GUILD

Mastering Messaging in the Workplace

How to communicate with messaging at work

March 2020

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1. Executive Summary

Messaging as a medium is exploding, but it's currently unmanaged and not legally compliant in many workplaces across the world.

By 2020, the four largest mobile messaging apps (WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, WeChat and Viber) already had more than 6 billion users in total, surpassing the 4.5 billion users on the four largest social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn)[1].

In a recent survey, 41% of workers in the UK were using the consumer messaging app WhatsApp at work, in spite of this usage breaching WhatsApp's own legal terms of use.[2]

More importantly for business, many features of WhatsApp and other consumer messaging apps such as Signal and Telegram do not comply with privacy regulation like the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and other legal duties like proper record keeping where their employees, customers, suppliers and stakeholders are concerned.

It's a 'Messaging Mess'. In many organisations there's a lack of clarity around corporate governance and employee behaviours. At a basic level, confusion reigns over how various messaging platforms are *described* by communication and IT professionals.

It's a new, and potent, medium in the workplace. But we have not yet developed the professional etiquette to best embrace its power. Messaging can be a force for good, but we urgently need clearer behavioural guidelines, policies and clarity around the right ways of working with messaging. Especially as younger generations, with a clear preference for messaging, become the majority of the workforce.

In this report, we provide clear definitions for the differences between professional/ business messaging or chat, work-based social networking, workflow communications for teams project management and consumer messaging or chat. These terms are used almost interchangeably, which can lead to confusion.

We propose a *'Hierarchy of Messaging'* model which clarifies what form of messaging to use when, and why, based on the purpose of the communication and the needs to be met.

[1] Estimates based on publicly available data.
[2] https://www.whatsapp.com/legal/



Figure 1: Hierarchy of Messaging Model



Source: Guild[3]

Businesses and individuals can use this model to analyse and formulate their own policies and guidelines for best practice communications, both within an organisation and externally.

Mastering Messaging in the Workplace helps organisations understand the drivers behind the growth of business messaging and the resulting opportunities and challenges. Based on a series of interviews with internal communications, digital transformation and corporate governance experts, this research:

- Provides clear definitions for messaging in the workplace.
- Highlights use cases for messaging in the workplace.

[3] https://guild.co/messaging-in-the-workplace-report

- Provides a model for organisations to help them effectively adopt messaging tools for improved internal and external communications.
- Considers whether messaging can improve productivity and foster a culture of sharing and communication.
- Considers security, privacy and compliance pitfalls associated with the rise of shadow IT and 'dark' workplace messaging on unsanctioned tools such as WhatsApp.
- Looks at the need to develop new workplace guidance as well as rules and behaviours as the professional communications channel mix adapts to include messaging.
- Looks at the rapidly evolving market for workplace messaging and highlights vendors of some of the leading business messaging tools.

Methodology

The research methodology involved two main phases:

- **Phase 1:** Extensive desk and qualitative research to identify relevant data, uses, issues, approaches, examples and models for workplace messaging.
- **Phase 2:** A series of in-depth interviews with a range of senior client-side professionals, vendors, consultants, strategists, authors and experts.

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2. Key Drivers of Professional Messaging Growth

2.1 The growth of consumer messaging apps

Messaging app growth is now outpacing social network growth.

Consumer communication is dominated by messaging apps such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and WeChat. In 2019, an estimated 2.52 billion people worldwide (87% of smartphone users) were using a mobile messaging app at least once per month.[4]

Growth in mobile messaging app users is expected to increase to 3 billion by 2022.

By 2020, the four largest mobile messaging apps (WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, WeChat and Viber) already had more than 6 billion users in total, surpassing the 4.5 billion users on the four largest social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn)[5]. "*Messaging is one of the few things that people do more than social networking,*" Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg noted in 2014.

Facebook Inc. owned WhatsApp has amassed two billion users,[6] making it the most popular mobile messaging app worldwide. WhatsApp usage outranked Facebook Messenger, which recorded 1.3 billion monthly active users in 2019, and WeChat, which has over one billion users.

Research by We Are Social indicates that 89% of internet users aged 16 to 64 use chat or messaging apps on their mobile phone, and that half their time on mobile devices is spent on social and communication apps.[7]

Globally, the market for chat applications is fragmented, with WeChat favoured in China, and LINE used predominantly in Japan. In South Korea, KakaoTalk is the go-to app, while Viber is popular in Eastern Europe and Facebook Messenger dominates in Australia.

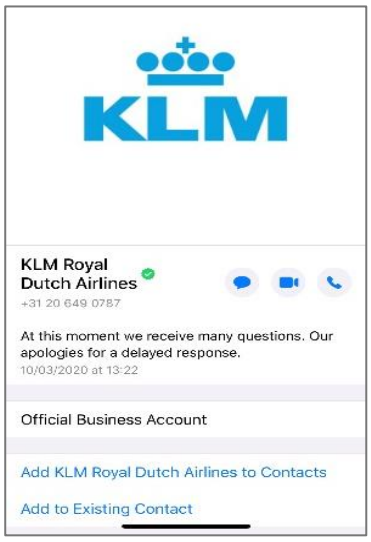
[4] https://www.emarketer.com/content/global-messaging-apps-2019
[5] Estimates based on publicly available data.
[6] https://about.fb.com/news/2020/02/two-billion-users/
[7] https://wearesocial.com/digital-2020

2.2 Businesses adapt to consumer messaging adoption

The popularity of messaging apps has meant that businesses and organisations have had to think about adapting their communications, customer experience and customer service.

Facebook has created a WhatsApp Business API solution, specifically designed for companies that want to create a presence on WhatsApp for customer support and notifications, and their Messenger product allows for chatbot and AI integration to streamline and speed up query resolution.

Figure 2: KLM Royal Dutch Airlines is an example of an organisation using WhatsApp Business APIs



Source: Author's WhatsApp

These types of business use of the consumer messaging app for customer support are compliant uses of the platform and show how consumer messaging apps play an important role in today's omnichannel strategy.

2.3 The rise of 'dark' workplace messaging

A major challenge for organisations is the unsanctioned use of popular consumer message apps by employees to create workarounds when internal and external communications channels are not fit for purpose.

A key communications trend has been the shift of conversation in public domain social media platforms towards private groups and messaging apps. Alex Madrigal, Deputy Editor of the Atlantic, used the term 'dark social'[8] to describe activity in messaging apps, email, as well as private browsing that can't be accessed, measured or analysed.

[8] https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/10/dark-social-we-have-the-whole-history-of-the-web-wrong/263523/

The popularity of 'dark social' and messaging has led to a profound shift in behaviour. For digital natives, messaging is the fastest and most instinctive way to communicate with friends, family, peers and colleagues.

Although many organisations provide their employees with intranets and workflow tools such as Slack or Microsoft Teams, professional messaging is now occurring 'off-grid' through consumer apps such as Signal and WhatsApp.

The unsanctioned use of communications channels that employees have created themselves to solve a gap in an organisation's channels matrix was coined as 'Shadow Comms' in 2017 by Director of All Things IC and internal communications expert Rachel Miller.[9]

Consumer messaging apps in the workplace are challenging for IT, HR, corporate governance and compliance teams in the face of GDPR and CCPA compliance. The financial and reputation cost of misuse in these shadow communications channels could become significant.

> *Messaging is being used by employees to connect them with their colleagues, and for business-related updates and conversations. Sometimes it happens with the knowledge of IT and/or comms, but at other times they're in the dark.*
>
> **Rachel Miller**
> Director, All Things IC

We have entered an era of shadow comms and 'dark' workplace messaging.

2.4 The need for speed

The benefits of messaging as a customer service channel are easy to recognise. When compared to phone support, agents can resolve multiple messaged queries whether that's using LiveChat, Line, Twitter DM, Facebook Messenger or WhatsApp Business API.

In its *State of Messaging 2020* report, Zendesk[10] found that 30% of businesses using messaging in their customer service mix cite 'faster time for resolution' in that channel. Typically, these same benefits of messaging apply to communications within the modern workplace.

More businesses are adopting messaging as an efficient means to communicate with their customers, but,alongside this, there's also increasing adoption of messaging for internal communications.

Messaging is popular because it's convenient and immediate. While we might not typically expect a reply to an email immediately, chat communications are typically much faster.

[9] https://www.allthingsic.com/shadow-communication-and-gdpr/
[10] https://www.zendesk.co.uk/message/state-of-messaging-2020/

Messaging apps encourage brevity. When used responsibly, actions and issues can be resolved quickly and messaging apps can help employees to become more productive.

The immediacy of communication and feeling of 'connectedness' is one of the reasons why messaging is popular with employees. However, according to National Grid's Group Head of Channels and Content, Andrew Hubbard, messaging as an internal comms channel is at a relatively immature stage: *" We're still in the awareness quagmire with messaging in internal communications. It's good to create a jolt in the business with messaging, but it's often one-way and very tactical.*

"It's clear that there are generations that find messaging a more user-friendly and socially acceptable form of communicating. This needs to be considered in the overall channels mix, but it can never be the sole form of communicating if you really want results."

2.5 Democratisation of workplace communication

The business world is increasingly shaped by the need for global communications. Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), video conferencing tools and collaboration platforms have risen in prominence, allowing businesses to communicate across the globe, with teams in different continents.

Messaging is a key part of this trend. Businesses can communicate with people all over the world without the additional cost associated with international phone calls. Unlike calls and meetings (unless they're recorded), messaging need not be ephemeral. Its permanency makes ideas and concepts real, tangible and immediately sharable.

Rachel Miller, All Things IC, explains: *"The biggest opportunity for businesses to use messaging is to connect the whole workforce, regardless of location or working patterns. They make previously invisible people and ideas visible and are a conversation owned by the organisation."*

Annabelle Dudman, VP Global Head of Business Planning, PlayStation, says messaging has democratised communication, allowing workers in other locations to take part in decision-making.

> *If you want to ensure that people are connected when they work across different time zones in a global organisation, you can't rely on face-to-face communications. Messaging has allowed organisations to become more democratic, particularly when it comes to the inclusivity of people working in different locations.*
>
> **Annabelle Dudman**
> VP Global Head of Business Planning, PlayStation

2.6 The acceleration of remote and flexible working

As well as being an essential part of the toolkit for global communications, the rise of messaging can also be attributed to the rise of remote working. Remote working is nothing new, but it has become a lot more popular and easier due to the proliferation of tools and technology.

The global COVID-19 health pandemic has brought the importance of remote working into mainstream consciousness. Such a widespread response can only be possible in a digital age, and in an era of uncertainty, it's no longer a 'nice-to-have' but rather a necessity.

Remote working will increasingly become the norm. Research from Flexjobs[11] showed that between 2005 and 2017, there was a 159% increase in remote work. More than 26 million Americans – around 16% of the total workforce – work remotely at least part of the time.[12] According to Buffer's *State of Remote Work 2019*[13], 99% of workers would like to work remotely at least some of the time for the rest of their careers. It's clear that remote working isn't going anywhere.

Figure 3: Remote and flexible working is a key driver of the rise of workplace messaging



Source: Andrea Piacquido

[11] https://www.flexjobs.com/blog/post/remote-work-statistics/
[12] https://www.bls.gov/news.release/atus.t06.htm
[13] https://buffer.com/state-of-remote-work-2019

Giving workers the freedom to adjust their schedules makes it easier to deal with the often unpredictable obligations of family life. It can also improve employee wellbeing. Allowing workers to set their own schedules has been cited as a way to improve the gender gap, according to the UK's Government Equality Office.[14]. More than three-quarters of parents who do not work flexibly indicated that they wanted to.[15]

Annabelle Dudman of PlayStation adds: *"I think messaging is completely essential. It's gaining ground due to the rise of flexible working and greater understanding around the importance of work-life balance. It just makes working so much more flexible if people can get in contact using messaging."*

Remote working is also beneficial for employers. A number of studies highlight the link between remote working and increased productivity because employees get to complete their job duties out of the office and on their own schedules.[16]

With flexible and remote working firmly on the agenda, video conferencing, VoIP and messaging technology have made it easier to address the needs of the modern workplace by enabling employers to provide a degree of flexibility and balance for workers.

