



4 Keys to Successful Project Collaboration & Execution

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1. INTRODUCTION

How many times do you find yourself sitting in meetings for the better part of your work day only to find you made very little progress on pending projects? Face to face meetings certainly have their value but what if your team is spread between buildings, cities, states and countries? How can you efficiently communicate and effectively execute action items? Learning to harness the power of collaboration software for project management can open up a simpler, less costly way to manage and execute your projects.



We all know the power of social media and social networks in our personal lives, but some still consider it a hard sell when it comes to using it for business.

Does the crossover work? The results of a study conducted by McKinsey Quarterly “How businesses are using web 2.0”, June 2007, indicate that many leading companies are able to successfully leverage social collaboration technologies to improve communication between business partners, customers and employees.

So how can you do it? How can you successfully use business social collaboration software to make your project collaboration & execution successful? Here are 4 key things that make online project collaboration successful:

2. KEY #1: CREATE FOCUSED, TRANSPARENT PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

With the emergence and growth of platforms like Facebook and Twitter, the “status update” has become a strong communication component in staying connected with your friends and family (Facebook) and outside connections (Twitter). The same valuable insight is missing from one of the most obvious places...inside businesses. Instead of trying to understand how to leverage this new modern method of communicating, what do we see in business? We see more meetings, heavy dependence on email, lots of traveling, and a general frustration that no one knows what anyone else is doing.

You can easily realize the benefits of collaboration software and apply it to the business world. Business collaboration software leverages the “status update”, combined with real-time presence and instant messaging, to provide a secure platform for groups, teams and entire organizations to communicate more effectively. For business this means fewer meetings, less email and more insight into what everyone is doing- with minimal interruptions to your work day. Creating a collaborative business network for your organization that opens up the channels of communication and generates more awareness about what others are working on can help you reach your desired outcomes faster. For successful execution, it is critical that everyone in the team knows:

1. **What is due** - Project Management solutions provide both a way to organize projects and also to set your task due dates and assignments. A good project management tool provides visibility on these tasks to both assignees as well as project managers. Across all projects it should be easy to get a snapshot of what is due, what exactly needs to be done and what outcomes are expected.

2. **When it's due** - Tasks presented visually in a standard calendar like format work great because they give you a time line view of when things are due. This is extremely helpful to understand the bigger picture of a project, as well as understand the individual tasks across multiple projects.
3. **Where to focus** – Most of us do not have just one project to focus on. We are constantly balancing multiple projects, tasks and deadlines. Collaboration project management tools help you determine where you can and should spend your time. If a project is set to be completed and you have the last task, you can prioritize this over a task in another project that has more flexibility and less impact on completion.

In a simple project management tool, getting answers quickly and easily to these questions can drive greater efficiency and effectiveness in how projects are executed and completed. The simplicity of the project management solution is a very important factor in how well it works for you. The easier you make it for users to see what is due, when it needs to be done and where they need to focus, the better the outcome. Take the time to look at simple project management tools and see how they can help drive better results in your business. One central communication hub creates less room for confusion and miscommunication.

3. KEY #2: OPEN, REAL-TIME COMMUNICATION

Instant Messaging and Project Activity Streams are at the core of collaboration software and it is the piece that everyone can relate to and comprehend. They are easy to understand software applications that make it so simple to communicate with coworkers no matter where they are located.

How does instant messaging contribute to the efficient execution of your projects? Here are benefits to using IM as a part of your project management communication:

- Your IM conversations are not just text - sometimes you share web pages, pictures and files. A lot of valuable information can be shared via IM.
- It's a quick, less disruptive way to communicate. You can get questions answered fast without leaving your office. You can even access IM using your mobile while on the go.
- You can have group chats that can take less time than a face to face meeting.

Based on our recent survey, here are the top 10 ways MangoSpring customers are using Project Activity Streams:

1. Share insights and ask questions. Keep everyone on the same page using private and secure social networking.
2. Access company experts. Post a message and unlock the access to your company's experts.
3. Collaborate with remote workers. Whether in the neighboring office or the neighboring country, access coworkers via mobile, web, and desktop apps.
4. Share documents and files of any size. Drag and drop document attachment makes it easy to share documents.
5. Minimize meetings. Get questions answered quickly without having meetings that take you away from your work.
6. Discuss confidential items. Once the company has claimed the domain, the data posted in that domain is the sole property of the company



7. Resolve customer issues. With presence enabled IM you can get the answers you need from your team to quickly resolve customer issues.
8. Create focused communication. Eliminate the need for lengthy emails and tree-mails where information gets lost.
9. Get engaged. Real-time communication allows easy sharing of ideas and feedback.
10. Access Archives. All conversations are fully archived and searchable.

The combination of project activity streams and instant messaging creates better communication, clarity and more productivity in any type of office environment.

4. KEY #3: TASK MANAGEMENT WITHOUT MICRO-MANAGEMENT

Project and task management without micro-management? How does that statement sit with you? As a manager, you are probably panicking and thinking, “Project and task management can’t happen without micro-management, can it?” As worker bee, you are thinking, “Sign me up!” Managers and worker bees unite; you can implement task management tools that can free you from micromanagement. Work management software can open up a whole new world for you in Enterprise 2.0.

