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The State of Digital Collaboration in 2021.

– a Study by Gmelius

About the study.

In 2020, teams have been fast-tracked to a New World of Work. In a few months' time, teams have gone through years of change in the way they collaborate.

But is everything that easy yet?

We decided to roll out a survey to dive into the state of digital collaboration in 2021 and provide actionable recommendations for teams in 2021.

We hope this report will inspire you and your team to make the Future of Work your Present.

🚨 #1 paint point
Fake urgency

🏆 #1 priority
Better Project Management

⭐ Avg. satisfaction around digital collaboration
6.5/10

Pitch

Table of content.

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Key Insights.

#1

6.5/10

Average satisfaction around digital collaboration

#2

Fake urgency

#1 pain point

#3

62%

added new collaboration tools in 2020

#4

Cost & Ease

Top decision factors for collaboration tool

#5

75%

of teams feel the pain of tool overload

#6

68%

of teams spend most of their time on email

#7

Better project management

#1 priority to improve digital collaboration

Insight #1.

Digital collaboration is not perfect yet

When asked to rate the quality of digital collaboration at their company, respondents gave an average score of 6.5/10. While digital collaboration is something that knowledge workers do every day, our survey reveals it has room for improvement.

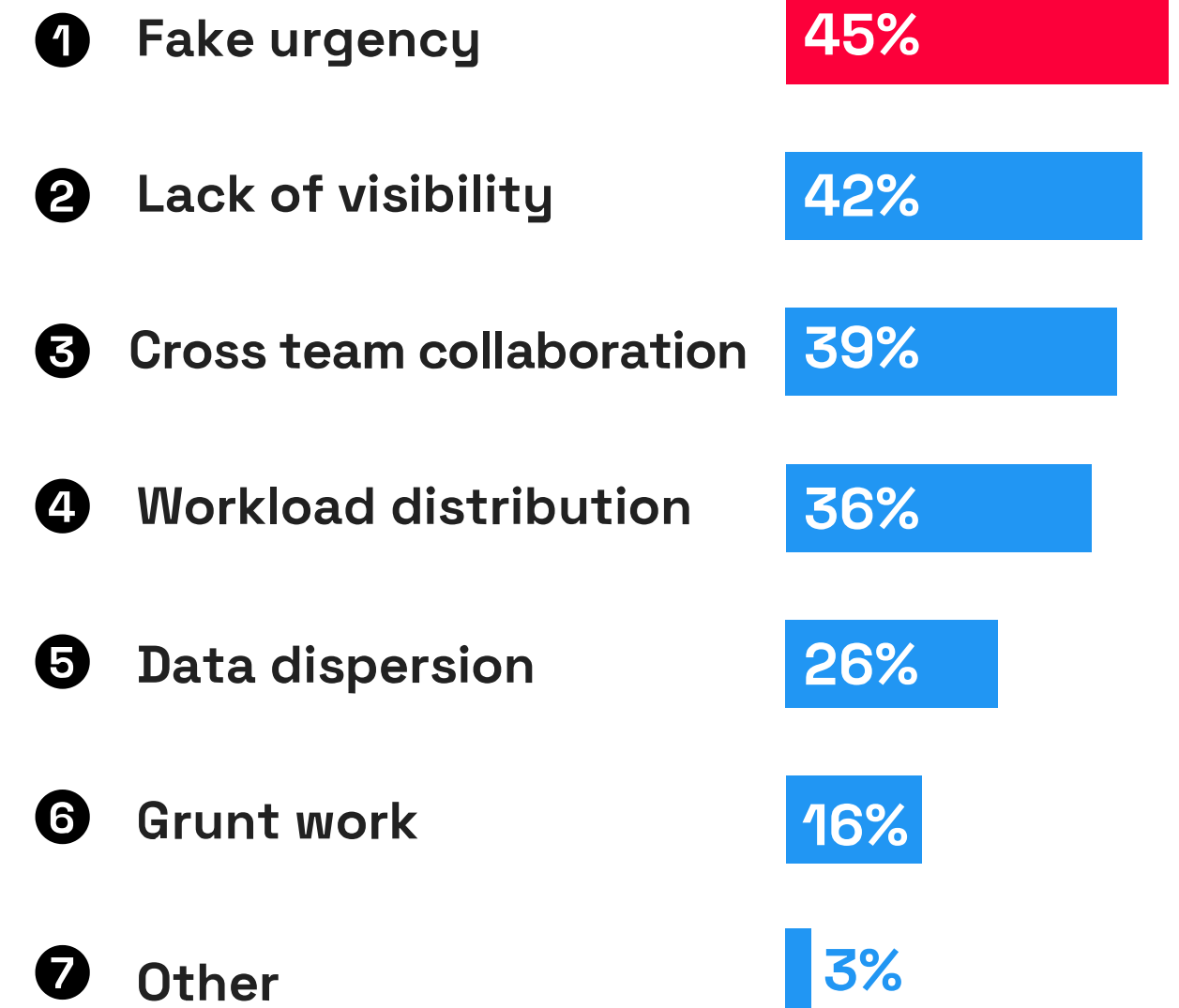**How would you rate the quality of digital collaboration inside your company?**