2.7 The rise of the digital workforce

Another driver of the growth of messaging comes from changing workforce demographics. According to a study by IDC, a global provider of market intelligence, more than half of the workforce in Asia Pacific are millennials[17], and this is changing expectations around internal communications.

This global generation of 'digital natives' are used to convenience and are equipped with the ability to communicate from anywhere. Consequently, they expect the same level of convenience in the professional arena and have a preference for speed and simplicity when communicating at work.

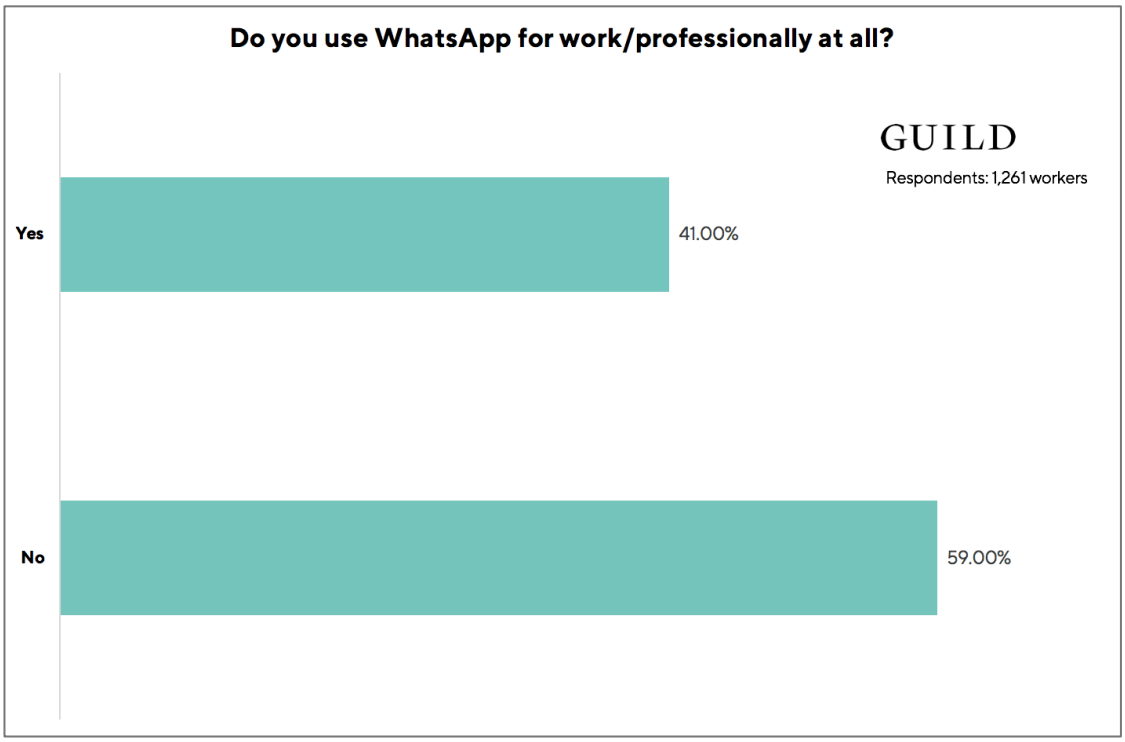
A 2018 future of work study by Microsoft found that those aged 18-21 used chat (messaging) more than email, in-person meetings, text or phone calls in the workplace.[18]

When looking at communications channels in the work environment, many companies provide their teams with officially sanctioned platforms. However, there's evidence to suggest that many workers are using consumer messaging apps *in addition* to agreed technology platforms for business communications.

Guild research has shown that 41% of UK workers admit to using WhatsApp at work, even though WhatsApp's terms of service prohibits non-personal use[19].

[14] https://equalities.blog.gov.uk/2020/01/16/how-flexible-working-can-help-close-the-gender-pay-gap/
[15] https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2020/jan/12/parents-workplace-families-survey-flexibility
[16] https://hbr.org/2019/08/is-it-time-to-let-employees-work-from-anywhere
[17] https://www.idc.com/getdoc.jsp?containerId=IDC_P39364
[18] https://news.microsoft.com/en-gb/2018/04/20/death-of-the-meeting-youngsters-prefer-to-use-chat-apps-to-communicate-at-work-microsoft-survey-reveals/

Figure 4: Research shows that 41% of UK workers use WhatsApp for work



Source: Guild[19]

What's clear is that many workers prefer to employ the tools they use in their daily lives, although employers may seek to provide a tool that meets their own needs first. Increasingly, there's a push towards simplicity in the form of tools that are more intuitive, efficient and easy to use.

[19] https://guild.co/blog/study-whatsapp-professional-use/

3. The Challenges of Messaging for Work

So what are the potential challenges and risks for companies using messaging in the workplace?

3.1 Investment – time and money

Many organisations are over-reliant on out-of-date internal communications technologies and legacy platforms. Subsequently, this has led to greater use of consumer messaging apps such as WhatsApp to plug the gap.

A 2015 study of 2,107 doctors and 4,069 nurses from the British Medical Journal (BMJ) highlighted that 33% of doctors and 6% of nurses were using app-based messaging to send patient-related clinical information to their colleagues.[20]

NHS documentation explicitly warns employees about the dangers of data privacy and non-compliance with EU legislation.[21]

The BMJ research also showed that 72% of doctors and 37% of nurses wanted a secure means of sending patient information.

Sector-specific compliant messaging app platforms *do* exist. Hospify is an NHS-compliant messaging app for doctors and medical staff to send and receive messages, and share patient information compliantly. Symphony is an instant messaging service aimed at highly regulated financial firms.

As the problem is only just starting to be acknowledged, awareness of these compliant alternatives will increase but currently most businesses are aware of the consumer messaging apps they've become used to in their personal lives.

There's clearly a demand for communications tools that are data-compliant, but many organisations are not only behind when it comes to messaging in the enterprise, they know they will need to invest time and budget in plugging the 'Shadow IT' and 'Shadow Comms' problems that exist.

There's a human and material cost of ignoring workplace messaging.

Multinational investment bank JPMorgan suspended one of its senior traders in January 2020, who allegedly was communicating with colleagues in a WhatsApp group. Messages on the app are encrypted from start to finish and can't easily be monitored by the

[20] https://innovations.bmj.com/content/1/4/174
[21] https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160606050915/https:/www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/ig-bull-21.pdf

compliance department, which is a problem for highly regulated firms that need to ensure employees aren't engaging in illegal activity like fraud or insider trading.[22]

Figure 5: Bloomberg, The Financial Times and MarketWatch reported the suspension of JPMorgan trader for WhatsApp use



Source: Twitter / Author's feed

Some companies have been proactive and addressed the risk of fines and non-compliance with industry regulation data privacy laws. In 2017, Deutsche Bank banned all text messages and communication apps on work-issued devices in order to improve its compliance standards.[23]

3.2 Governance and data privacy

3.2.1 Corporate oversight and control

A major concern for businesses is this lack of corporate oversight and control when consumer messaging platforms are used for business communications.

[22] https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-01-13/jpmorgan-puts-senior-credit-trader-on-leave-over-whatsapp-use

[23] https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-01-13/deutsche-bank-is-banning-text-messages-on-company-issued-phones

Depending on the jurisdiction, and industry sector, businesses have varying degrees of legal obligation to keep a record of conversations that their employees, suppliers or other stakeholders have with them in case there are legal challenges or problems where they need to provide a record of these conversations.

While employees may prefer to use WhatsApp for their private communications, consumer messaging apps are not suitable in a working environment. Notwithstanding, WhatsApp's own legal terms of use say that its platform should not *"involve any non-personal use of our Services unless authorised by us"*.[24]

Rachel Miller of All Things IC noted that many internal messaging groups are introduced by employees with good intentions, but many businesses do not even know what groups exist, let alone who is in them. Former employees or contractors could also still have access to corporate information that they should not. Miller added: *"It's common to have more than one messaging app for comms. It's not ideal, but they've often been introduced by employees themselves, so you need a compelling reason for them to switch to the 'official' one if they're already in the habit of using a certain platform."*

> *Most businesses are uncomfortable with the chatter on WhatsApp due to the lack of control around security.*
>
> *Many employees like these messaging platforms for their utility and their workflow capability. However, in terms of corporate liability, there are a range of corporate governance issues which present something of a challenge.*
>
> *One issue arises from the lack of an effective centralised management system, which is critical for the company's audit trail.*
>
> **Jo Vertigan**
> Managing Director, Obidos Consulting

Businesses have legal obligations around protecting their employees and ensuring adequate levels of oversight, governance and control, such as protecting against bullying in the workplace, harassment or inappropriate behaviours.

Furthermore, businesses cannot delete messages on consumer apps like WhatsApp, which might be inappropriate or damaging. And even if a business admin removes a member from a WhatsApp group, they cannot revoke access to the content, which might be commercially sensitive, unless the user deletes that content manually him/herself.

[24] https://www.whatsapp.com/legal

Permission, and allowing users to opt in when they're added to work groups, is of particular importance. On WhatsApp, the user and the employer have much less control over their settings and the information being shared.

Miller of All Things IC continued: *"The potential risk is for companies not to be close enough to the conversations. If they're all happening in locked environments, it makes knowledge management harder as you can't see what you know as an organisation. Compliance is an area comms and IT practitioners are mindful of, and need guidance on."*

3.2.2 Guidance and policy

Many organisations have simply lumped consumer messaging apps into employee social media policies and guidance, without fully considering the data privacy and compliance issues.

In some organisations, senior management have adopted consumer messaging apps and have therefore set precedents for their use by others in the organisation.

Marc Wright, Founder of simplycommunicate, a community for internal communications professionals, said: *"The elephant in the room is WhatsApp. Our audits have shown that a large chunk of management within organisations are using WhatsApp for work, particularly in East Asia. It's very difficult to get them off it, and this is a major problem for large organisations."*

The challenges around consumer messaging apps feel like a case of history repeating itself. Organisations faced similar issues in the early days of social media, particularly around how employees were using platforms such as Twitter or LinkedIn at work. There were questions around whether companies should police this behaviour. Some organisations responded by enforcing a total social media ban in the workplace.

> *Organisations need to treat messaging apps a little like they would (or should) be treating social media: as a formal part of organisational communications, if they're being used for work purposes or sent using work computing equipment.*
>
> *Anything that is transmitted as text (or indeed voice) in a work context has the potential to cause compliance failures or reputational damage if it's inappropriate, and even to be used in court.*
>
> *This is as true for messaging apps as it's for social media, phone calls and mailed letters.*
>
> Jeremy Swinfen Green
> Author of 'Digital Governance: Leading and Thriving in a World of Fast-Changing Technologies'

As social media usage matured over time, company policy has evolved to regulate usage of these channels at work.

There's also very little guidance for businesses from professional bodies supporting business organisations. Many have developed information for their members about social media and GDPR/CCPA privacy regulation compliance, but there appears to be no similar guidance related to messaging apps.

3.2.3 Data privacy risks

WhatsApp has had a number of high-profile hacks and more recently an issue where WhatsApp groups, chat history and personal phone numbers were publicly exposed when they appeared in Google searches.

