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Market Intelligence **Black & White**

Digital Transformation Trends Driving Team Collaboration and Productivity

COMMISSIONED BY



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About this paper

A Black & White paper is a study based on primary research survey data that assesses the market dynamics of a key enterprise technology segment through the lens of the “on the ground” experience and opinions of real practitioners — what they are doing, and why they are doing it.

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Introduction

Today's organizations face immense challenges, both technical and cultural, to effectively leverage technology and IT teams to drive innovation, stay responsive to customers and remain competitive. Recent disruption from the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these hurdles as companies are forced to support more remote and distributed workers, as well as adjust to dramatic and rapid changes in the market. As organizations accelerate digital transformation and build greater resiliency across their teams and goals, integrating tools amid the sprawl and complexity of today's enterprise IT can be critical.

We surveyed and interviewed enterprise IT decision-makers and practitioners regarding integration of Slack and Atlassian products such as Jira, Halp, Confluence and BitBucket to reveal their biggest challenges in software and project delivery and to get a sense of how integration of this tooling can help address those issues.

We found companies were focused on several key requirements and objectives. Idle waiting time must be cut down through automated alerts and responses. Tools and tasks should be consolidated in a meaningful way that reduces reliance on less efficient alternatives. Teams must have flexibility in the tools they use, but not at the expense of deployments that are not policy-driven, sanctioned, secure and compliant. This can be difficult amid the complexity of today's IT landscape, but integration of components across the DevOps lifecycle – particularly communication and collaboration tools – can help organizations focus on new features, products and innovation. Our study indicates that integration can also help organizations be more responsive to customers and changes in the market.

Key Findings

- Respondents said integration of Slack and Atlassian products enabled their agile approach by improving collaboration (86%), providing consistency (64%), improving incident and bug response (62%), and providing flexibility to layer in other tools (47%). The platforms also helped organizations achieve their goals by driving consistency (72%), reducing manual tasks with automation (71%), increasing/improving collaboration (65%) and supporting integrations (60%).
- Nearly all (95%) businesses replaced at least one other tool through their Slack and Atlassian integration. Most have replaced multiple tools, including project/work management (58%), email (54%) and spreadsheets (49%). Many of those polled also referred to reduced telephone calls.
- Businesses experience a range of benefits equally from the integration of Slack and Atlassian: real-time notifications/status updates (56%), improved collaboration and knowledge management (54%) and improved response times (56%). They also benefited from time savings; 64% of those surveyed said they saved more than six hours a week by using the integrated tooling, and 63% reported a very positive impact on the teams in which they work.
- Integration of Slack and Atlassian products offered both technical and cultural benefits for users in remote settings. Respondents indicated that the integration allowed them to better support remote workers (78%), improve visibility (61%) and promote team building (57%). Other advantages were better employee focus and alignment (53%), increased accountability (50%) and promotion of communication/collaboration (49%).

- Organizations are measuring and improving their success with Slack and Atlassian integrations, primarily based on business-level metrics (66%) – such as customer satisfaction – as well as technical metrics such as quality (63%), efficiency of admins to servers (55%) and application performance (55%). Business metrics were cited as the most improved (66%) from the tool integration.

Overcoming Challenges with Integration

As today's teams seek to rapidly develop and deploy software, manage IT efficiently, and drive projects and business objectives, they are faced with immense complexity and inconsistency across products. Tools can be difficult to integrate or may require context switching between app interfaces, leading to wasted time and other inefficiencies. Technical teams continue to experience significant friction across their day-to-day work. These friction points include having to manage significant technical complexity, working with inconsistent workflows and processes, a lack of efficiency across the software delivery lifecycle with policy gates that lead to idle time, silos between developer and operations teams, and the lack of capacity to take on unanticipated work.