6.5/10

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Insight #2.

Remote work amplified pre-existing pain points

Fake urgency, lack of transparency and cross-team collaboration are the top collaboration pain points selected by respondents. If these 3 were rampant before COVID-19, the switch to remote work only amplified them

Which challenges prevent efficient collaboration, within your company's digital workplace?

1. Fake urgency — 45%
2. Lack of visibility — 42%
3. Cross team collaboration — 39%
4. Workload distribution — 36%
5. Data dispersion — 26%
6. Grunt work — 16%
7. Other — 3%

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In their words.

> **"**
>
> *More asynchronous communication instead of overusing Slack.*
>
> **Fake urgency**

> **"**
>
> *A better and more visible high level "master overview" of all ongoing projects and issues.*
>
> **Lack of visibility**

> **"**
>
> *Bring more of our tools, pipelines, and information together so that my team has better cross-department visibility, collaboration.*
>
> **Cross-team collaboration**

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Insight #3.

Teams tried 80+ new collaborations tools

What's stricking is that respondents named a whopping list of 80+ different tools, with Google, Slack, Trello, Notion, and Zoom leading the pack.

This demonstrates both great reactivity and a will to experiment with tools to better work together.

62%

of teams added new collaborations tools in 2020

3%

of teams removed collaboration tools in 2020

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The 80+ tools participants tried in 2020.

Microsoft365 · Zoom · CloudHQ · InVideo · NeedtoMeet · Frase · Pluspage · WhenIwork · ServiceNow · Thrive · Process.st · Trello · Lattice · Tasksboard · Pipedrive · Aurora · Auth · Loom · Dixa · SharedExcell · Todoist · Tableau · SyncSketch · Gmelius · Airtable · Hubspot · CRM · Fellow · Favro · Karbon · Descript · Lever · Absence.io · Salesforce · Miro · Nifty · Zoho · Gmail · Ironclad · Asana · Jira · Infinity · Ansible · SaneBox · SquareOnline · GoogleWorkspace · Spendesk · Gainsight · Tunnelblick · ClientSuccess · JivoChat · Mural · Front · Monday · Slack · JotForm · Ubersuggest · Recruitee · Team · Calendly · RingCentral · ChurnZero · Zapier · Payfit · Padlet · Notion · FreshSuccess · SimilarWeb · Plotagon · Copper · Publer · ClickUp · Quire · Intuo · HappyScribe · TheFormTool · Pathagoras · Basecamp · Leapsome

Insight #4.

Cost and ease as main decisions factors

In these uncertain times, when choosing a new collaboration tool, cost and ease of implementation are the top decision factors, ranking even before features. This demonstrates an appetite for lower-commitment and a fast rollout.

What are your most important criteria when choosing a solution for you collaboration stack?