These high-profile cases have led to more businesses considering whether their workplace messaging is private and GDPR or CCPA compliant. But there are just as many organisations and employees who are blissfully unaware of the data protection risks of using consumer messaging apps.

Marc Wright of simplycommunicate notes: *"People are unaware of the Data Protection Act and what it means. For instance, in the medical world, if you put any kind of patient information onto WhatsApp, you are breaking the law."*

In the UK, the ruling Conservative political party switched from WhatsApp to Signal following a number of high-profile leaks of private messages by ministers to the media.[25]

The European Commission followed suit in February 2020, announcing on an internal message board that its staff should use Signal.[25]

Given that Signal has the same data protection risks as WhatsApp, this raises questions about the risks and ethics of using consumer messaging apps in politics.

Ashley Friedlein, Founder and CEO of Guild, comments: *"Signal may be more secure than WhatsApp, or at least more transparent with its code, but still has the same GDPR and governance challenges. Surely public institutions should have work conversations on the record rather than move towards a level of secrecy and anonymity that puts them beyond the reach of the laws the politicians themselves enact?"*

Figure 6: Political parties moving to consumer messaging apps like Signal raises many questions about risk and ethics

[25] https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-commission-to-staff-switch-to-signal-messaging-app/



Source: Twitter/Guardian.com[26]

Organisations are particularly concerned when it comes to legislation, such as GDPR[27] and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA)[28]. Those that are still using WhatsApp are at a significant risk of non-compliance with data privacy laws.

Beyond this, the fact that two of the largest consumer messaging platforms are owned by Facebook is of particular concern, as Eva Appelbaum, Co-Founder and Director of Arc, explains: *"Up until recently, people didn't really register that WhatsApp was owned by Facebook. Because there's this natural distrust of Facebook now, people are starting to rethink their behaviour. There's a realisation that using WhatsApp comes with a significant risk as there's a vulnerability to it, particularly due to the fact that it's owned by Facebook and the privacy aspects of that. For organisations that are taking data sharing seriously, it can feel like a bit of a risk."*

> *Companies need to ask themselves if they really want to give Facebook access to their contacts. Organisations are wising up to the potential dangers of tech companies having an enormous insight into personal data and organisational data, when at best their motivations are not aligned to the client organisations and, at worst, they're competitors.*
>
> **Jo Vertigan**
> Managing Director, Obidos Consulting

WhatsApp's deletion policy, where messages can only be deleted up to an hour after sending, could be risky if employees accidentally disclose sensitive information. Simpler errors such as spelling mistakes or typos may seem minor and inconsequential, but can seem embarrassing in a professional environment.

[26] https://twitter.com/guardiannews/status/1207069367474819072?s=20

[27] https://guild.co/blog/is-whatsapp-in-breach-of-the-gdpr-a-lawyers-view/
[28] https://guild.co/blog/is-whatsapp-compliant-with-the-ccpa/

Encouraging employee engagement has long-term benefits for the company's organisational culture, but at the same time, this needs to be tempered with respect for concerns around data privacy laws: *"We want to allow people to talk and collaborate, but in a way that helps the business maintain standards,"* says Andrew Hubbard of National Grid.

Key to this is understanding what the organisation hopes to achieve in terms of facilitating collaboration, as Martyn Perks, Digital Workplace Consultant, notes: *"Businesses should ask themselves what they're trying to get out of messaging. In a very regulated space, the onus is on security, whereas in a more creative environment, where the focus is on innovation, messaging can encourage more openness and synchronicity between employees."*

3.3 The blurring of personal and professional communications

As work schedules become more flexible, increasingly there's a blurring of lines between what constitutes personal and professional use of business communications tools.

In some ways, the meshing of the different aspects of our lives facilitates a culture of innovation, leading to greater productivity among employees. Michael Litt, CEO of video marketing platform Vidyard, refers to the 'slackification of work', describing how Slack is used for internal comms as well as for socialising and sharing interesting content with colleagues at work.

In an article for Fast Company[29], Litt argues that it's futile to police how people are using communication tools at work, and that organisations should let the usage of messaging apps evolve organically.

PlayStation's Dudman makes a similar point, contending that shaping the flow of messaging is more about training employees to understand what's appropriate, rather than overtly controlling the conversation: *"Companies have a desire not to be too structured when it comes to controlling the flow of messaging within the organisation, as employees don't really like this approach, which can feel too heavy-handed and somewhat hierarchical. So giving people too many guidelines just isn't the right approach. I think it's about giving more broad training in professionalism at work; giving people too many policies is often not a good fit with the company's culture."*

> *The biggest opportunities for businesses using messaging lie in creating more autonomy in terms of how people work. It's a real strength to give employees more scope and flexibility, and to enable them to have ownership over their own work.*
>
> Martyn Perks
> Digital Workplace Consultant

[29] https://www.fastcompany.com/90236583/the-slackification-of-work

Litt maintains that one of the biggest drivers of workplace productivity isn't time spent at the desk; rather it's social cohesion, and instant messaging facilitating conversations between different teams is positive for productivity.

Employees may use chat-based tools to talk about topics other than work, but these 'off-topic' conversations enable workers to bond around shared interest. The 'off-topic' chats are a natural extension of the conversations in shared office spaces such as kitchen or the small talk during the day or whilst waiting for everyone to attend a meeting or conference call.

Messaging facilitates a culture of belonging as it's fundamentally about community; this goes to the heart of what makes us human, feeling like part of something bigger and allowing employees to feel more like themselves.

Team chat can also be an outlet for tensions and can act as a stress buster. Expressing frustrations in a healthy way can be positive for emotional regulation at work.

Organisations should be wary of policing their employees too much, as giving employees a degree of autonomy fosters a culture of innovation and team collaboration.

3.4 Mental health: work-life balance and employee burnout

As with all technologies, companies need to be mindful to strike a balance when it comes to technology usage and productivity, to avoid the point of diminishing returns. While it's true that technology can make us more productive, there's also a point at which it can prove to be a distraction.

Back in 2012, consulting firm McKinsey reported that workplace communications tools had the potential to improve workplace productivity by 25%.

However, according to the law of diminishing returns, there's a point at which messaging can result in information overload. Productivity blogger Darius Foroux has highlighted[30] that organisations have to know where to draw the line, before technology actually becomes more of a burden than a benefit. In summary,

> *One of the biggest challenges to remote working is people feeling isolated. They may struggle without social support. This can be mitigated by lots of rich, varied, online interactions. But if all communication is through screens it can still lead to mental health vulnerability within work. Checking in on employee well-being is vital.*
>
> Eva Appelbaum
> Co-Founder and Director, Arc

[30] https://dariusforoux.com/more-technology/

messaging tools are beneficial for productivity and communications, until there's too much of a good thing.

Arc's Appelbaum notes that businesses should also recognise that extended periods of remote working can lead to mental health issues for some employees.

As with many other areas of technology, it's crucial for businesses to set out goals and objectives, communicating what they hope to achieve from messaging. This would help employees to strike a balance between productivity and burnout, as Miller of All Things IC relates: *"I think one of the biggest challenges is when companies introduce messaging apps without a clear purpose. If they're not replacing another channel or have a clearly defined purpose, they can simply add to the noise and frustrate employees."*

So while companies may be concerned that messaging may lead to employees managing their time ineffectively, research suggests that social tools and messaging can increase productivity within the organisation.

Ignoring mental health issues can come at a great financial cost to the employer. According to the UK's Health & Safety Executive (HSE), 12.8 million work days were lost in 2018/19 due to work-related stress, anxiety and depression, accounting for 45% of all work-related ill health.[31] The Centre for Mental Health, a leading charity specialising in mental health, reported that mental health problems at work cost the UK economy £34.9 billion in 2018.[32]

3.5 Notifications and the 'right to disconnect'

As with any workplace communications platform, there can be pressure to read and respond to messages immediately. Many organisations have realised this can cause stress and burnout and are taking steps to ensure that employees take a healthy approach to out-of-hours business communications.

As messaging apps and email are so convenient and easy to use, it can also result in employees receiving too many messages and being unable to cope with the 'always-on' culture.

There's a danger that employees are unable to switch off after leaving the office, resulting in a negative effect on mental health and well-being, leading to employee burnout.

The 'right to disconnect' has been proposed as a human right, with some countries incorporating this into their laws. In 2016, French workers won the legal right to avoid checking their emails out of hours.[33] In Germany, while there aren't actual laws proposing the right to disconnect, many companies have a history of implementing company policies with employee mental health in mind.

[31] https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/dayslost.htm
[32] https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/news/mental-health-problems-work-cost-uk-economy-ps349bn-last-year-says-centre-mental-health
[33] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-38479439

In 2012, Volkswagen implemented a policy which meant BlackBerry would turn off its email servers and stop sending emails to off-shift employees. In addition, in 2013, Germany's employment ministry banned its managers from contacting staff after hours as part of a wider agreement on remote working.

Added to this is the further risk of liability for companies who choose to turn a blind eye to how their workers are communicating after hours, as Jo Vertigan of Obidos Consulting contends: *"If you have a team messaging each other during out-of-office hours, when employees should be investing in family time, then companies are potentially further at the risk of vicarious liability. It could be argued that companies are failing to protect their employees, in terms of their rights to work-life balance, downtime and family life."*

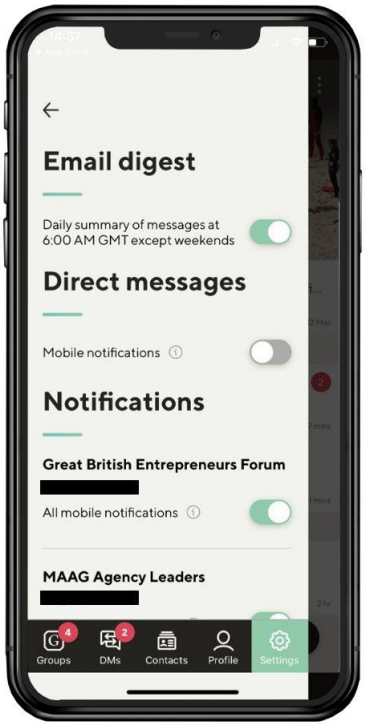
The solution to the work-life balance question not only lies in the apps providing the ability to switch off notifications, but also empowering employees to feel confident enough to make decisions to switch off when they need to. The role of the organisation is to make their workers feel comfortable enough to be able to say 'no' when needed.

Annabelle Dudman of PlayStation said: *"To deal with the issue of work-life balance we have to be very proactive in giving people the permission to manage their workload and communications themselves. In my experience, employees are able to set the boundaries themselves, and manage their own stress levels. The question of work-life balance is essentially the other side of flexible working. In a culture of flexibility, businesses must empower people to make these choices themselves, but equally, it's an issue that companies need to keep an eye on and be careful about."*

When employees use consumer messaging apps like WhatsApp for personal and professional purposes, it's almost impossible to disentangle the two 'modes'. Those who use these apps often have personal messages intruding at work, but more importantly work messages intruding on their personal time.

The simple solution is to keep personal contacts and chat in a personal messaging app, and work contacts and messaging in a dedicated app for work.

Figure 7: Employees should be empowered to switch off notifications from messaging apps and emails – this is a settings feature in Guild



Source: Author's Guild account

4. Definitions – Messaging Types

There is a lack of clear definitions for the different types of messaging in the workplace.

This section aims to provide a simple reference and definition of terms around workplace messaging.

Getting definitions right can help define the different technology required, but also different policies and approaches to messaging.

Currently, '(professional) messaging' seems to be interchangeable and indistinct from 'workflow communications'. Some journalists and experts are even highlighting consumer messaging apps as potential choices for the workplace.