When asked about the most significant constraints in the software delivery process, respondents to our survey of enterprise IT decision-makers and practitioners highlighted idle time waiting for responses (63%), policy and security gates (59%), and development and IT operations silos (59%) as the top three. The time it takes for teams to communicate, particularly using email and spreadsheets, can drag down response times and contribute to idle waiting time. Organizations that cannot effectively manage policy and security requirements also tend to slow down both teams and releases. Even with the increased adoption of DevOps in the enterprise over the last decade, silos persist, and enterprise teams still often struggle to communicate and collaborate with others outside of their primary domain.

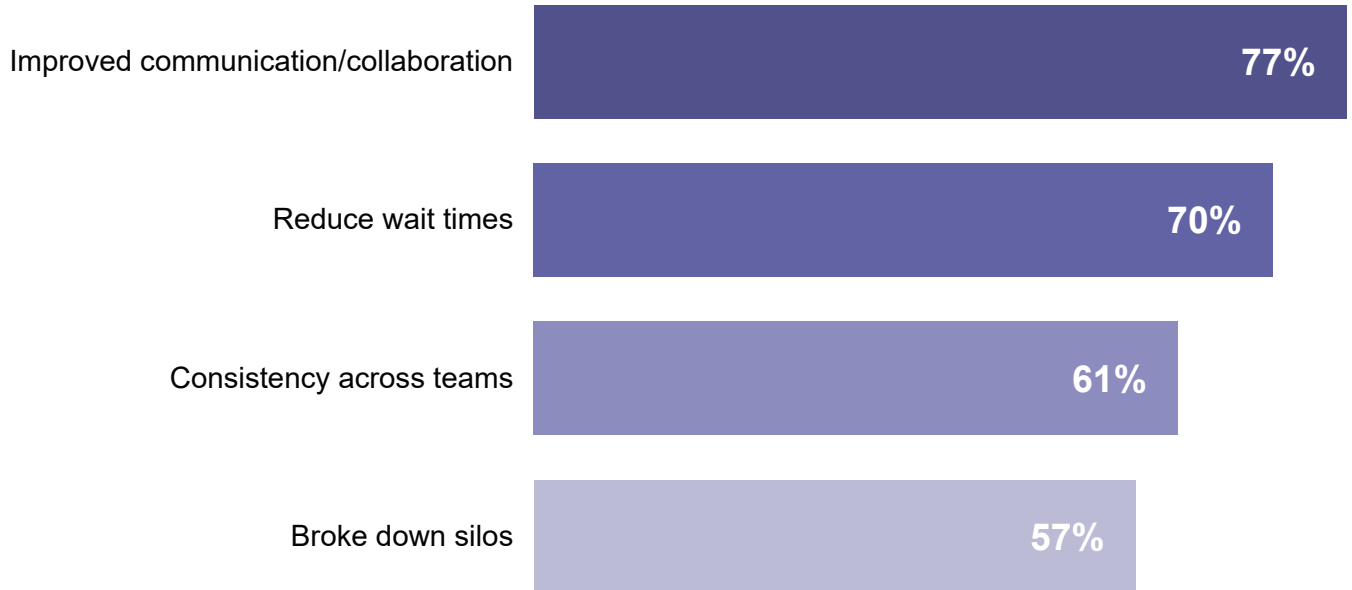
Thus, most enterprises can truly benefit from the automated alerts and responses that can come from integration of chat, project/work management and other tools. Survey respondents said integration of Slack and Atlassian helped to address software delivery constraints by improving communication/collaboration, reducing wait times, supporting consistency across teams and breaking down silos (see Figure 1). Our research shows these all contribute to overcoming key pain points associated with software and project management.

Figure 1: Addressing constraints with integration

Source: 451 Research and Atlassian/Slack custom survey

Q: How have Slack and Atlassian helped with software delivery constraints?

Base: All respondents (n=100)



IT management and operations teams are also facing significant challenges as they try to better serve developers while managing larger-scale and hybrid infrastructures more efficiently. One of the biggest challenges that respondents identified for these teams is the technical complexity (58%) of today's IT environments that utilize cloud-native technology such as containers, Kubernetes and serverless alongside on-premises and private cloud infrastructure and applications. Teams are also typically trying to support a range of tools, languages and platforms for their developers, including SaaS and open source software.

