

# Enhancing Remote Collaboration

*A Guide To Connecting Your Global and Remote Employees*



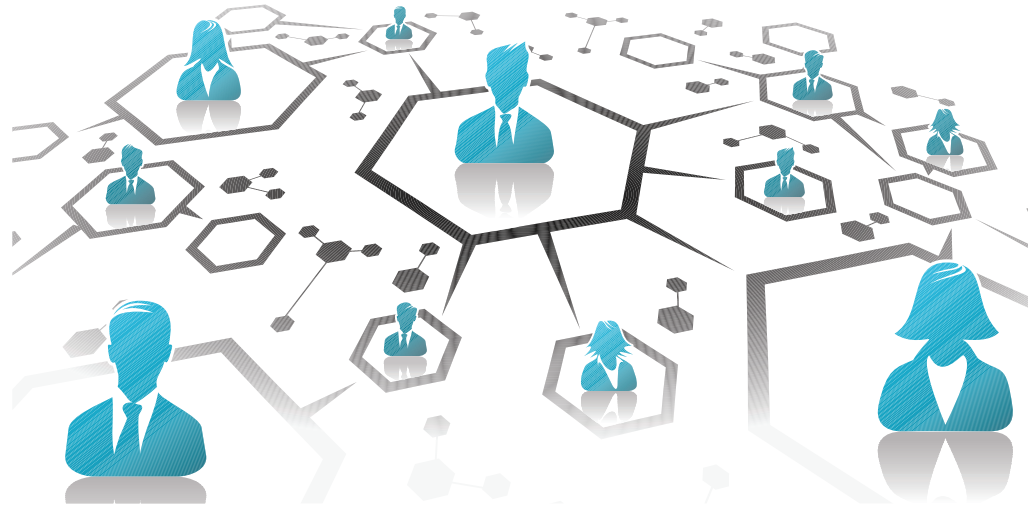
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## Executive Summary

Businesses like yours rely on effective internal and external connections between employees to operate efficiently. But you might be discovering that the old ways of conveying important business messages are no longer enough for your staff. Relying only on telephone calls, email, and face-to-face meetings alone could be now considered a competitive disadvantage. It also makes it more difficult to attract top talent, and inhibits the communication speed most enterprises now require.

This shift is compelling businesses to adapt by providing technologies that make remote collaboration more efficient and effective for virtual teams. What investment does your business need to make now to ensure that vital collaborative work gets done for the new normal workstyle?

■ **This paper will:**

1. Examine the role of remote collaboration in modern business
2. Explore the factors underlying the growing importance of remote collaboration
3. Explain why high-quality audio and video, sharing software, mobile-device compatibility and record capture are fundamental to collaboration
4. Show why now is the time to start investing in advanced collaboration technologies

## Part I: The Role of Remote Collaborations

The goal of meetings is to empower people to share knowledge, and advanced communications technology is enabling organizations to accomplish this objective via remote collaboration. As technologies improve and continue adoption, remote collaborative meetings will become even more immersive and interactive, and they will provide participants the flexibility to use any mobile device (or OS). In a sense, the tech should bring us closer to garnering the benefits of a true face-to-face meeting experience, in real time, despite employees and resources being located miles, states, or even countries apart from each other.

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*The goal of meetings is to empower people to share knowledge...*  
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A shift is already being seen where meeting rooms are evolving into collaborative spaces, becoming more fluid and designed with end-users in mind. Newly designed spaces are utilizing remote collaborative technologies to facilitate communication, particularly visual communication, by allowing all participants — both in-person and remote — to provide the type of essential nonverbal feedback that will ensure key messages are accurately conveyed and received.

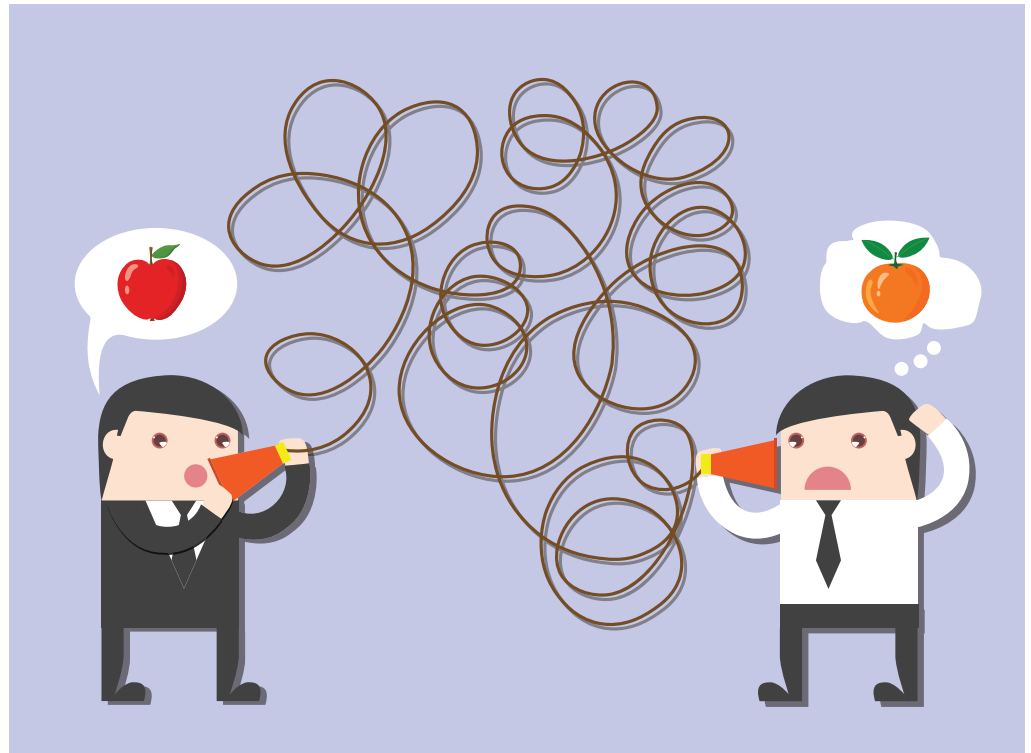
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## Part II: The Role of Visual Communications in Meetings