Given that many still categorise workflow collaboration tools as 'messaging apps,' this report aims to clarify what constitutes a messaging app, and the differences between business messaging apps, work-based social networks, workflow communications and consumer messaging apps.

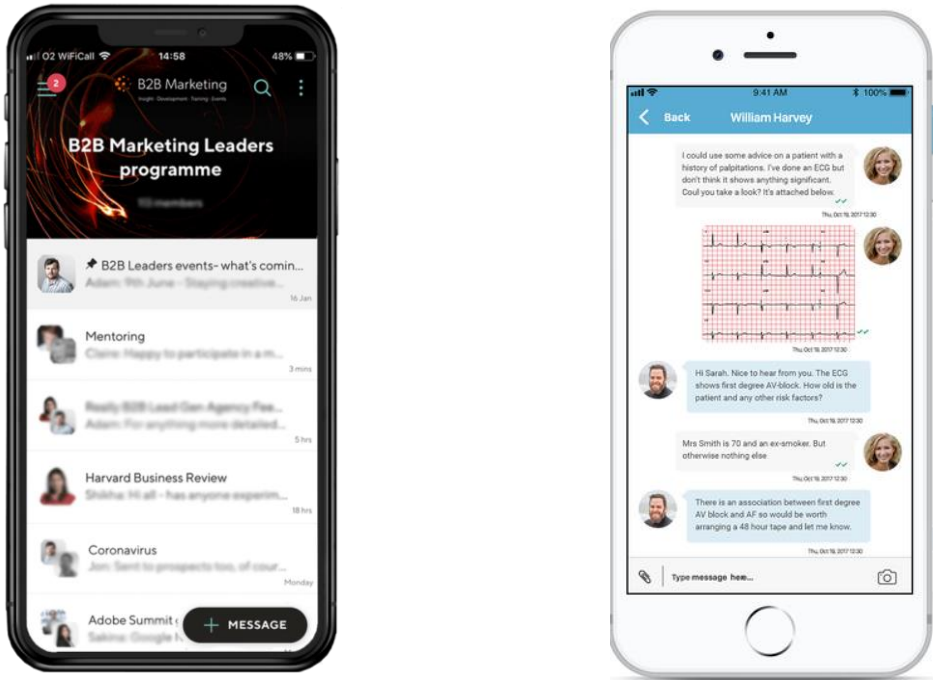
We have not defined 'email' below given that it's a well-understood professional communications tool and channel.

4.1 Professional messaging

Professional messaging, for use by businesses and individual professionals, is distinct from consumer messaging largely because of the required admin features, additional controls and legal compliance.

- Main purpose: fast, easy professional communication and connections
- Primary usage is on a mobile device via a native messaging app
- Form of messaging: in-app messages and mobile push notifications
- Used interpersonally for direct messages as well as for groups
- Used internally and externally across organisations for groups and individual messaging
- Extensively used for social, networking, community purposes
- Control, configuration, governance and compliance via app/web admin interface managed by business units

Figure 8: Guild and Hospify are examples of professional messaging platforms



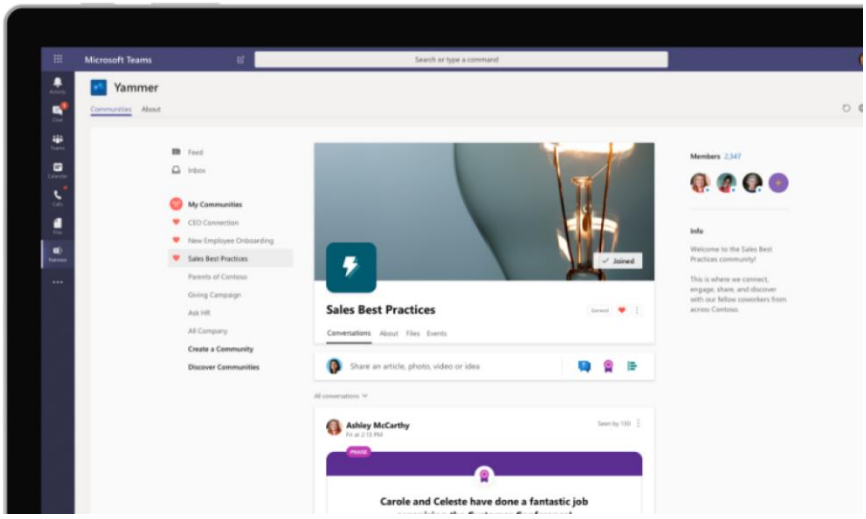
Source: Guild[34] and Hospify[35]

4.2 Work-based social networking

- Main purpose: building connections and relationships with colleagues
- Form of messaging: in-browser messages and email notifications
- Web and mobile usage, although mostly web-based via desktop/laptop
- Mostly used in groups
- Employer/host organisation owns the data and manages the users' profile and system access (except with LinkedIn)
- Used almost entirely internally and for the purposes of the host employer
- Control, governance and compliance provided by chosen software platform usually managed by IT and HR functions

[34] https://guild.co/blog/cmo-peer-support-group-guild/
[35] https://www.hospify.com/features-index

Figure 9: Yammer is an example of a work-based social networking platform



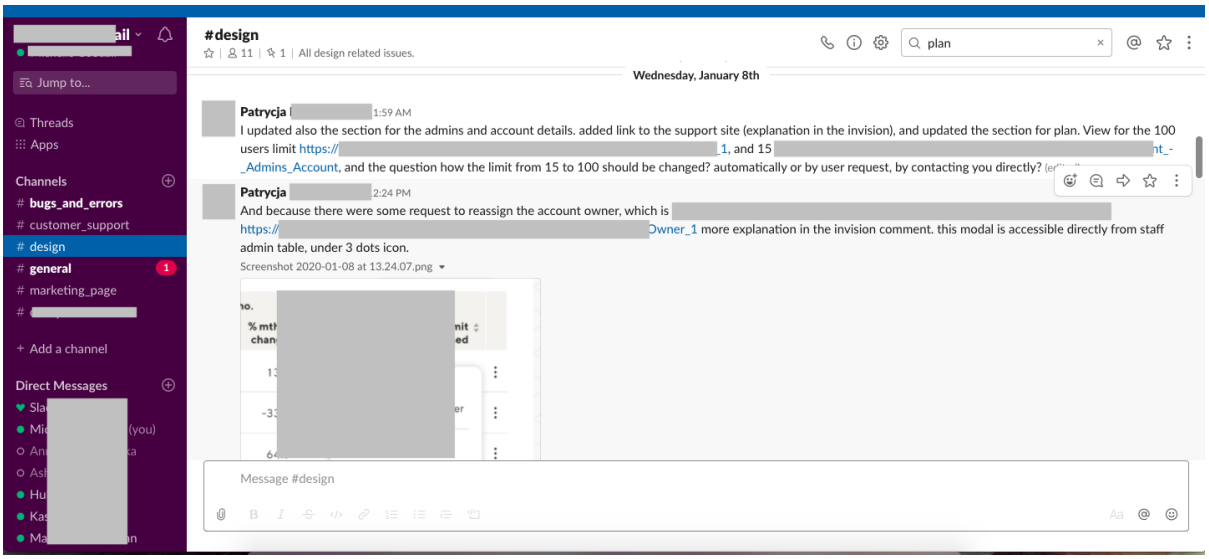
Source: Yammer[36]

4.3 Workflow communications for teams

- Main purpose: team collaboration around ongoing projects and tasks
- Web and mobile usage, although mostly web-based via desktop/laptop
- Form of messaging: in-browser messages and email notifications
- Used in teams with some direct messaging between team members
- Used largely internally
- Some social, networking, community use
- Control, configuration, governance and compliance via web admin interface often managed by IT function

[36] https://products.office.com/en-gb/yammer/yammer-overview

Figure 10: Slack is an example of a platform for workflow communications for teams

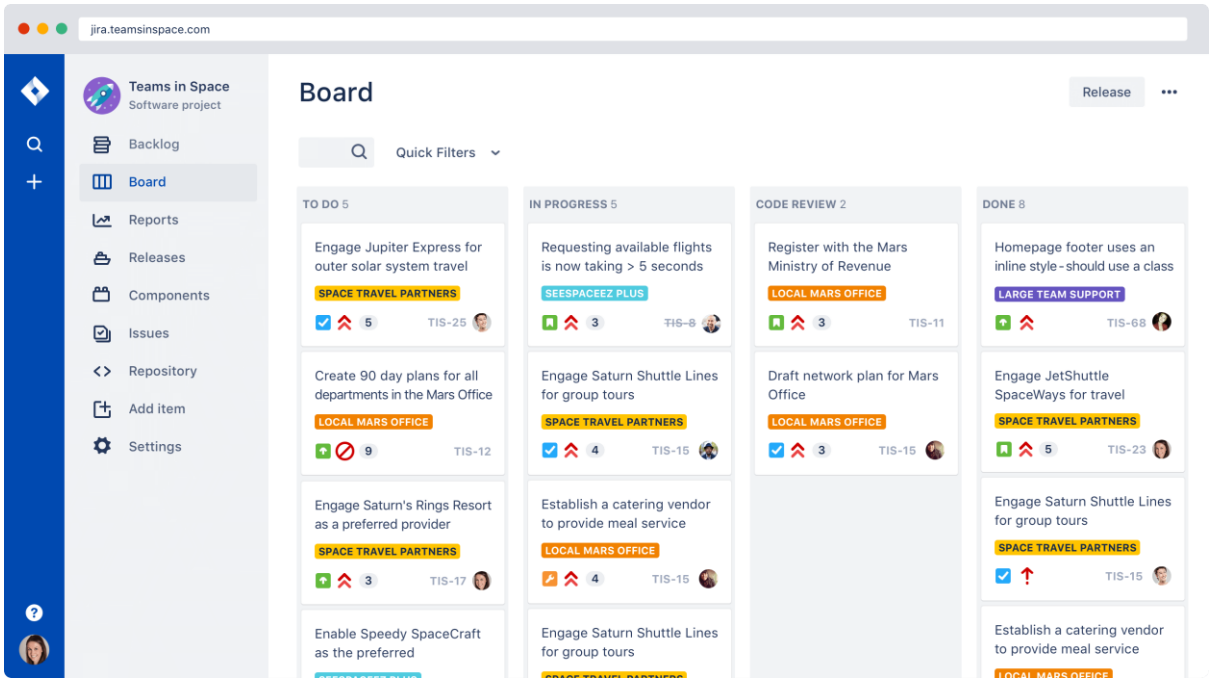


Source: Author's Slack Team

4.4 Project management

- Main purpose: organisation of tasks including capturing requirements, assigning responsibilities and tracking progress
- Web and mobile usage, although mostly web-based via desktop/laptop
- Form of messaging: web and email notifications
- Used by project teams
- Used largely internally
- Very little social, networking, community use
- Control, configuration, governance and compliance via web admin interface often managed by IT function

Figure 11: Jira is an example of a project management platform



Source: Jira[37]

4.5 Consumer messaging or chat

- Main purpose: fast, easy communication and connections between personal contacts and connections
- Primary usage is on a mobile device via a native messaging app or the direct messaging features of social media (e.g. Instagram or Snapchat Direct Messaging)
- Form of messaging: in-app messages and mobile push notifications
- Used interpersonally for direct messages as well as for groups
- Individuals control their own login and profile but the platform providers (e.g. Facebook Inc) access their data and contacts (for example, when you are asked whether you wish to 'find your phone contacts on Messenger')
- Used frequently in a non-compliant way internally and externally across organisations, both for personal professional interests
- Extensively used for social, networking, community purposes
- Control and settings via app/web admin interface managed by individual
- Consumer messaging apps, when used by individuals in the workplace, do not provide business control or governance

[37] https://www.atlassian.com/software/jira

5. The Market Landscape of Messaging Solutions

According to research firm IDC, the 'team collaborative applications' market was valued at $3.5 billion in 2019, and is forecast to grow by 70% in the next three years.[38]

'Dynamic chat rooms' are one of the key elements of some of the team collaboration tools, but this IDC market study did not include standalone enterprise/business or professional messaging or chat apps such Guild, Hospify or Symphony.