Another big challenge for IT teams, according to survey respondents, has to do with inconsistent processes and workflows (53%). This can be particularly difficult across hybrid and multicloud infrastructures since tools and experience can vary greatly. Performance (52%) was also highlighted as a primary challenge for IT teams, which serve a demanding audience – both internally of developers and product teams and externally of end users/customers. Our study indicates that integration of Slack and Atlassian helped to mitigate these various challenges by driving efficiency (78%), driving consistency (73%) and reducing cost (64%).

“For the people that are leading the projects and managing the projects and having to report out on the projects, it's made a big difference in terms of their visibility across to-do lists and code reviews, releases and issues and things like that. So, it's definitely made it less manual in terms of our ability to track and report.”

- HIGH TECH, VP DATA MANAGEMENT AND ANALYTICS, US, 2,001-5,000 EMPLOYEES

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Integration Drivers and Impact

As companies try to balance flexibility (for technical teams) and security (of deployments, sanctioned by the organization), integrations that support automation and reduce tool sprawl can be critical. Most organizations sought integration of Slack and Atlassian to collaborate more effectively (63%). Other drivers of the combination include reducing time wasted switching between applications (52%) and the need for a better way to curate knowledge of projects (49%).

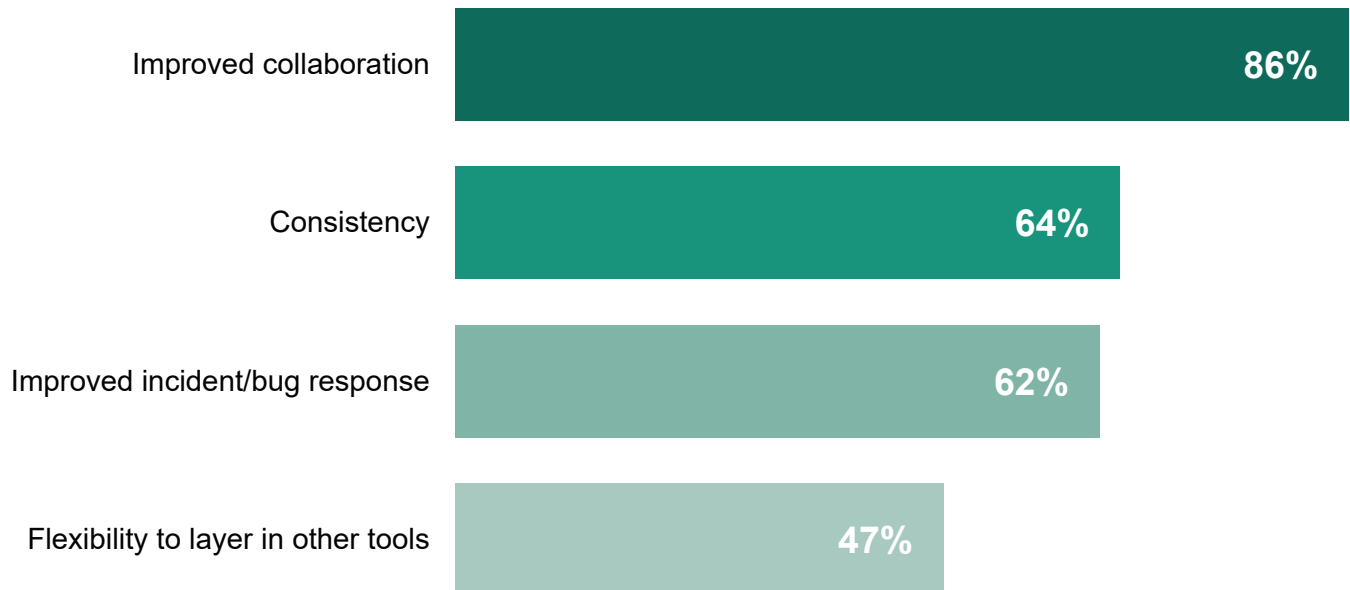
There's no question that integration can have benefits, particularly as organizations manage the mix of tools, environments and processes used by their teams. Companies reported that Slack and Atlassian integration drove benefits such as rich notifications and updates when changes happen (56%), improved incident management/response (54%), and improved collaboration and knowledge management (54%). For example, rather than having to switch between applications, teams were able to respond to alerts via integrated tooling by using the same interface. This highlights how getting better information to the right people more rapidly can truly enable a more responsive and change-ready organization. Enterprises also described how integration can enable an agile approach by improving collaboration, driving consistent IT workflows and improving incident/bug response (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Integration enables agility