54% ①
Cost

48% ②
Ease of implementation

44% ③
Features

35% ④
Integrations & API

29% ⑤
Ease of training

29% ⑤
UX

16% ⑥
Customer support

2% ⑦
Other

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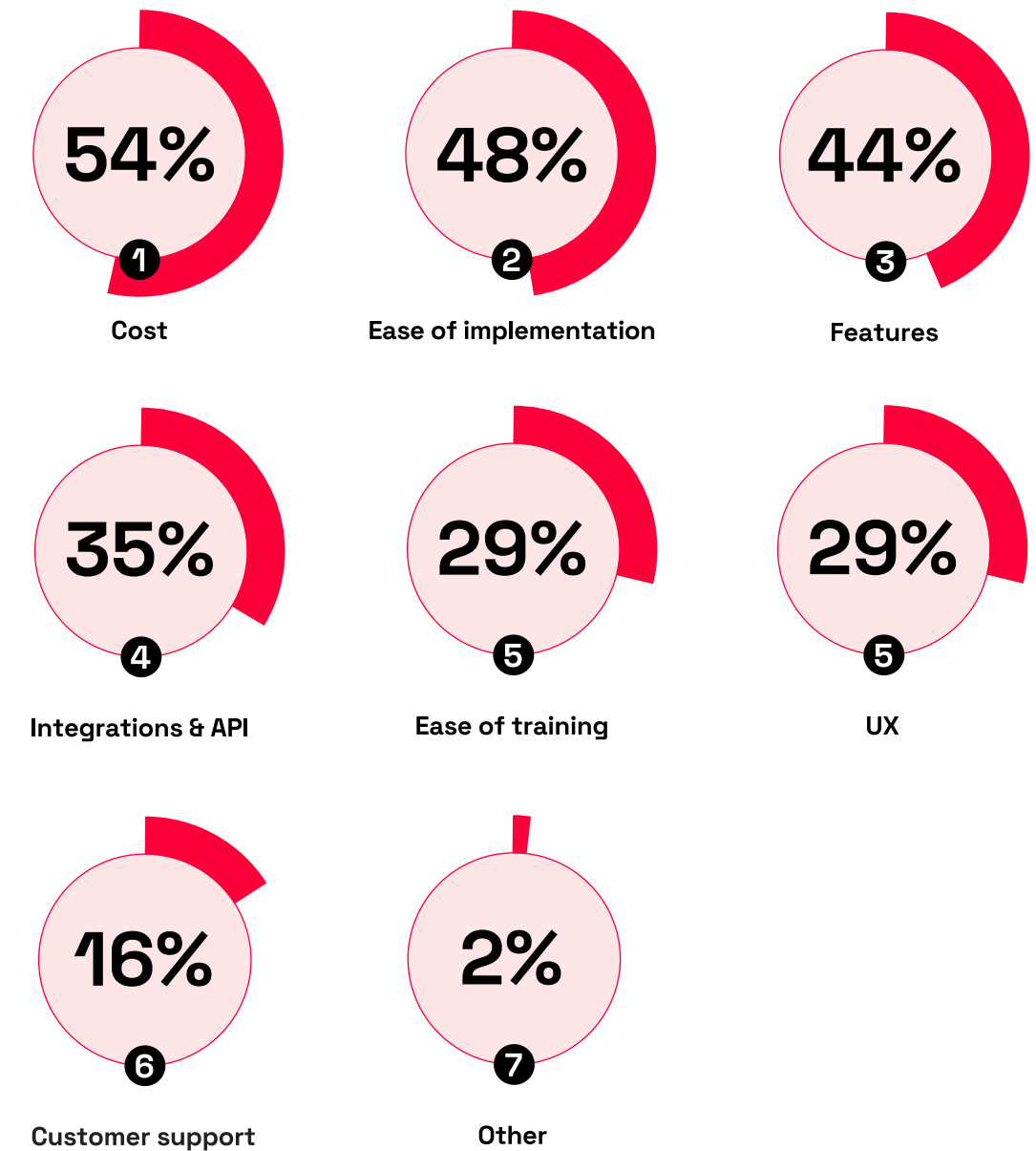
Insight #5.

Teams feel the pain of tool overload

With an ever-expanding stack, the challenge for team is to make their tools play together nicely.
From data unification to giving more flexibility for team members to work from their favorite tools, respondents expressed a need for rationalization...

75%

agree that the excess of non-integrated apps is crippling team productivity.

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In their words.

> *We have too many tools and we add them constantly*

Tool overload

> *Integration between all systems so each individual can use their own productivity tool*

Integrated tools

> *Single source of truth, unified data source*

Centralized data

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68%

Of teams still spend most of their time on emails, with only 20% of which, able to collaborate over email without friction.

Pitch

Insight #6.