Figure 12: Comparison table highlighting the differences between workplace or workflow collaboration tools (Slack/MS Teams), consumer messaging (WhatsApp, Signal, Telegram) and business or professional messaging (Guild)

Guild competitor comparison table

Microsoft Teams, Slack, Signal, Telegram, WhatsApp

	GUILD		slack			
Business / Consumer	Business, Individual professionals	Business	Business	Consumer	Consumer	Consumer
Market	Professionals, SMEs, Mid-market	SMEs, Mid-market, Enterprise	SMEs, Mid-market, Enterprise	Individuals	Individuals	Individuals
Business model	Free & paid	Mostly paid (as part of O365)	Free & paid	Donation & grant funded	Funded by Initial Coin Offering	Ad-funded
Cost	Low (£7/user/yr)	Medium-High (£110+/user/yr)	Medium-High (£60+/user/yr)	Free (for now)	Free (for now)	Your data for advertising
Main purpose	Communications, networking	Workflow comms, project collaboration	Workflow comms, project collaboration	Communications	Communications	Communications
Unit of users	Groups, individuals, communities	Teams	Teams	Groups, individuals	Groups, individuals	Groups, individuals
Branding, look & feel, personality	Professional, elegant, customised to you	Corporate, utilitarian, productivity	Clean, functional	Functional, neutral	Functional, neutral	Familiar, functional
Level of complexity / feature set	Simple	Medium-High	Medium-High	Simple	Simple	Simple
Level of integration with other systems	Low	High	High	Very low	Very low	Very low
Visibility / accountability of identities and message content	Medium-High	Medium-High	Medium-High	Very low	Very low	Very low
Level of privacy compliance (GDPR, CCPA etc)	High	High	High	Low	Low	Low
Level of analytics	High	High	High	Very low	Very low	Very low
Level of admin / management features	Medium	High	High	Very low	Very low	Very low
Level of corporate governance / control	High	High	High	Very low	Very low	Very low

Source: Guild[39]

As with any workplace technology, there can be disagreements about workflow or enterprise messaging solutions, as Arc's Eva Appelbaum suggests: *"Often there's a bit of a tension between the teams that like to use workflow messaging tools such as Slack and the company's strategy to roll out enterprise-wide suites like Office 365. The teams that like*

[38] https://www.vox.com/recode/2019/5/1/18511575/productivity-slack-google-microsoft-facebook
[39] https://guild.co/blog/guild-competitor-comparison-table/

simpler messaging are often resistant to change, but organisations want to get people off other platforms so that they can grow full adoption of their own choice of solution."

In this section, we have tried to simplify and highlight where some consumer and business messaging apps and workflow collaboration technologies sit based on business needs and drivers. We've placed them alongside more familiar workplace communications channels such as email and LinkedIn.

5.1 Consumer messaging vs. professional messaging

Consumer messaging apps such as WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger have been clearly built with the consumer and personal use in mind. Previous sections explained why these apps are not compliant in a professional environment, unless being used for specific customer service and notification applications.

There is a distinct category of professional messaging apps built specifically for workplace messaging, including standalone apps such as Hospify for healthcare professionals and Guild for all types of business and organisations.

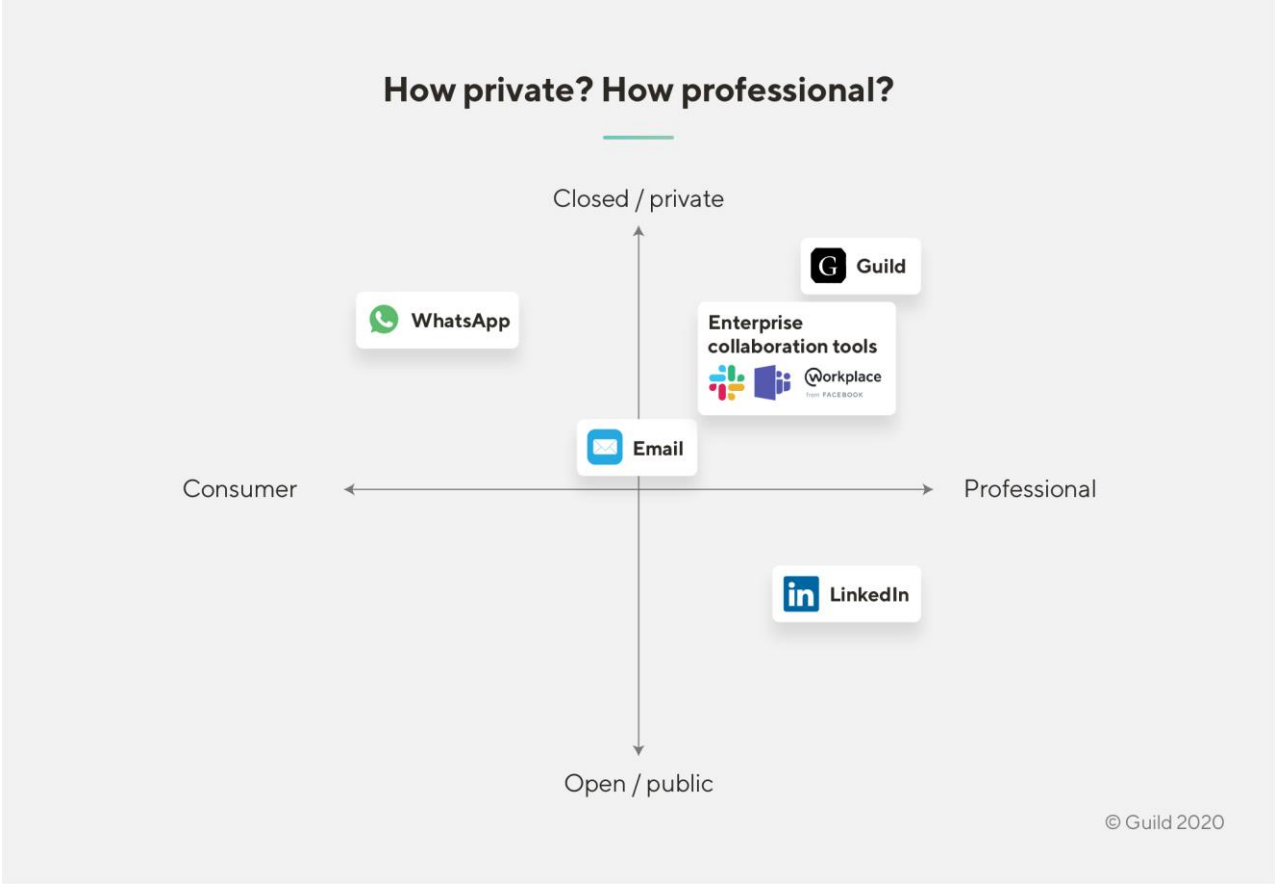
These professional messaging apps have been developed for business rather than consumer use. Professional messaging apps are built with data privacy compliance and corporate governance requirements in mind.

There are chat and messaging features in work-based social networking and workflow communications for team tools, such as Slack, Office 365 and Yammer.

Workplace for Facebook is an example of a workplace collaboration tool. An issue that some of our report contributors mentioned is that Facebook's platform operates in a walled garden. This makes it difficult to share data across different platforms and collaborate, as Marc Wright of simply-communicate notes: *"Facebook has a real problem with Workplace by Facebook because they built it in a walled garden so it doesn't really integrate well with Office 365, SharePoint or Salesforce, for example. So that means that their uptake has been very low."*

Rachel Miller of All Things IC noted: *"The most common messaging app in the UK is WhatsApp, which is typically seen as 'unofficial, but useful' by many organisations. There are also specific platforms such as Slack and Yammer. How they're categorised depends on how 'official' they're in the company."*

Figure 13: How private and professional should your chosen tool be?



Source: Guild

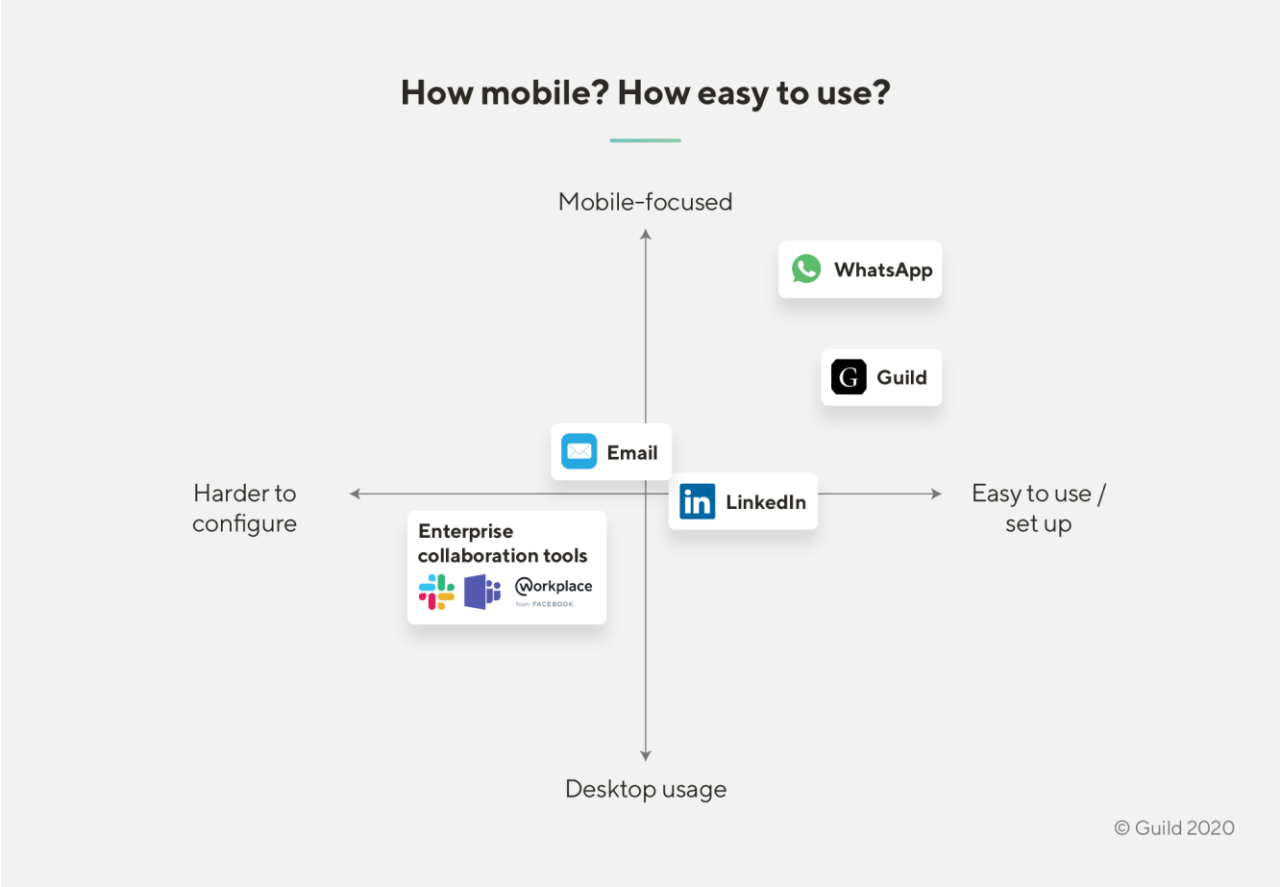
5.2 Flexibility and ease of use

Messaging apps can also be categorised by how easily they can be used on mobile. With an increasingly mobile, remote workforce, it's important that companies focus on messaging platforms that provide high degrees of flexibility and ease of use on mobile devices.