As the “telephone” game demonstrates, a speaker may mean to say one thing, but listeners often hear and comprehend something else. That’s because effective communication requires more than just transmitting information. In addition to transmission, clear channels between communicators and feedback are also part of the process. Despite the crucial nature of ensuring messages are both received and perceived correctly, most of the focus of traditional communication channels lies only on transmission and reception of the core message.

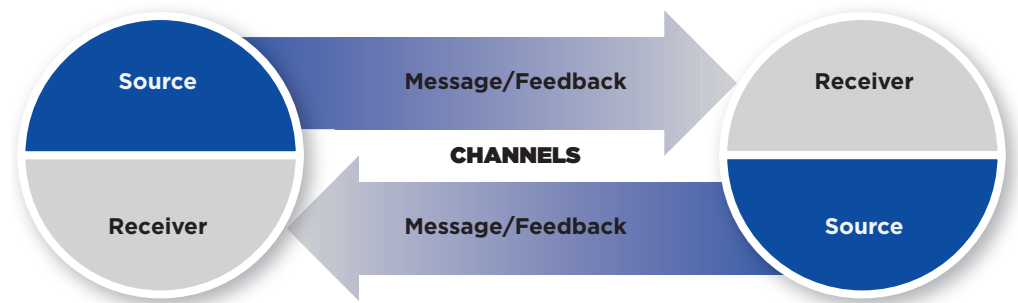
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### ■ How communication works

Effective communication is the “glue that helps you deepen your connections to others and improve teamwork, decision making, and problem solving,” observes business professor Dr. James Seligman.<sup>1</sup> It requires speakers and listeners to use and detect various types of feedback and nonverbal communication, especially eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, and body language.



### *The basic communication loop*

Transmission of “data” in communication formats is speeding up as well. TV, computers, and online videos have made modern communication less reliant on verbal or written communication and more dependent on visual elements due to speed and richness of what can be conveyed quickly in an image versus text. We constantly use spreadsheets, charts, graphs, diagrams, product photos, videos, and other visual information. In meetings, we share slide shows, whiteboard drawings, and other visual aids to ensure that our messages get through to audiences.



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Additionally, the benefits of face-to-face meetings are undeniable. Your management and employees use them to develop ideas to improve products or services and to take advantage of emerging business opportunities. They also enable people to engage in conversation, share visuals, and establish a strong personal connection. Face-to-face communication also builds trust among your employees and outside organizations, allowing them to collaborate efficiently and effectively.

With the importance of leveraging the rich, visual communication which stems from face-to-face communication, and the future demanding faster transfer across more widespread geographic areas, how can you use technology to improve face-to-face collaboration, especially with remote employees?

## Part III: The Rising Demand for Remote Collaboration

Traditional meeting rooms can become collaborative spaces, incorporating technologies that enable more effective long-distance communication among virtual teams within an organization or with customers and others outside their



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organizations. Because many employees are becoming comfortable with using their own mobile devices to conduct business, forward-looking companies have started adopting bring-your-own-devices (BYOD) technologies that allow employees to use their own smartphones and tablets to communicate at work. Email, enterprise messaging apps (such as Slack), video conferencing, and work-management software are among the advancements that have made remote work more feasible than ever before. Many are becoming standard issued by IT departments across enterprise networks.

In many offices, however, the basic configuration of remote meeting rooms — a conference room phone, a basic whiteboard, perhaps a video conferencing solution — hasn't changed much over the past few years. For many businesses, these tools are no longer enough to keep pace with the increasing demands for collaboration in the workplace of today and tomorrow. Something more must be done.



## Part IV: Making Remote Meetings More Collaborative

So how can you look to the future to improve the solutions within your own organization? Advancements in several key technologies have elevated the effectiveness of remote collaborations. Future innovations will enable businesses to be even more collaboration friendly. Consider the following areas:

- **Device compatibility**

The most significant innovation for remote collaboration will be the integration of personal smartphones, tablets, and other mobile devices into collaborative solutions. Improvements in remote conferencing technologies will make them compatible with users' personal devices and applications, enabling participants to work seamlessly and communicate by using their own mobile devices. Staff should be able to participate in a meeting that includes a rich data experience, no matter where they are — whether it's connecting via a PC from their home office, using Skype in a hotel room, or communicating via a smartphone while in their car.