In this new world of work, email is not going away

67% of teams spend most of their time on email. Email remains a central part of a teams' workflow. Email is mainly used for external communication, to interact with customers, partners, and vendors. Only 20% of teams like to collaborate internally over email. This is where syncing email with other channels can considerably remove friction.

Which tools does your team spend most of their time on?

Most used tools

Tool	%	Rank
Email client	68%	1
Messaging	56%	2
Video App	45%	3
CRM	22%	4
Project management	20%	5
Company wiki	11%	6
Other	3%	7
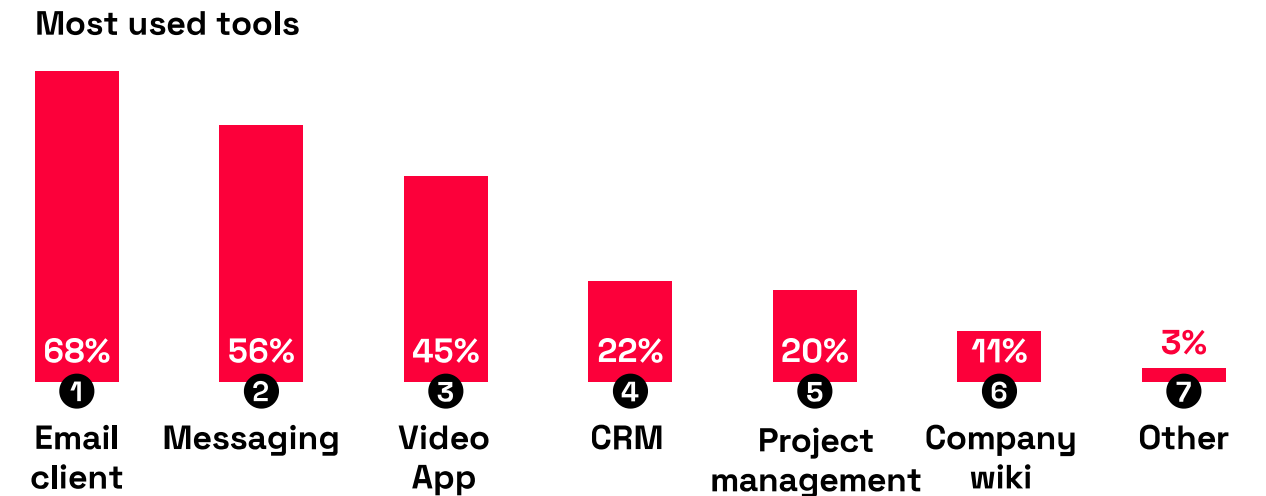
How would you describe the usage of your inbox regarding email collaboration?

Usage of emails

We mostly use email for client communication
1 — 56%

We use email a lot but its not optimal for collaboration
2 — 36%

We actively collaborate internally over email and we like it
3 — 22%

We don't use email anymore and use a 3rd party tool instead
4 — 4%

Other
5 — 2%

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Insight #7.

Better Project Management emerges as #1 focus

We're seeing 3 trends:

1. **Project management** tools and methodologies provide proven frameworks to improve digital collaboration and provide transparency.

2. Adopting **better workflows** is needed to further adapt to these new times. This focus on internal processes and organisation goes together with a desire for more automation, integrations, and consolidating tools.

3. There's an increased awareness to **better support team members**, by improving internal communication, company culture, documentation, meetings, and fostering employees' performance.

What are the most impactful changes you implemented or would like to implement to improve collaboration within your company?

1. Project Management — 22%
2. Better Workflows — 21%
3. Integrations — 18%
4. Culture — 14%
5. Documentation — 10%
7. Automation — 8%
6. Tool overload — 6%
7. Smarter meetings — 5%
8. CRM — 2%
9. Security — 1%