Source: 451 Research and Atlassian/Slack custom survey

Q: How do Slack and Atlassian together enable your organization's agile approach?

Base: All respondents (n=100)



Flexibility to layer in other tools was another enabler of agility, and this can be critical as organizations manage a growing variety of tooling. Seamless and simplified tool integration can help companies avoid sprawl. Well-integrated toolchains can also align teams across the organization, so rather than wasting time waiting or working on manual processes, they can focus on new features and products, rapidly respond to customer needs, and effectively react to shifting market dynamics.

“Instead of having people go to multiple technologies to do their work, basically, the integration allowed them to just work in Slack and do all the things they needed to do. From a pure workflow perspective, instead of having to have all kinds of browser windows open, they could do their work from one application. I think that was one of the main benefits that people comment on that has improved their life quite significantly.”

- HIGH TECH, VP, TECHNOLOGY AND STRATEGY, US, 1,001-2,000 EMPLOYEES

The study also revealed that integration of tools can drive the replacement of suboptimal communication via email, spreadsheets and telephone calls. While many different tool types beyond Slack are integrated with the typical Atlassian footprint, there was, nevertheless, a significant replacement effect when the tools came together. Half of organizations said they had managed to replace other productivity tools – project and work management, email, conferencing tools, spreadsheets and file-sharing tools were the most likely to be replaced. This highlights how benefits of automation and responsiveness can often be realized simply by migrating to more modern tools and platforms. Integration can mean simplification in terms of less tool switching for different contexts, as well as cost reduction, also known as application or tool rationalization.

Supporting Distributed Applications and Distributed Teams Culture

Software developers and DevOps teams are often focused on developing and deploying distributed applications – software that runs across multiple infrastructures simultaneously. They are also typically already working as distributed teams that collaborate closely, yet remotely. The same cannot be said for the bulk of other teams in the enterprise, so the move to work-from-home settings has been highly disruptive for many organizations. Thus, the technical teams are serving as a paradigm for how all remote teams can still collaborate, communicate and succeed together, even if they aren't in the same office.

