Your Guide to Selecting a Visual Collaboration Solution

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Mobile technology has dramatically changed our work styles, increasing pressure for businesses to modernize the workplace, create a culture of collaboration, and accelerate the pace of innovation. The challenge is that many buyers don't know what to look for in a collaboration solution to support this new way of working.

VISUAL COLLABORATION AT A GLANCE

Two of the most important assets within the enterprise are people and information, so finding ways to seamlessly connect the two is growing in importance as the workforce becomes more distributed and the amount of available information expands exponentially. Today, when people need to work together, this information is shared in many formats through a variety of tools, such as spreadsheets, data visualization tools, video- and Web-conferencing sessions, and in-person meetings. However, when it comes to implementing technology for sharing this rich content in both internal meetings and customer outreach, enterprises have lagged behind.

A new class of visual collaboration solutions is emerging, with the goal of bringing people, content, and technology together in a single, unified experience for immersive team collaboration. These solutions are helping to close a collaboration gap that exists in the enterprise by enabling both asynchronous and real-time, synchronous collaboration via a shared digital workspace. They allow many people to interact with multiple assets and information sources at the same time to facilitate collaboration across physical locations, fast-track decision-making, and increase the pace of innovation.

But why should enterprises consider this type of solution? And what are the key criteria for selecting an enterprise visual collaboration offering? This guide offers research to support the case for a new type of solution and discusses the key criteria for selection, including factors such as enterprise readiness, flexibility, scalability, and ease of use.

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR VISUAL COLLABORATION

Recent research has identified that a technology gap exists in many organizations—the gap between what users need to collaborate more efficiently and what IT is currently providing. This gap is actually widening in enterprises whose collaboration tools aren't up to today's challenges, which leads to both inefficient go-to-market processes and employee disengagement, which further stymies productivity.

A recent study, conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Prysm,[1] found that while 51 percent of IT/facilities workers believe their organizations provide adequate collaboration tools, only 26 percent of employees say this is the case, pointing to a significant perception gap between IT/management and end users.

The study also revealed that 40 percent of respondents reported going into the office five days a week, which means the other 60 percent are working off-site regularly. From a collaboration perspective, this means that it is increasingly important to meet the needs of remote participants so that they can more effectively contribute to work sessions.

1. "Digital, Disparate, And Disengaged," a commissioned June 2016 study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Prysm

CLOSING THE COLLABORATION GAP: KEY CRITERIA FOR A VISUAL COLLABORATION SOLUTION

Visual collaboration solutions—which are distinct from other types of collaboration solutions that may include only file-sharing or chat—are evolving quickly, and offerings vary by vendor. Below are the key criteria to keep in mind as you evaluate prospective offerings:

- **Content and application compatibility.** Your organization relies on many different types of content, such as documents, dashboards, whiteboard sessions, field video, Web-based mapping software, 3D models, 2D models, and data visualization tools, to name a few. A good visual collaboration solution allows you to use all of your current tools and file types in a unified visual workspace, so it will enhance your workflow, not detract from it.

- **Accessibility.** Since your workers are always on the move, your new collaboration solution should give workers real-time access to any kind and quantity of content, regardless of location, so they can actively participate in meetings and work sessions. Look for flexible, cloud-based solutions (public, private, or hybrid) that enable simultaneous access from laptops, tablets, and smartphones, as well as from large displays in conference rooms and auditoriums.

- **Integration with your existing infrastructure.** It's smart and economical to leverage your existing technology investments, as well as your workforce's knowledge of your internal systems. As you evaluate vendors, make sure that the solution is fully compatible with your conferencing and collaboration tools, such as Cisco TelePresence tools, Polycom HD video and teleconferencing systems, and more. It should work with all unified communication options and not be a limited platform that is too "app-based" (such as providing only screen shares, as opposed to being able to sync in real time, for example).

- **Augmented data visualization.** One of the best aspects of a good visual

collaboration solution is that it gives you the ability to view multiple pieces of information from many sources on screen simultaneously. This provides deeper insights into your data, helps you solve problems, and accelerates decision-making. Look for a solution that enables you to visualize numerous pieces of content and information sources simultaneously, not just one or two.

