Microsoft Teams for Training and Development

Top practical tips and tricks to help human resources better communicate, collaborate and train employees.

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Training is crucial to employee progress, competitiveness, and retention. But even before the events of the recent year, training and onboarding were not easy tasks.

For example, Jeff is the Director of Training & Onboarding at a mid-sized financial services company. Overseeing communications and education across staff was never an easy task, with advisors frequently in the field or not at their desks. That became exacerbated in 2020. Suddenly, Jeff needs to maintain professional development for a sizable team of employees, many of whom don't see the inside of head office.

As the economy rebounds, the company also grows significantly and hiring picks up. But recruiting new prospects virtually is one thing; making sure they are up-to-speed on company policies and procedures and adopting corporate culture in this environment is something he was never prepared for.

His challenge is to figure out how to onboard a rapidly expanding employee base, while maintaining ongoing employee development programs across multiple remote locations. And in a world where travel restrictions change daily or are cost-prohibitive.

Traditional methods of collaboration — often limited to an endless e-mail thread — prove ineffective in handling the onboarding of new employees. New hire documents, constantly being updated, become lost or ignored in the dreaded e-mail chain, while ironically the new workforce eschews email for speedier short-form chat.

This guide aims to arm HR managers like you and Jeff with the tools and tips that will help put in place effective training and development programs for today's evolving hybrid workforce through Microsoft Teams best practices.

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Training the Hybrid Workforce of Today

The remote workforce was a growing trend before the emergence of COVID-19, but in 2020 the world pivoted to work almost completely from home.

The years ahead will see many organizations moving to a hybrid model, combining the best of what the office and online workplaces have to offer. Employees will work wherever and however they are most productive — and, according to a recent worldwide survey, half of all employees want that level of flexibility.[1]

This new reality means shifting to hybrid and multi-cloud environments, with employees seamlessly connecting to office resources from anywhere. Remaining competitive in this new world means employees must have availability to the resources they need, and location cannot affect their ability to work, collaborate or learn. To ensure successful onboarding and professional development, employees must be able to feel like a cohesive team, whether in the office at home or on the road.

Improving Training and Development with Microsoft Teams

Adopting Microsoft Teams for the purposes of training new and existing employees — whether remote or in the office — is a natural choice for many organizations. You and your team may be quite familiar with Microsoft solutions, and the organization benefits from native integrations with Microsoft 365 and enhanced Outlook integration.

[1]Global workforce expectations are shifting due to COVID-19 (jll.com)

Still, not every employee will have that experience, and this is where Teams' broad integration across other platforms becomes essential.

For all its benefits, moving to Microsoft Teams will require a shift in mindset for most HR teams. First, collaboration is real-time; sharing no longer needs to be incremental as document versions are completed, but as ongoing works in progress.

The second important mindset shift is related to managing the platform itself. Microsoft Teams gives team owners the ability to make substantial changes to the Team structure without IT involvement. This reduces the burden on IT while making it easier for managers to have their team meet, create cohesion and ensure employees are informed and properly trained.

Many Teams customers are taking advantage of **integrating training and development directly within the Teams app**. By leveraging a central learning hub directly within Teams, not only are you modernizing self-learning, but you're also encouraging adoption of Microsoft Teams across your organization.

Optimizing Onboarding and Professional Development with Microsoft Teams

Microsoft Teams is an all-in-one platform for work that makes scheduling formal training, as well as more impromptu professional development inside the company simple. As recruitment and onboarding increasingly move online, Teams also provides the digital boardroom to meet with prospects from outside the company.

> **Data labeling**
  Training is often on sensitive material, and information in Teams can be flagged as sensitive to keep it private and secure, accessible only to members and permitted guests.

> **Everyone Presents**
  The opposite of most platforms, the default in Teams meetings is for everyone to have presentation capabilities, a great benefit in training.

> **Ongoing Alerts**
  Members can be notified whenever a particular folder or file is updated to stay organized and have the latest information and policies.

> **Company-wide Communications**
  By creating an organization-wide channel, HR can easily keep all employees up to speed on policy and process changes.

> **Poll Creation**
  Get feedback from teams or company-wide, to fully understand how changes and training affect employees, what is working and where there may be gaps.

The features of Microsoft Teams are extensive, and the platform is always changing as Microsoft innovates and improves on it. To maximize the effectiveness of your Teams' adoption, it's a good idea to have a user oversee the platform. Look for an **adoption champion**, a team member that's excited about the platform and who can become an advocate. They would be responsible for creating processes, access rights, syntax and naming of channels and workflows.

Tips and Tricks
to Master Microsoft Teams

Set up your organization's training and onboarding efforts to succeed, improving the business and its employees with a few simple tips and tricks:

Develop Best Practices Early

Start your Teams deployment on the right foot by ensuring a few best practices such as building Teams gradually rather than in huge numbers, creating channels to focus discussions, and setting up one or more members to act as moderators to control who posts and replies.

Speed Access to Critical Info with File Tabs

Tabs in Teams act like bookmarks on your internet browser, helping you and members access specific files straight from chat, like onboarding policies, and locate important training material with the click of a button.

Keep It Clean and Updated

Your Teams channels lose their value if they become cluttered. It's crucial that Teams channels — especially ones dedicated to professional training and the files linked to — are current and up to date. As the organization evolves, policies and practices will too, and your employees will need to have the most current documentation and up-to-date processes.

Make Training Mandatory

For Microsoft Teams to be effective — and any training programs built leveraging it — employees need to become comfortable using it to collaborate,

communicate and connect. Before you can begin using Teams to train employees, host mandatory training around Teams to guarantee everyone understands it and its benefits to them.

Integrations and APIs

Microsoft already has a significant number of applications that are integrated into Teams that can improve its use for HR activities. For example, Polly can be used for running polls and surveys to gain employee feedback, while integration with Karma is great for growing workplace morale.

As the pandemic continues, maintaining the wellbeing and mindfulness of employees has become vital. This year, Teams added integration for the Headspace meditation app, helping employees fully disconnect to reduce stress and prevent burnout. Keep an eye on the Teams' storefront to see when new innovative apps become integrated.

As well, by connecting Microsoft Teams' APIs to other applications you will find even more benefits from connecting workflows between platforms.

Better Together:
How SHI Complements Microsoft Teamss

The only thing that is better than implementing a platform built to drive your team's success is working with a partner that can help you deploy and adopt that platform with ease.

SHI's Microsoft Teams Deployment and Adoption Services, you can depend on industry experts, who have served thousands of organizations like yours, to help you create a Teams adoption and rollout strategy. SHI will cover all of

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your bases by ensuring your information is secure and compliant with policies throughout your move to Teams.

SHI supports the execution on training and development strategies with the SHI Learning Teams App, a self-service training and productivity solution housed directly within Microsoft Teams.

As you begin to plan for and implement Microsoft Teams, SHI will guide you through the best path forward to improve your collaboration and workflow processes every step of the way.

Ready to put Teams to work at your organization?

Get in touch with an account representative today to discuss how SHI can help your organization implement Teams effectively.