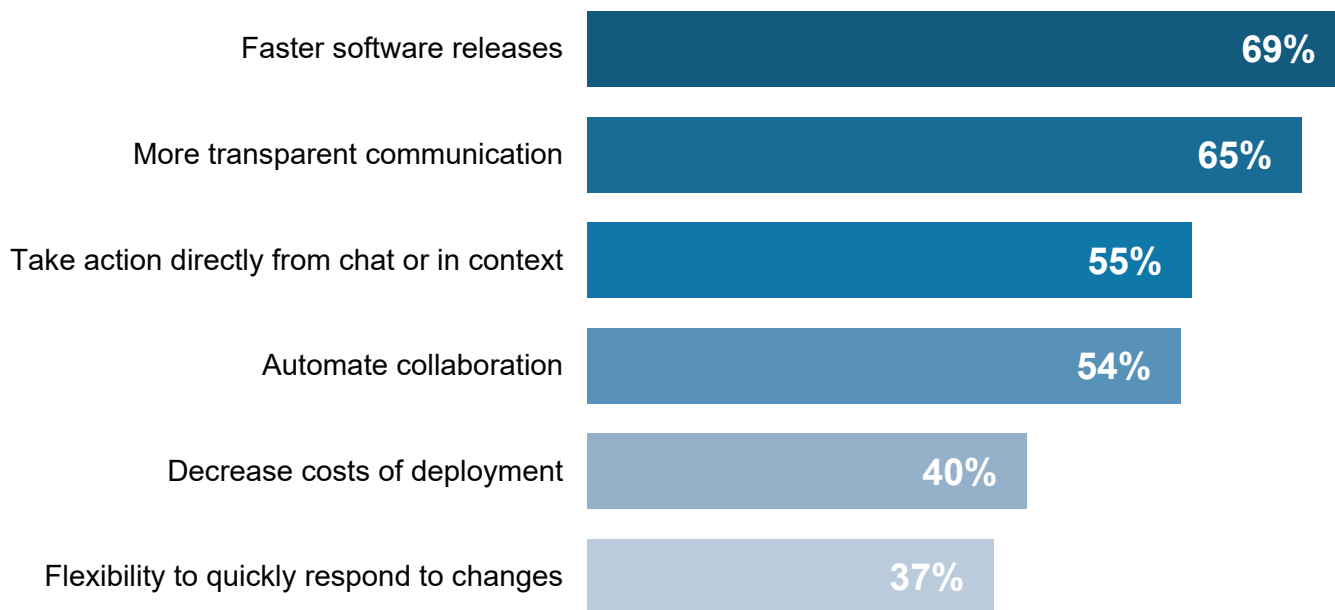
Organizations indicated that integration of Slack and Atlassian can help to overcome software development challenges in remote settings by supporting faster software releases, making communication more transparent, enabling teams to take action directly from chat or in context, and automating collaboration (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Overcoming software development challenges in remote settings

Source: 451 Research and Atlassian/Slack custom survey

Q: How can the Atlassian Slack integration suite help software engineers overcome challenges in remote development settings?

Base: All respondents (n=100)



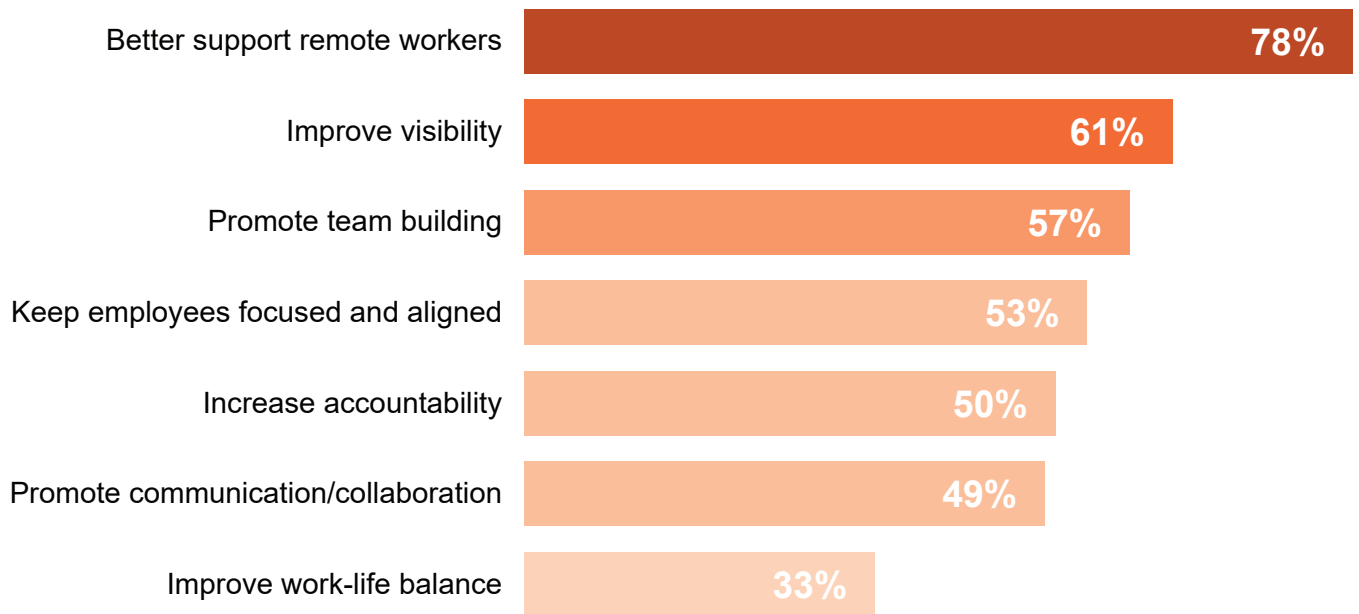
Integration of Slack and Atlassian offered both technical and cultural benefits to users in remote settings. Respondents indicated that integration allowed them to better support remote workers (78%), improve visibility (61%) and promote team building (57% – see Figure 4). Other advantages centered on keeping employees focused and aligned (53%), increasing accountability (50%) and promoting communication/collaboration (49%). Improved work-life balance was ranked lower (33%), but it highlights a growing focus on culture and employee happiness. Although much of supporting remote teams is challenging, our study also revealed some advantages; for example, replacing in-person conversations with digital ones means those conversations can be documented and referenced.