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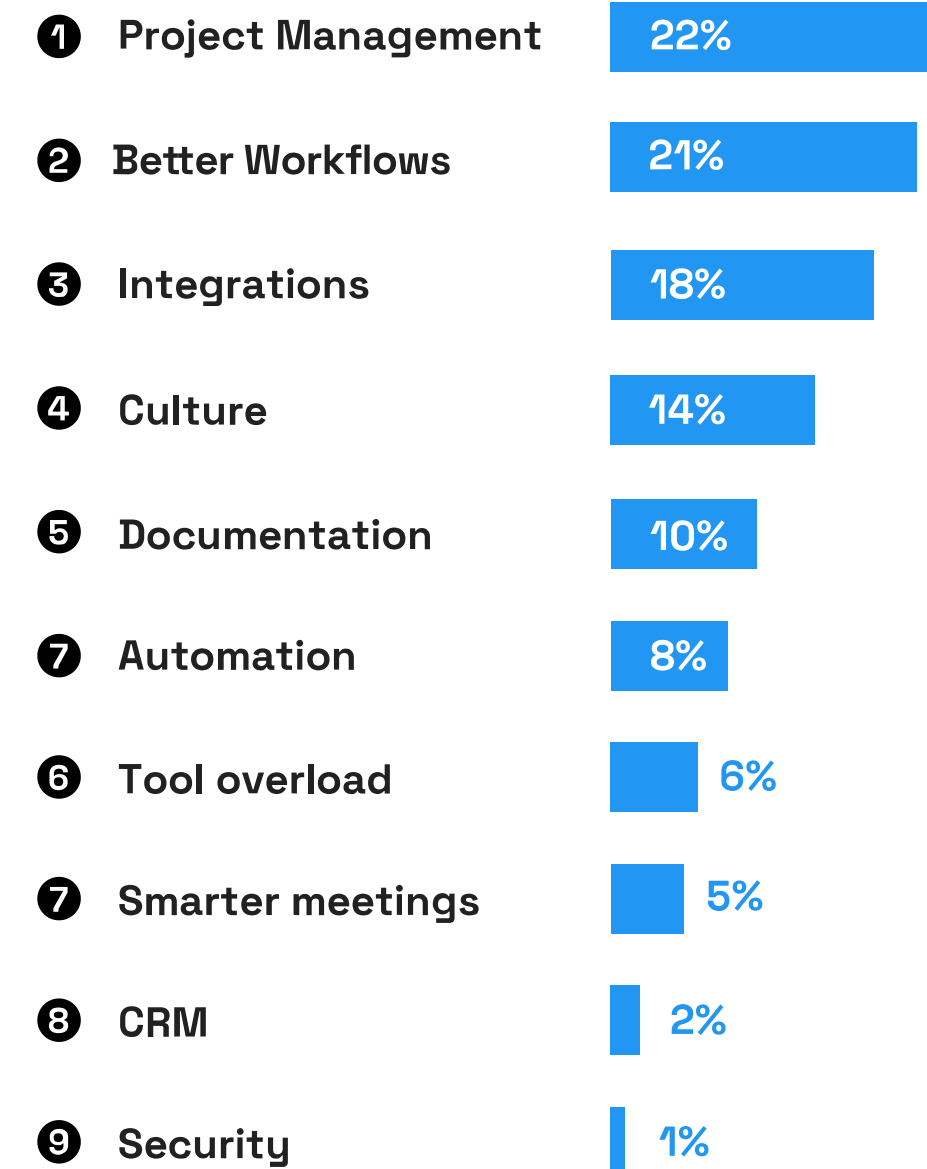
At Gmelius we advocate for a collaboration stack of tools and workflows that makes sense for you and your team.