Instead of hiring competent people and then monitoring their every move – you can put your collaboration software to work for you and give your employees the space they deserve. You’ll find that by organizing



and assigning tasks to groups and individuals using collaboration software, a searchable accountability and desired level of transparency can be established. With next generation task management tools, once your boss assigns you a task and you accept it, it’s posted in the activity feed. There is a record that says this task was assigned to you on October 5th and you accepted it on October 5th. There’s no disputing the email you didn’t get or

the conversation that happened at the end of the day on Friday. Your boss can include all the task details and attach files and assign priority all while creating the task.

The second part of task tracking is that you can follow the entire life cycle of the task. Every time you make an update, edit or comment regarding your task, it is posted in real-time to the activity feed. You and your boss can see exactly where you are in the process. There’s no need for email chains where you forgot to cc someone or extensive voicemails asking when you are going to create a status report. You automatically make mini status reports all the time. With task project management software, you are free to do your work without worrying about looking over your shoulder.

Now, as the boss, why is task management software valuable to you? The benefits mirror that of your team but with a slightly different spin. When you assign a task to a person or group, there is a level of transparency and accountability created. You can see exactly when the task is accepted, edited, updated



and completed. You can edit the details at any time and the update will post to the activity feed in real-time. You are free to attend to the higher level tasks your of your job. You don't have to search email archives to see if Joann ever responded to your request. You'll have one central place to monitor the tasks of your employees and group projects.

5. KEY #4: MAKE STATUS UPDATES AUTOMATIC AND EFFORTLESS

How many hours and resources have been used to get everyone together to communicate the status of projects? The answer is: too many! With online project management tools that provide a single place for project management and task management, those hours can be better used for actually getting work done. Online project management tools help keep everyone on the same page, and take valuable communication out of old, inefficient systems. They put the communication into a social business system that is focused on visibility and transparency. Say goodbye to those status meetings and let these new tools work for you.

1. **Task Status Updates** - At a task management level, users that are assigned tasks can quickly and in real-time update their assignments. This builds accountability among team members as everyone is responsible for updating their activities in a single location. Team members stay informed regarding small bits of progress, major milestones, task completion or even tasks being behind schedule. No one is left out of the loop and therefore you can make the most of work time and resources.
2. **Weekly Status Reports** - A lot happens within a week of working on project activities. In addition to completing assigned tasks, users can provide a weekly post to the online project management tool that summarizes the week's activities. They can list out the challenges they faced, opportunities they see, and what is upcoming. These weekly status reports provide a mechanism to both reflect back on what was accomplished during the week, and at the same time plan forward to try and determine where the next focus area should be. Here again, the key is that you use an online project collaboration tool to enable this activity. Having users send around emails only adds to the already over-stuffed inbox and will likely get missed.
3. **Open Activity Feed** - With online project management tools, both the task updates and weekly status reports can be viewed in a single activity feed. The feed is open and visible to all, from the project manager to individual team members to the CEO. With open feeds, more awareness can be highlighted for both challenges as well as successes. They can quickly and easily see what everyone is doing, as well as share their own experiences.

These are three simple ways you say bye-bye to those status meetings. Stop going through the effort of coordinating schedules and wasting people's time, and instead use online project management tools. This will let the updates happen in real-time and you will always have the status when you need it. With simple online project and task management tools, you have a single location for everyone to keep each other informed and engaged about the progress of projects. Don't let these critical business communications occur in old, inefficient tools.



6. SUMMARY

Traditional project management software comes with a reputation of being built, designed and used by the project manager. However, the entire organization in one way, shape or form participates in and contributes to projects, and their success. The command and control nature of Project and Task Management within a company is something that needs an overhaul. Today's collaboration tools enable a new kind of working environment that blends new communication with cooperation and collaboration across the enterprise to focus more on results than on management. With a focus on execution and communication, project teams can be better at what they do and drive towards success.

If you think about it, a Project Manager is only as successful as the team they work with. It makes a lot of sense to focus on the team member more and determine how to get the best out of them day in and day out. By taking a more collaborative and communication approach to project management software, project managers can in fact get more out of their team. They can help build greater team and individual awareness of what is happening. They can provide a mechanism for instant sharing of updates and status that is critical for the team to know. They can simply focus on executing against the plan. With resources becoming more and more scarce within an organization and project managers being asked to do more with less, ensuring that team members are engaged, not overwhelmed, with the project management software solution is critical to the entire team's success.

There is a huge opportunity for both project managers as well as project management software. Focus less on the traditional command and control nature of these tools, and instead create transparent and open collaboration and communication that lets team members concentrate on execution. Consider project management tools that enable and empower employees to be accountable, communicate and collaborate in new ways that match their working styles.

Visit the [MangoSpring](http://www.mangospring.com) website to take a live tour or signup for FREE and see how [MangoProjects](http://www.mangoprojects.com) implements these keys to successful project management & execution.