Figure 4: Integration helps improve optimization in remote settings

Source: 451 Research and Atlassian/Slack custom survey

Q: How can enterprise companies adapting to remote work use the Atlassian Slack integration suite to optimize software development and IT operations?

Base: All respondents (n=100)



“We’re seeing a higher rate of communication...I think that although we miss the face-to-face interaction, I think there’s been a benefit that things are more documented now than they ever have been before the virus hit.”

– HIGH TECH, VP, DATA MANAGEMENT AND ANALYTICS, US, 2,001-5,000 EMPLOYEES

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Measuring and Proving Success

Measuring and proving the success of DevOps has always been an important part of the trend as organizations seek to show the advantages, citing them as justification to include more applications and teams. Our surveyed organizations reported using primarily business metrics (66%), including customer satisfaction, but also quality metrics (63%), sysadmin-to-server efficiency (55%), and application performance metrics (55%) to measure and prove their DevOps success.

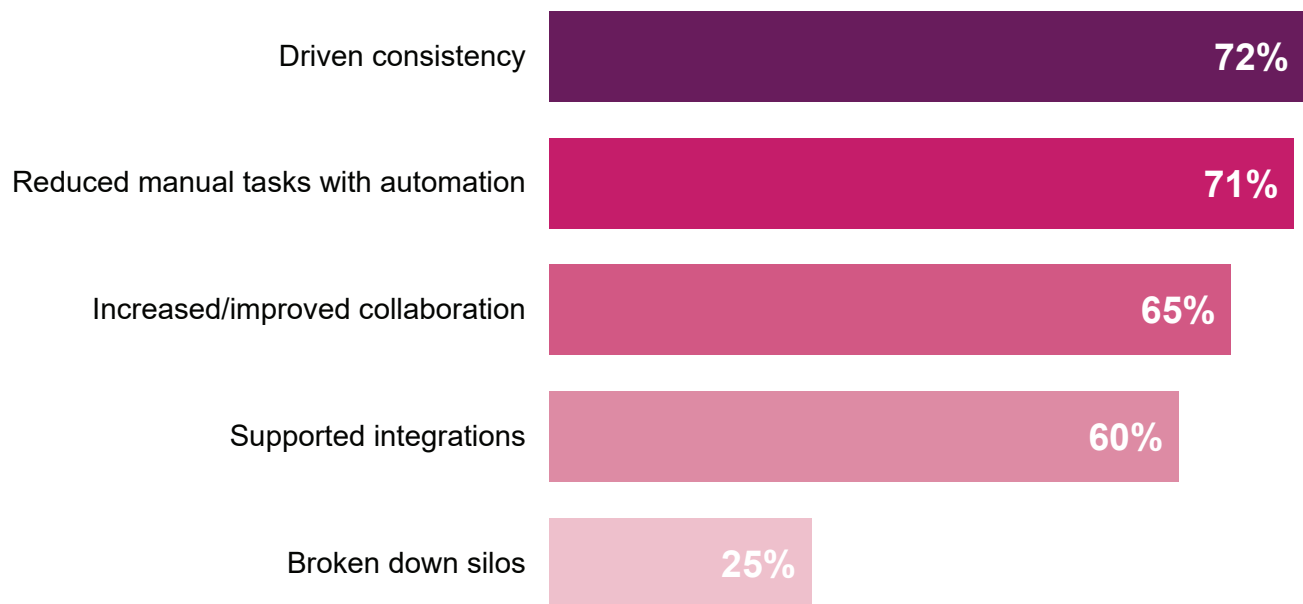
Respondents' most improved metrics from the integration of Slack and Atlassian also mapped to both business and technical benefits and were similar, with crisis recovery metrics also among areas where companies saw gains. Whether reacting to customer input and behavior or responding to internal teams such as software developers, data scientists and line-of-business managers, organizations are leveraging Slack and Atlassian's integrated platforms to do it. Enterprise respondents also indicated that the integration of communication and collaboration tools is helping to achieve prioritized team goals, such as driving consistency, reducing manual tasks with automation, and increasing or improving collaboration (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Platforms to achieve team goals