Whilst workplace collaboration tools can be used on mobile devices, they're usually more tied to the desktop. WhatsApp's 'mobile-first, access anywhere' design explains in part why the platform is so popular.

Another consideration is ease of set-up/configuration and usability. Consumer and professional messaging apps like WhatsApp and Guild are easy to set up and use. Enterprise collaboration tools such as Microsoft Teams and Slack require a greater degree of preparation and time to configure, especially when integrating with other third-party tools.

Figure 14: How mobile and how easy to set up should your chosen tool be?



Source: Guild

5.3 Connections or community

The use of messaging apps has overtaken the use of social networks. One of the key drivers for this is the shift in social activity from public social networks towards a greater focus on community and smaller, more private forms of messaging.

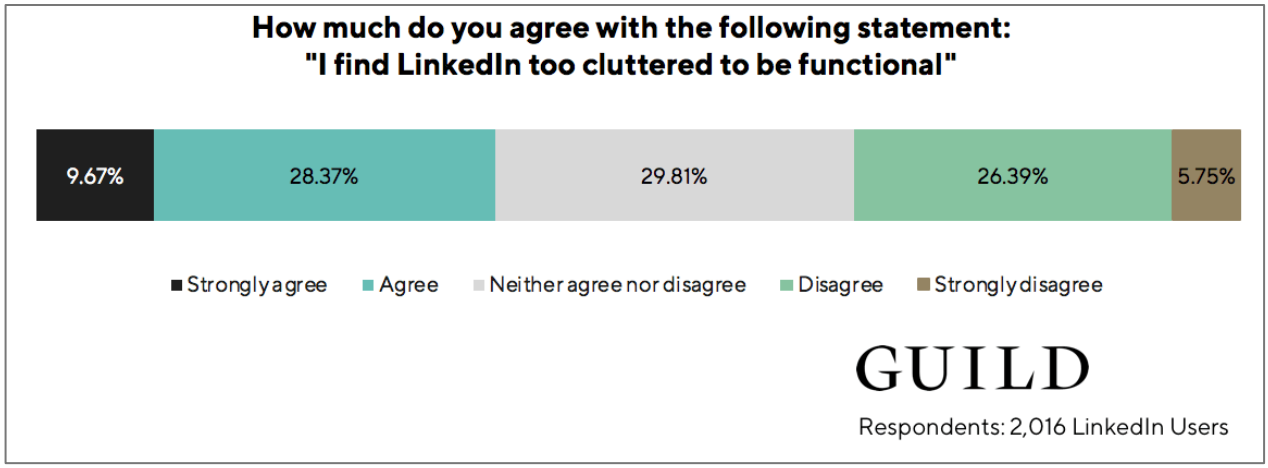
Although platforms such as LinkedIn are central to many communication, marketing and business development strategies, LinkedIn has removed a number of features that made it a formidable professional community platform for internal teams, external groups and as a personal customer relationship management tool (CRM). Engagement levels in LinkedIn groups are low and many have become full of 'spammers' and low-quality members.

Like Facebook, LinkedIn's business model is ad-funded and the impact of increased numbers of adverts on the platform has had an impact on how professionals both perceive and use the platform for messaging clients and connections. A Guild study of more than 2,000 UK LinkedIn users found that 38% found LinkedIn 'too cluttered to be functional'.[40]

[40] https://guild.co/blog/linkedin-user-research-professional-networking/

The LinkedIn platform is designed in a way that enables instant, rather than thoughtful connections and professional networking. Connections can be made with a single press of the 'connect' button. The same study showed that professional LinkedIn users feel that the quality of their personal networks has deteriorated over time. We recommend reading the Guild LinkedIn study for more detail.

Figure 15: LinkedIn's successful ad-funded model has led to dissatisfaction among its users



Source: Guild[40]

Compared to a professional social network like LinkedIn, workflow collaboration and professional messaging apps are more suited to facilitating communications among teams, departments and smaller networks. This is where high-value communications can take place among a lower volume of known and trusted contacts.

It's important to consider how well free and enterprise tools scale, and how useful they are, once the size of a team or group reaches a particular milestone in terms of numbers. Eva Appelbaum notes: *"Over time, the attractiveness of certain platforms wanes. Some tools are great when there's a small number of people, topics and messaging to manage, but when you've got your entire department on it, it can actually be really confusing."*

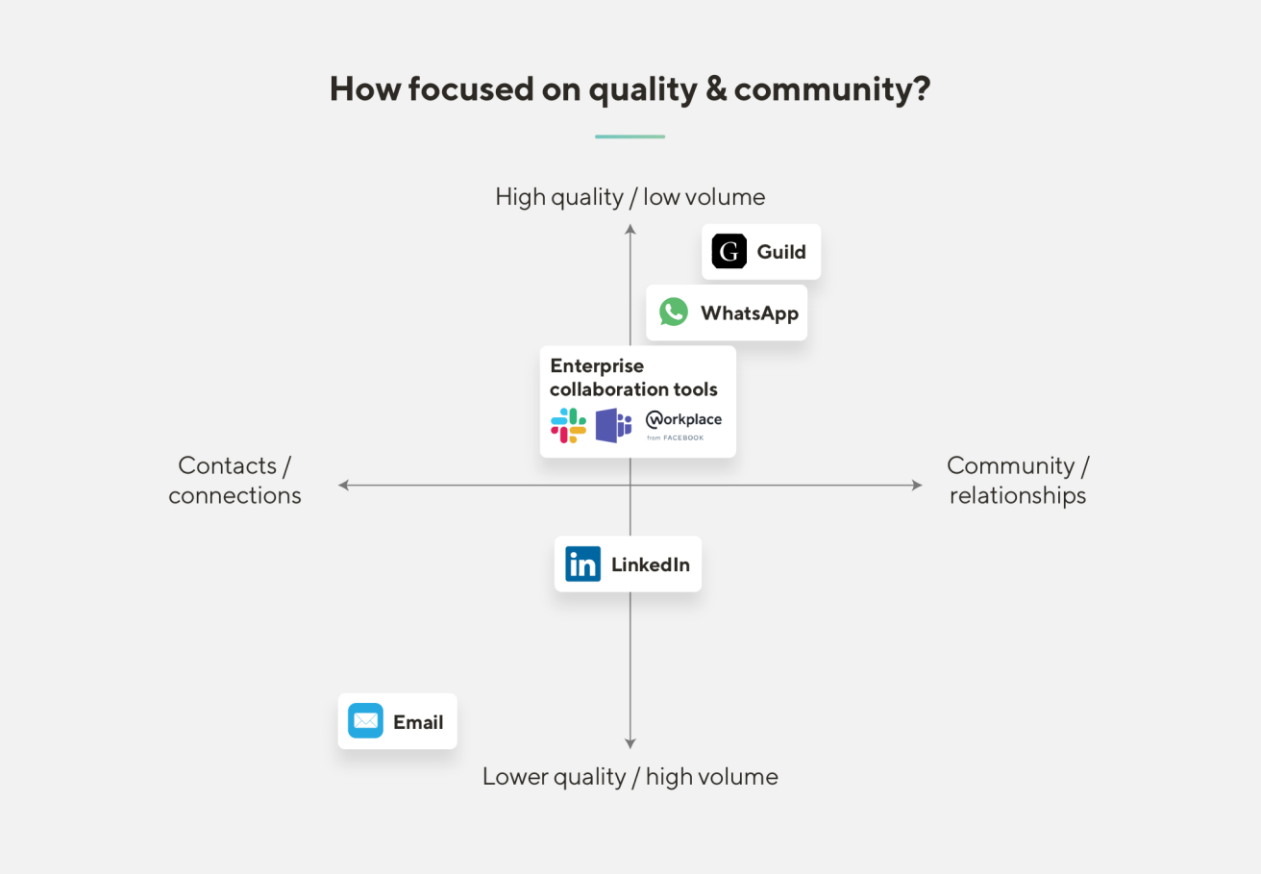
If you plan to use messaging apps or workflow collaboration tools to build communities then consider not only which platforms offer the right features, but also which ones are cost-effective as things scale.

Slack is designed for teams collaborating on projects rather than communities. These teams tend to be small – even if there are lots of teams – and as this is business software it's reasonable for Slack to charge around £6 per active user per month (around £70 per year per team member).

If you had quite a small community of 100 members and needed to move to the paid version of Slack, then you will need to spend around £7,000 a year. One hundred people is a large team but a small community.

It's also worth considering that more feature-rich workplace collaboration tools are difficult to use on mobile.

Figure 16: How focused on quality and community should your chosen tool be?



Source: Guild

5.4 Internal or external messaging

As previously noted by Rachel Miller of All Things IC, in many organisations, employees are using more than one messaging app, which means that it's also important to consider the purpose behind using a particular tool.

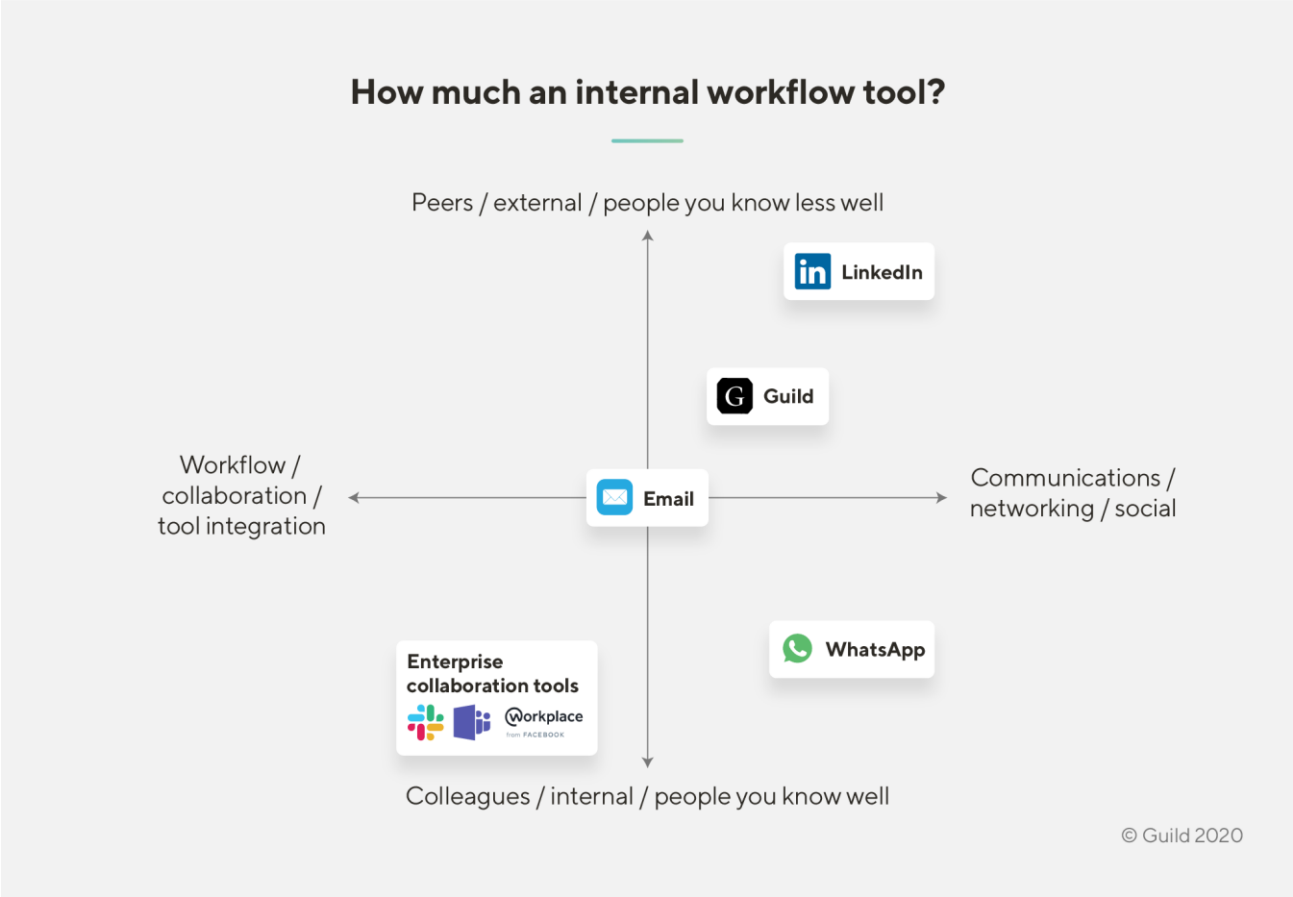
Companies should set clear guidelines around what they hope to achieve from a particular communications tool, whether that's a professional use of LinkedIn, workflow collaboration tools or messaging apps.

