, investment banks and corporations.

http://highq.com/

Time Doctor is a remote time tracking and productivity app to track you and your team's productivity.

http://www.timedoctor.com
ProofHub is an all-in-one project management software that helps you better collaborate and manage projects of all sizes. It provides you the right tools, in one place, to get things done faster, better and easier.

https://www.proofhub.com/

Projectplace, a part of Planview, is rated as one of the industry's most secure cloud platforms. Today, some 1 million users trust Projectplace to help them get things done. Collaborate anywhere, anytime. Established in 1998 in Stockholm, Projectplace pioneered the SaaS industry.

https://www.projectplace.com/

Brightpod is an easy to use, cloud-based project management software for marketing & creative teams. Brightpod helps you get clarity on your everyday projects, tasks and deadlines. With Brightpod, teams can create workflows, delegate tasks, setup their editorial calendar, and manage digital content strategies from a central place.

http://www.brightpod.com/
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www.mikogo.com