Source: 451 Research and Atlassian/Slack custom survey

Q: How have these platforms helped you achieve your team goals?

Base: All respondents (n=100)



These team goals reflect the enterprise priority to address the complexity of cloud native and other technology by driving consistency, replacing manual tasks with automation, and enabling better communication and collaboration among various stakeholders. Many of the reported benefits flowed from being able to respond more rapidly within workflows – receiving real-time status updates, faster software release and incident management response times, and greater added flexibility to respond to changes when they were required. Teams also said they automated a range of previously manual tasks, including sending status updates, locating important information, converting decisions in Slack to specific actions in Atlassian, sending reminders, and removing the need to do as many conference calls.

“I would definitely say the developer efficiency metrics have improved. And these are things like how many points do I get in the sprint, how many checks, all those types of things that show throughput around engineering.”

– HOSPITAL & HEALTHCARE, DIRECTOR OF IT, US, 2,001-5,000 EMPLOYEES

Speed and Productivity Improvements

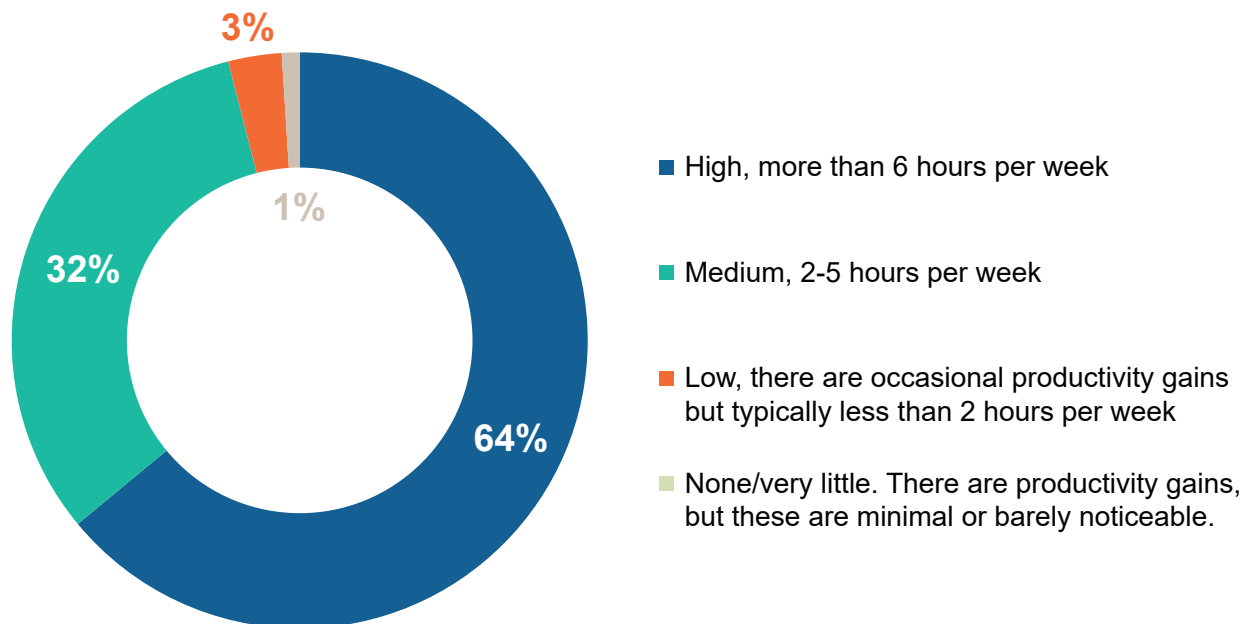
Despite all the focus on efficiency, collaboration and other factors, successful software development, deployment and management still hinges primarily on speed and productivity. Organizations in our study said that through integration of Slack and Atlassian, individual employees, on the whole, were able to accrue significant productivity improvements – two-thirds reported saving more than six hours a week per person (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Increased productivity from integration