There's clearly a place for workplace collaboration, as the model below shows, but equally standalone messaging platforms are important for engaging employees. In a creative environment, encouraging conversation is crucial for fostering a culture of openness, team cohesion and innovation.

Standalone professional messaging apps such as Guild facilitate internal communications between peers and colleagues, as well as business contacts *external* to the organisation like

customers, suppliers and other stakeholders. A consumer tool, such as WhatsApp, may be better suited to social communication and non-business networking.

Figure 17: Will your tool be used for internal or external communications?



Source: Guild

6. Best Practices for Professional Messaging

What are the criteria for successful adoption of messaging in the workplace?

To summarise, dynamic real-time messaging communication in and outside of the organisation should be underpinned by:

1. Auditing how messaging is currently being used
2. Developing a strategy for workplace or business messaging
3. Developing a model to show what form of professional messaging to use when, and why, based on the purpose of the communication and the needs to be met
4. Creating a messaging guidance framework for employees – adapt the 'Hierarchy of Messaging' model (see section 6.3) as a suggested starting point
5. Aligning messaging to existing processes and policies (security, data compliance), and corporate governance
6. Developing mechanisms to monitor success, employee engagement and well-being
7. Empowering employees to feed back and shape the role of messaging in the organisation

6.1 Identify where messaging is currently used in the workplace

While many companies may officially disapprove of the use of messaging apps at work, like social media before it, it's important to get on the 'front foot' rather than ignore use of messaging platforms in the organisation.

Senior management may actively encourage or discourage messaging at work, but in terms of business strategy and corporate governance, organisations should audit and put some form of formal strategy and guidance in place.

Identifying sanctioned and unofficial messaging channels and groups in your organisation, and considering whether they pose a risk or are working well, is an obvious first step.

Using an audit template, like the one illustrated below, helps to identify compliant and successful messaging use cases and also compliance 'weak spots' in an organisation.

Figure 18: An example organisational messaging audit template

Messaging platform	Name of group	Internal or external	Owner (department and individual)	Official/ sanctioned?	Action
WhatsApp	PR Agency Comms	Internal/ External	Comms – Jo	Unofficial	Remind teams of employee guidance and policies; move to professional messaging platform
	North Region Volunteer Team	Internal/ External	Fundraising – Ronke	Unofficial	Remind teams of employee guidance and policies; move to professional messaging platform
WhatsApp API	Customer Service	Internal/ External	Customer Service – Clare	Official	No action
Slack	Development Team	Internal	Digital – Sam	Official	No action
	UX Team	Internal	Digital – Rashid	Official	Add CS team
Facebook Messenger	Customer Service	External	Customer Service – Clare	Official	No action
Twitter	Customer Service	External	Customer Service – Clare	Official	No action

6.2 Formulate a messaging strategy

Where messaging fits into an organisation's strategy will vary according to whether it's highly regulated as well as its business sector and internal culture.

Where the oversight for messaging sits, who owns that strategy and how teams will use messaging will depend on the organisation.

It's worth remembering that the most successful early social media approaches and strategies from the likes of Dell and Adobe were developed by cross-functional teams including HR, communications (PR and internal communications), IT, customer experience, customer service, compliance and legal, marketing and digital teams.

Organisations need to consider a number of business areas and clearly set out goals and objectives. This will of course vary according to the organisation's specific requirements.

As Larraine Solomon, Managing Director of Inspiring Conversations, notes: *"To be successful you need to be clear on the business outcomes you are seeking to achieve."*

6.3 Define how messaging adds value to the mix of existing business communication channels

We rarely ask ourselves *"why do I use email?"* or *"why do I meet people face to face?"* Meetings and emails are essential internal and external business communication tools, as are professional social media networks such as LinkedIn.

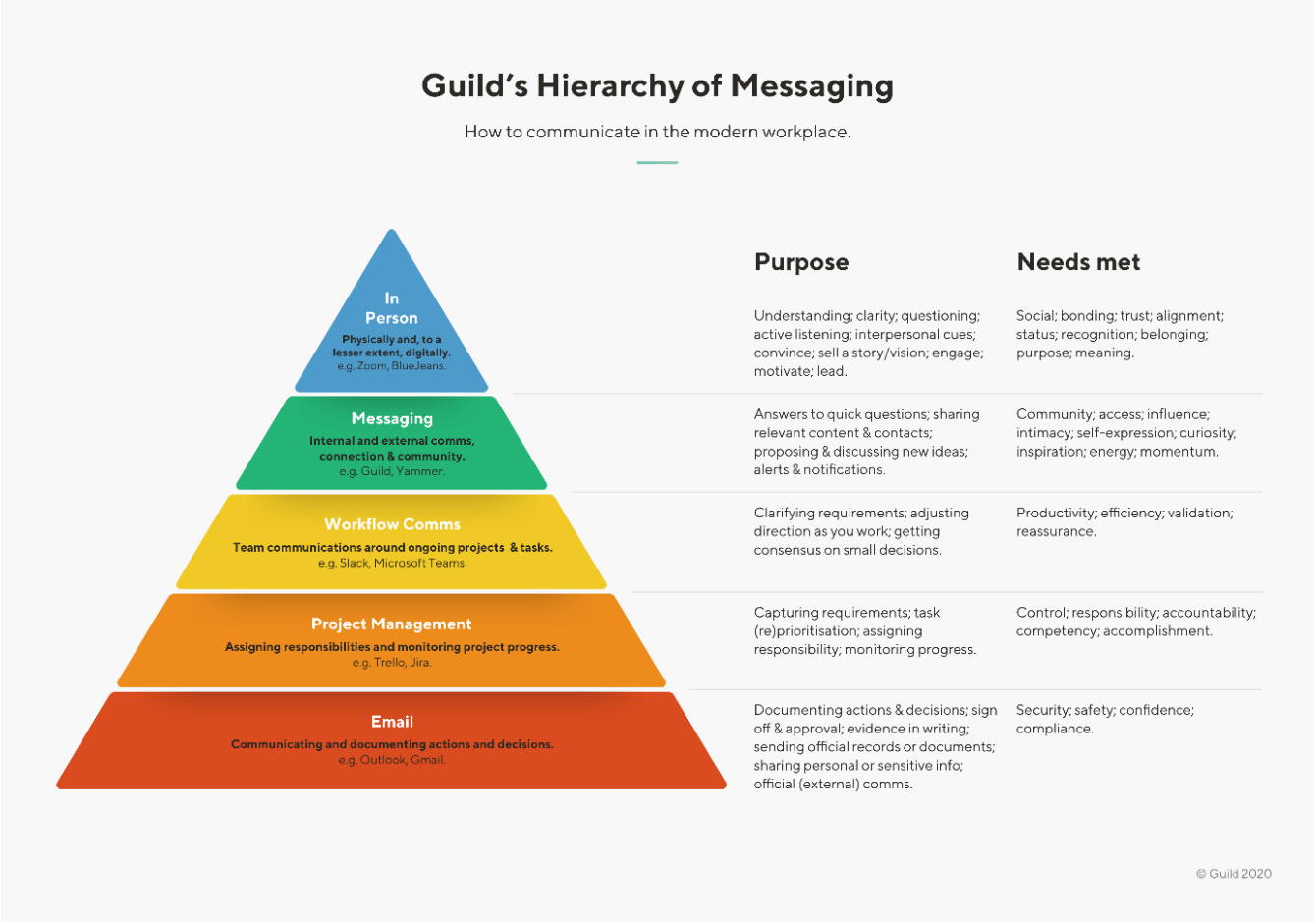
As we introduce more digital tools into the internal and external communications mix, such as project management, workflow communications, messaging and video conferencing, it's useful to consider the *purpose* of that medium and tool as well as the communication, business and personal needs that can be met by that specific medium.

It's also helpful to frame thinking around where specific media perform better than others and when it's appropriate to 'hand off' to another medium or channel.

In organisations that have used messaging and workflow collaboration tools for some time, email has become more of an 'in-writing' tool where decisions are documented, time-stamped and shared formally rather than a medium where discussion takes place.

Guild's 'Hierarchy of Messaging' framework (see Figure 19) proposes which messaging approaches are appropriate for broad purposes. It also highlights the needs met for the individual participants in the different channels of communication.

Figure 19: Guild's Hierarchy of Messaging



Source: Guild[41]

To illustrate how you might use this model, here is an example showing how each medium is used at Guild, and where there's a 'handoff' to other communication media:

In person (face-to-face, or BlueJeans for video conferencing)

- Daily huddles or check-ins with team members
- Weekly face-to-face team meetings, video conferencing if physical meetups not possible
- Client, partner, supplier and media meetings
- Social and team building events
- Handoff to messaging, email, project management and workflow platforms

Messaging (Guild)

- Weekly team meeting agenda sharing/building

[41] https://guild.co/blog/messaging-in-the-workplace-report

- Daily highlighting of availability
- Real-time updates, collaboration and questions related to projects, PR, marketing, sales, servicing, technical/product updates
- Sharing and discussing inspiration and new ideas
- Real-time direct messaging: bonding, arranging lunch/meetings, venting, non-work-related chatter etc.
- Community management of external groups (e.g. investors, advisors, advocates, Professional Community Leaders etc.)
- Real-time collaboration with PR, UX, digital marketing agency and other partners/suppliers
- Handoff to email when decisions need to be time-stamped and documented or shared with people outside of messaging groups
- Handoff to project management and workflow communications to specific team when required (e.g. tech team for product backlog or customer support)

Workflow Communications (Slack)

- Working with remote development/design teams to clarify task details as they evolve
- Refining specifications and reprioritising tasks in the backlog as worked on
- Bringing in relevant team members (e.g. User Experience) as required for particular tasks or to answer particular questions
- Agreeing/assigning responsibility for smaller tasks and iterations
- Checking in to monitor progress on agreed tasks
- Audio/video calls and status meetings
- Handoff to project management (e.g. Trello, Jira, InVision) when units of work need capturing, defining and tracking or assets need creating in appropriate tools and environments

Project Management (Trello, Jira)

- Creating projects and assigning responsibility, tasks, deliverables and milestones
- Capturing and prioritising requirements
- Monitoring the progress of units of work, or deliverables/assets, in a structured and systematic way
- Measuring the performance and productivity in the throughput of work (e.g. velocity, efficiency etc.)
- Provides an audit trail and documentation for agreed plan and projects

Email (Gmail)

- Documenting and formalising decisions made in other channels (e.g. in person or messaging)
- Sending official and private documents or decisions (e.g. contracts)
- Formalising signoffs and approvals 'in writing'
- Anything that needs evidence 'in writing' (e.g. sending official records or documents)
- Any communication that has personal or sensitive information (e.g. HR)
- For official (external) comms (e.g. with customers, suppliers, shareholders, journalists etc.)