Collaboration tools in 2021: how to build your stack.
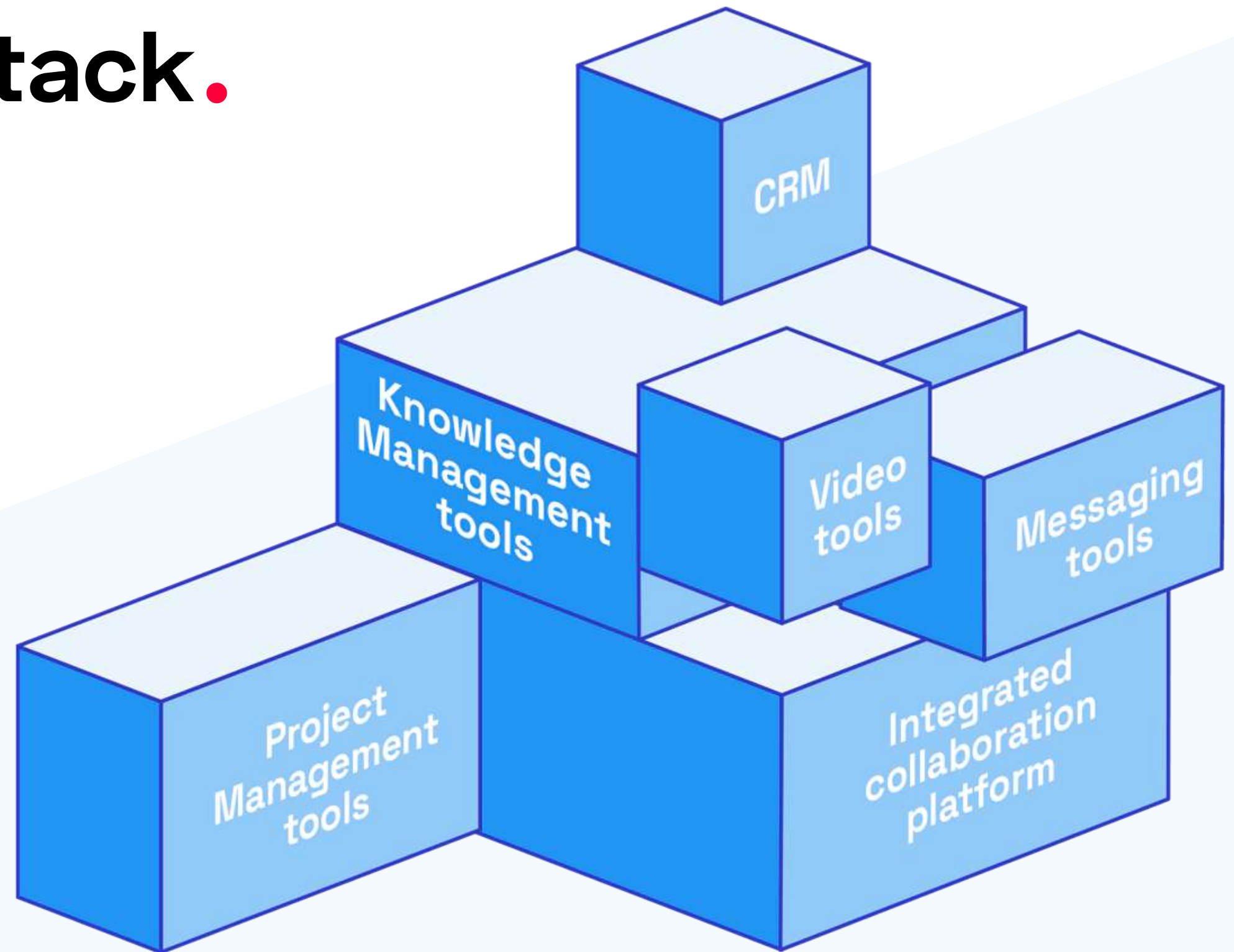
Messaging tools have become inevitable, but fake urgency can be avoided

Our take:

Even if you are not looking for a new messaging tool in 2021, we're sure you're not a stranger to the exhausting feeling of fake urgency that comes with 24/7 connectivity. More on that on slide XX.

💡 Recreate the feeling of working in same room in the remote environment with 🌀 Teamflow.

	Slack	Google Chat	Mattermost
Pricing	Free with limitations. Paid plans start at $6.67 per user per month.	Part of Google Workspace. Paid plans start at $6 per user per month.	Free for teams with up to 10 users. Paid plans start at $10 per user per month.
Integrations	✅	✅	✅
Mobile app	✅	✅	✅
G2 Rating /5	4.5	4.3	4.2
G2 Ease of setup /10	8.9	9.1	8.0
What makes them unique	Use the Slackbot chat to create custom responses, set reminders, and easily integrate with your daily tools like Gmelius.	Collaborate in Google Docs, Sheets & Slides, start video calls in Google Meet, use Google search to find past conversations.	Security-conscious, with controls to block posting of sensitive data, and custom data retention policies.

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# Video apps that go beyond live conferencing

Our take:

You've probably heard about "Zoom fatigue" or "Zoombombing", right? These are the reasons why we want to focus on video tools for asynchronous video conversations to collaborate and engage with your team.