Even better, users should spend little or virtually no time at all syncing their mobile devices to share, booting up equipment, or going through massive steps to sign on, regardless of their operating system or platform.



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#### ■ Video and sound

Optimal visual quality is crucial for virtual meetings. From video walls to projection, display technologies that leverage higher-speed data connections turn any wall into a flexible, interactive canvas. High-quality video allows listeners to see a speaker's nonverbal cues better and ensures that speakers detect nonverbal feedback from listeners. Large displays provide much finer detail, which increases engagement and elevates communication.

Ideally, collaborative spaces should be small, to ensure that virtual teams hear the emotive content of a speaker's words. Designed with optimal acoustics in mind, these spaces — along with advanced microphone technologies — can provide better sound quality and minimize background noise.

A study published in the Journal of Neuroscience found that face-to-face communication results in more effective communication because it increases interpersonal neural synchronization.<sup>3</sup> Future improvements in video and sound quality and seamless sharing will perfect digital, face-to-face simulation, making it look and appear as if remote meeting participants are all in the same room. These technologies will bring communicators closer together, allowing them to provide feedback and also ensuring messages are accurately conveyed and received.

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### ■ **Sharing software**

Collaborative technologies help people share information as naturally as possible so employees can connect with each other to solve business problems and develop new ideas. Participants should be able to access internal and outside information instantly, as well as view and manipulate data and other shared assets on a shared digital canvas. Common platforms, which keep projects organized and have search capability, are also key. These limit the time employees will spend shuffling between project data and associated files. As collaborative technologies improve, sharing platforms will become increasingly more intuitive and less intrusive (blending into the workflow), ensuring that the focus remains on the meeting agenda rather than on the devices and software.

### ■ **Digital records**

Collaborative tools already capture a record of remote meetings — such as sound, visuals, and annotations — and distribute the digital record to participants. Having a complete record of a meeting is vital because it avoids participants being distracted by note-taking. Note, visual, audio, and data capture technologies will improve even more in the future, ensuring that ideas, plans and other meeting content will never get lost or muddled.

## Part V: Considerations



*Forward-looking businesses should consider making their workplaces more collaboration friendly.*



Forward-looking businesses should consider making their workplaces more collaboration friendly. By adopting today's collaboration tools, they can start building the infrastructure needed to take advantage of future advances in remote collaboration technologies.

As you explore which remote collaboration tools are the best fit for your business, keep these factors in mind:

- **Collaboration spaces:** When planning collaboration spaces, think about end-users. What will they be trying to accomplish? Equip collaboration spaces with high-quality audio, microphones and video so everyone can be active speakers and attentive listeners. Use large displays for video conferencing and data sharing. Deploy interactive whiteboards in huddle rooms and other small, informal meeting spaces used for brainstorming and collaboration.
- **Device fragmentation:** Perhaps the biggest challenges currently facing remote collaboration is enabling meeting participants to use their own personal mobile devices, either remotely



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or in the collaboration space. As BYOD becomes more widespread in enterprises, business information needs to be available across all these devices and applications. Overcoming device fragmentation requires adopting a device-agnostic collaborative technology solution that works with any device. This type of solution means that you don't need to commit to a specific platform or worry about compatibility.

- **Network capacity:** Most current collaboration tools are web-based, and it's likely that future collaborative tools will likewise require substantial network capacity. High-definition video and high-quality audio demand high-speed bandwidth to ensure meeting productivity won't be diminished due to a bad connection. Remote users will also need to have robust, fast, and uninterrupted bandwidth.
- **Security:** Adopting a web-based remote collaboration solution that allows the use of personal mobile devices poses a wide range of security issues. Encryption, firewalls, and other security features will need to be incorporated to ensure that data transmission and storage are secure from threats.

## Conclusion



Collaboration technologies make business meetings more efficient and productive, facilitate the sharing of in-house and external expertise, and free up employee time to perform primary job duties and focus on innovation. Remote-collaboration technologies also save travel costs and boost talent attraction and employee retention.

To take advantage of the productivity gains and cost savings of remote collaboration, consider creating a strategy and dedicating a budget now to adopt the right collaborative tools for your business. View the money you spend on updating your meeting rooms into collaboration spaces as investments that will improve a wide range of business practices.

For many businesses, an all-in-one, multiple-user interface that provides high-definition video and sound and robust sharing capabilities and that works with a wide range of devices may be the best option. By adopting today's collaborative technologies, your firm will be well positioned to take advantage of future collaborative technologies.

For more information on collaborate solutions for ideation and productivity in the modern workplace, visit us today at [epson.com/brightlink-pro-collaborative-whiteboarding-solution](https://www.epson.com/brightlink-pro-collaborative-whiteboarding-solution)

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**Remote Collaboration Tools for your Business**

How Technology Has Made Remote Meetings More Effective

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