6.4 Choose your messaging tools

In section 5 we provided a messaging comparison table and some simple decision matrices to help consider some questions to ask when choosing messaging tools for your business.

The tools may vary, and organisations may opt to use more than one tool, but this should be clearly laid out in the company's strategy.

There are many places where you can conduct your research and countless review sites and blog posts evaluating workflow communications tools like Slack or Microsoft Teams, but very few places that compare professional or business messaging apps.

The marketplace will reach early maturity when research and advisory firms such as Gartner and Forrester Research include emerging dedicated business and professional messaging apps as their own category, distinct from consumer messaging apps.

Meanwhile, use cases such as those summarised below are helpful, as well as asking peers what their communications 'tech stack' looks like.

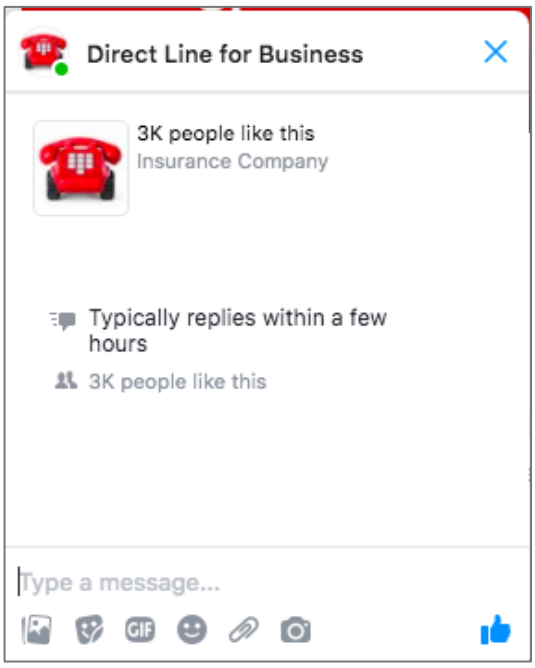
WhatsApp Business API

By integrating the WhatsApp Business API, international airline KLM offers customers flight status updates and information about their boarding passes, travel details and booking confirmations in the app.

Facebook Messenger

UK insurance company Direct Line provides customer service to their business insurance customers through Facebook Messenger as a part of its commitment to end-to-end servicing in social media.

Figure 20: Direct Line for Business uses Facebook Messenger as a customer service channel



Source: Direct Line for Business Facebook Page[42]

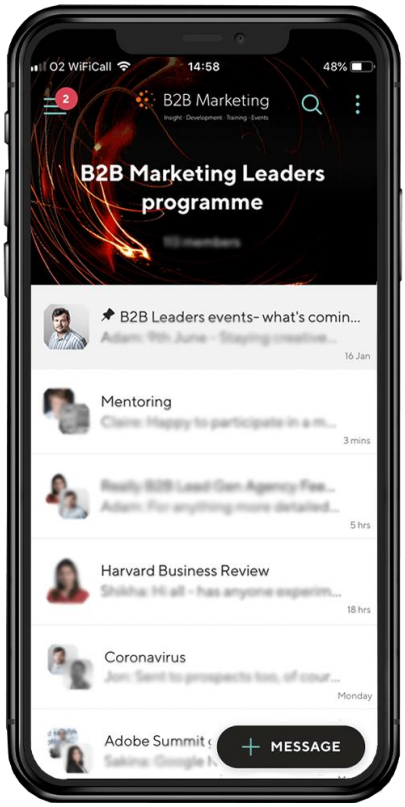
Guild

Membership organisation The Nutrition Society wanted a messaging tool to facilitate communication among students, staff and members. The society needed to provide students with a mobile, private messaging forum to communicate among themselves and resolve issues in a timely manner. The private, GDPR-compliant messaging app with a familiar and mobile-optimised interface has helped to increase engagement, particularly among Generation Z users.[43]

Publisher, media and events business B2B Marketing has set up and hosts a peer-support network of chief marketing officers on Guild, to facilitate peer discussions and chat about the challenges of running a marketing department. The members are from many different companies across the whole of the UK. It's a highly active community of more than 100 B2B marketing leaders. The community is highly engaged and has monthly physical meetups. Communities like this provide membership value and positively impact renewals in a competitive sector.[44]

[42] https://www.facebook.com/DirectLineforBusiness/
[43] https://guild.co/blog/case-study-the-nutrition-society/
[44] https://guild.co/blog/cmo-peer-support-group-guild/

Figure 21: B2B Marketing's peer support community of CMOs on business messaging app Guild



Source: B2B Marketing /Guild

Symphony and WeChat

In 2017, Deutsche Bank banned all text messages and communication apps on work-issued devices in order to improve its compliance standards. In 2019 the company introduced WeChat onto its Symphony platform.

The advantage of a solution that integrates both WeChat and Symphony is that it enables the bank to be able to communicate with clients in real time, while also maintaining thorough and rigorous standards of data security and privacy protection.

Symphony's platform, which has been designed for investment banking, allows financial institutions to maintain compliance and adhere to governance. Deutsche Bank's corporate clients can complete multiple steps in the FX trade process, as clients have access to trade data, which they're able to share in real time.

Financial services are highly regulated, so security and compliance are of paramount importance. Investment banking requires a tailored solution; Symphony's access to trade data enables bankers to deliver market commentary directly from the trading floor as well as deliver content from editorial teams directly to the client.

Hospify

The Surrey-based Frimley Park NHS hospital trauma teams comprising surgeons, anaesthetists and other members are responsible for coordinating and performing hip fracture surgery on elderly patients. They use the Hospify mobile messaging app to stay in touch with each other – privately, compliantly and in real time – so that the right people can be mobilised immediately when new complex cases come in.[45]

6.5 Align with productivity, performance and well-being metrics

Social and communications tools can make employees more productive, but there's a fine line between tools being useful for productivity and being a distraction. Organisations need to manage productivity by keeping an eye on metrics and focus on quantifying team performance.

Productivity metrics can also help to measure team effectiveness. This is measured by looking at the quality of employee output and aligning with the organisation's goals. Metrics will vary from company to company, but it's important to look at qualitative measures (such as employee well-being) as well as quantitative outputs.

As well as looking at the work that employees are producing (and measuring this against the company's goals), it's equally important to keep staff motivated. All of this in combination builds an effective company culture that is not only efficient, but also recognises the quality of output and takes into account employee satisfaction.

6.6 Empower employees to give feedback

In some ways messaging has democratised communication, as it allows employees at all levels to have a voice. The flipside to that is information overload, with employees continuing to work after office hours.

However, as Martyn Perks notes, the solution is to empower employees so that they're able to voice their concerns to senior management: *"Having a mobile at work is something that will inevitably follow you home, but if everyone's treated like an adult, this includes your relationship with your manager. You should be able to tell your manager, face-to-face: 'I'm not a slave to my work and I need to work respectable hours as agreed in my contract; why are you pursuing me to work after hours? That's not what we agreed upon.'"*

It's crucial for organisations to put communications channels in place that encourage employees to give feedback and engage with senior management. Perks continued: *"It can be quite difficult sometimes, as workers feel unable to speak out and challenge anti-social work practices. Sometimes employees may feel isolated. And in a very competitive environment where jobs are scarce, it's inevitable that workers might feel pressured to work beyond their normal hours."*

[45] https://www.hospify.com/case-studies-orthopaedic

When communicating with employees, it's important for managers to maintain an open-door policy. Key to this is creating an environment where trust, accountability and open dialogue are at the forefront of communications. Employees should feel that information is being shared with them, so that they're able to raise any questions or question policies. Transparency helps to bring the team together and create a more harmonious working environment for everyone.

6.7 Develop a messaging policy

Putting an official policy in place serves as a reminder to employees to be careful about what information they're sharing across the organisation and to use common sense when it comes to disseminating data. Moreover, a formal policy not only protects the rights of the organisation, but also that of the employee, in case that sensitive information is compromised.

"While messaging can feel mundane, the truth is, it's mundane until something goes wrong. For example, in the case of child protection without an appropriate policy in place, you could have teachers just using WhatsApp to message each other. If that child is at serious risk of harm or abuse, you've got a real problem both as an employer and as a teacher, if the teacher is using WhatsApp to communicate."
Jo Vertigan, Managing Director, Obidos Consulting

Arc's Eva Appelbaum suggests that conventions around messaging could be woven into the company's broader HR policies that cover email, calls and social media*: "In many sectors, businesses should be telling employees – point blank – that they're not allowed to use messaging channels that do not comply with GDPR for any work conversations. In addition, we all should be mindful of our behaviour and etiquette when messaging at work as it tends to be more unfiltered compared to other business channels. But anything that crosses the line should be covered by existing HR policies."*

As messaging matures, informal protocols may emerge as they have done with other channels. In an interview with the Evening Standard, Slack's Founder, Stuart Butterworth, argued: *"People have to come up with social conventions. People have two decades of experience using email at this point and have internalised a lot of this etiquette. Very few people have that with Slack. The usage will evolve and we feel a big obligation to support people and help with training."*[46]

[46] https://www.standard.co.uk/business/business-interview-tech-billionaire-stewart-butterfield-wages-war-with-microsoft-a4356606.html

For companies, it's crucial to strike a balance in terms of regulation and foster a can-do attitude and positive engagement.

Rachel Miller of All Things IC suggests focusing on the purpose of the communications platform and creating 'Etiquette Guides'.

Martyn Perks argues that an over-regulated workplace is actually detrimental for the organisation in terms of hampering innovation and the free flow of internal communications: *"We need people to push against an over-regulated workplace. The starting point is that organisations must treat their workers as being responsible and allow them to be more creative, and have more autonomy. They will likewise respond in a more positive way."*

> *I encourage companies to have etiquette guides for messaging and to make sure they're included in your HR policies and how you expect employees to communicate. This is not the 'thou shalt not' mindset, but I encourage flexibility within boundaries. Etiquette guides and defining the purpose of the messaging channel helps solve this.*
>
> **Rachel Miller**
> Director, All Things IC

7. Conclusion

Messaging in the workplace feels similar to the early days of social media adoption over a decade ago.

Some businesses and organisations have quietly and effectively created messaging strategies, working solutions and employee guidance to help to achieve their business objectives.

Some businesses are either unintentionally or knowingly playing 'fast and loose' with messaging, not taking seriously the possible costs to the business if data privacy, regulation or corporate governance is compromised.

Messaging is yet another channel to add to an already nuanced and complex professional communications mix. However, messaging is here to stay and, as more 'messaging-first' employees enter the workforce, it will increasingly become *the* dominant communications platform for business.

The *'Mastering Messaging in the Workplace'* report has been developed to enable decision makers and professional users of messaging to understand the opportunities and risks of messaging and to get the very best from this exciting, immediate way to engage with others. We are very grateful for the insights and expertise of the report contributors and thank them for their time and input.

For more case studies, models, research, opinions and data about professional messaging, visit the Guild blog at https://guild.co/blog/

We intend to update this report as an ongoing guide to business professionals developing their messaging approaches.

Please contact us via https://guild.co/contact should you wish to reproduce this report or provide further data or case studies.



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