Source: 451 Research and Atlassian/Slack custom survey

Q: How much more personally productive are you as a direct result of having Slack and Atlassian integrated with one another?

Base: All respondents (n=100)



About the same proportion (63%) said the integration had a very positive impact on the productivity of teams working together. Time savings not only means empowering teams to focus on new features, applications, products and innovation, but it also means cost savings. This can serve as powerful proof of team success, empowering the organization to broaden initiatives to more applications and teams.

“The effective use of people’s time has been upped tremendously. (We’re) not spending time on repetitive things. Make the integrations work so they don’t have to switch between applications. We hear productivity and time management as the two main benefits of (integration).”

-HIGH TECH VP, TECHNOLOGY AND STRATEGY, US, 1,001-2,000 EMPLOYEES

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Conclusions

Integration of communication and collaboration tools can help organizations overcome common software development and IT management challenges, such as idle waiting time and persisting silos among developers, IT operations and other teams by reducing manual tasks, driving automation and aligning teams. The less time that employees spend waiting and mired in manual work, the more they can focus on the features, applications, products and initiatives that really matter.

While organizations tend to integrate tools primarily to improve collaboration, reduce time wasted switching between applications and to better curate knowledge of their projects, they often are realizing additional benefits such as richer notifications and updates of changes and improved incident management and response. This is one key area where integration can allow organizations to transcend tactical, triage response and operate in a more strategic way.

As recent market disruption has illustrated, companies must also be able to support their teams in remote, work-from-home settings. Integration again plays a key role in speeding software releases, improving communication and automating collaboration. The organizations that can maintain and even improve speed, efficiency and productivity among their teams – even if they’re distributed and remote – are the ones best positioned to compete and succeed.

Integration of communication, work management and collaboration tools can also help enable more data and business-driven DevOps as organizations consider not only technical metrics such as quality and performance, but also business metrics including user experience. This can also enable effective feedback loops that drive continuous improvement in application development, deployment and management.

Methodology

451 Research surveyed 100 North American IT respondents via web survey and conducted 10 in-depth interviews for the custom research. The respondents were screened for the use of both Slack and Atlassian tools and are influencers/decision-makers about purchasing either software tool. The survey was designed to better understand current or previous friction and pain points and ascertain how Slack and Atlassian tools enabled them to be more innovative, collaborative and productive. For the top four verticals: 50% of respondents were from the high-tech industry, 15% of respondents were from financial services, 9% from retail/consumer packaged goods, and 9% in communications, media and services.



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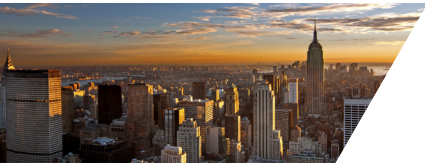
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