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- **Enterprise-grade security.** If you're in an industry that requires a "behind the firewall" solution—government, banking, health-care, insurance, or other security-sensitive industries where data must be stored on premise, not in the cloud—it's important to make sure that your collaboration solution can accommodate this.

- **Content persistence.** While we think of meetings as events with a beginning and an end, meetings are often waypoints for large projects. Look for a vendor that offers true content persistence so that your documents, videos, Web pages, whiteboards, annotations, etc. exist in a workspace after your meetings end. The solution should be able to preserve and instantly restore your sessions exactly where you left off in the last meeting. This way you can finally say goodbye to locking conference room doors to preserve the content for the next meeting and prevent it from being erased or altered.

- **Solution completeness.** Is the collaboration offering a complete hardware and software solution, as opposed to one piece of the puzzle that leaves you going to many vendors for the other pieces? The best solutions don't just offer robust software and enable the content experience described above, they also offer hardware solutions, such as interactive touchscreens.

- **Ease of use.** Evaluate the amount of training necessary for your organization to adopt your new solution. Seamless hardware and software integration may play a role in this. Additionally, the product should be easy to use and the vendor should provide readily available education and training.

- **Total cost of ownership and return on investment.** Look for a solution that is greater than the sum of its parts—not just a technology solution but an investment that will pay its way, lead to greater efficiency, and contribute to the growth of your enterprise.

CONCLUSION

The business information and collaboration landscape is changing, led by the mobility of work. Workers are frustrated by inadequate collaboration technology, increasing the urgency for investment in holistic, productive collaboration solutions. Visual collaboration solutions are being adopted by enterprises worldwide to fill the collaboration gap created by current solutions. If your business is in the market for this type of solution, be sure to have potential providers address the criteria above to ensure your organization selects the best visual collaboration solution for your workforce. ◾

Featured Solution: Prysm Visual Workplace

Prysm Visual Workplace is a total hardware/solution with flexible deployment options suitable for any enterprise — retail, finance, technology, healthcare, and more. Recognizing the overwhelming need for collaboration technology to reduce employee disengagement, increase productivity, optimize the mobile workforce, and increase speed to market, Prysm is the perfect solution to modernize your workplace, ignite teamwork and accelerate decision making.

Prysm combines applications, content, video-conferencing, and the Web into a visual workspace where teams can create, edit, and share. These interactive workspaces are stored in the cloud and are available on any screen.

Prysm Visual Workplace includes the key criteria for a superior visual collaboration solution, including:

• **Content and application compatibility.** Prysm is integrated with Microsoft Office 365, OneDrive, and Skype for Business. It works with all Web data and content types.

• **Anywhere, any-device access.** Prysm Mobile lets you lead and participate in meetings and access content from large-screen displays, laptops, tablets, and smartphones.

• **Seamless integration with your existing infrastructure.** Prysm Visual Workplace is compatible with all leading brands of VTC solutions, including Polycom and Cisco. It works in public, private, and hybrid cloud environments.

• **Augmented data visualization.** Prysm lets you visualize many pieces of content from multiple data sources on screen simultaneously, to help you derive new insights, drive innovation, and accelerate time to market.

• **Enterprise-level security.** Prysm accommodates the level of security required by your business and industry. It can be deployed behind the firewall and in private cloud environments.

• **Content persistence.** Everything is preserved after your meetings, including your projects, your files — even the screen position of your content. It's easy to pick up where you left off, even from another location.

• **An intuitive interface.** Prysm Visual Workplace is as easy to learn as a tablet — touch, pinch, drag, and swipe.

• **Low total cost of ownership (TCO) and high return on investment (ROI).** Because Prysm increases productivity, reduces staff turnover, accelerates product development, and integrates seamlessly into your existing infrastructure, it pays for itself many times over.

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For more information about Prysm Visual Workplace, or to find a local Prysm office or customer experience center visit www.prysm.com