💡 Tired of having your customers logging into Zoom? Try Whereby. It offers easy video meetings with no login or downloads.
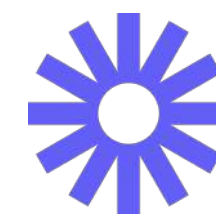
	Loom	Vidyard	Hippo Video
Pricing	Free with limitations. Paid plans start at $8 per month.	Free. Paid plans start at $15 per month.	Free trial is available. Plans start at $15 per month.
Integrations	✓	✓	✓
Mobile app	✓	✓	✓
G2 Rating /5	4.4	4.5	4.4
G2 Ease of setup /10	9.8	8.6	8.9
What makes them unique	primarily known for optimizing internal communication.	Strong analytics tool set, integrations and customization capabilities.	Professional video editing and handy features, integrations, analytics.

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CRM (Customer Relationship Management) tools

Our take:

Regardless of your company size, a CRM software is a must-have in your stack. You need it to track your lead and customer pipelines and centralize data in one place.

💡 Bring your CRM and your team inbox together. Use Gmelius API to automatically route emails to the right person based on ownership in your CRM and more.

	HubSpot	Pipedrive	Salesforce
Pricing	Free plan available. Paid plans start at $45 per month.	Starts at $12.50 per user per month.	30-day trial. Contact for enterprise pricing.
Integrations	✓	✓	✓
Mobile app	✓	✓	✓
G2 Rating /5	4.3	4.3	4.2
G2 Ease of setup /10	8.3	8.7	8.1
What makes them unique	Detailed contact records, centralized touch points inside an inbox, track of individual and team performance.	Focuses on sales-specific activities, visual pipeline management, activity management, team reporting.	Known for managing complex sales cycles, wide range of integrations, AI lead scoring, internal collaboration features, robust reporting.

Pitch

Project Management

Our take:

Using Google Drive but feeling like that it's not enough any longer? It becomes messy and hard to manage? We feel you. This is where a project management tool can come to the rescue.
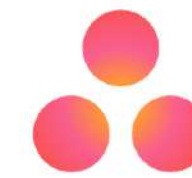
💡 Want to turn emails into tasks, get a real-time view of your projects both in Gmail and Trello, and let your team work from both platforms? Check our 2-way integration.

	Trello	Asana	ClickUp
Pricing	Free. Paid plans start at $9.99 per user per month.	Free plan is available. Paid plans start at $10.99 per user per month.	Free plan is available. Paid plans start at $5 per user per month.
Integrations	✓	✓	✓
Mobile app	✓	✓	✓
G2 Rating /5	4.4	4.3	4.7
G2 Ease of setup /10	9.1	8.7	8.4
What makes them unique	To manage projects the Kanban way (and more), make your boards public, and access a variety of templates and Power Ups (automations & integrations).	Full suite where you can organize work in the view that works best for your team (lists, boards, calendars, timelines).	A "one place for all your work" to import and manage your tasks and projects, with extensive customization capabilities.

Knowledge management tools

Our take:

When information is scattered everywhere, it's easy to feel frustrated or make mistakes. For teams to be more nimble and better aligned, we recommend you to check out knowledge management tools.

💡 Using a knowledge management software as a company wiki can fasten and facilitate remote employee onboarding. Describe your company values, present the team, highlight employee benefits, register internal policies, and more.

	Slite	Notion	Guru
Pricing	Free for up to 100 docs. Paid plans start at $6.67 per user per month.	Free for personal usage. Team plans start at $8 per user per month.	Free for up to 10 users. Paid plans start at $14 per user per month.
Integrations	✓	✓	✓
Mobile app	✓	✓	✓
G2 Rating /5	4.8	4.5	4.6
G2 Ease of setup /10	9.8	8.7	8.8
What makes them unique	Knowledge base is compiled in channels, similar to Slack; powerful search algorithm; extensive template library.	Multiple views including Kanban boards, calendar and list; functionality to manage spreadsheets and databases; wide range of templates.	Card format is easy to share and embed; numerous integrations.

A new way to collaborate with 2-way integrations

Our take:

"The more the merrier" doesn't really work in case of a collaboration stack. Here it's rather "less is more". Instead of adding new tools think of integrating your existing tools with each other.

💡 We believe in giving every teammate the freedom to work from their favorite tools. This is why we've built a 2-way integration architecture, so your team can collaborate in real time across your existing stack. No need to migrate nor learn a new platform.

	Gmelius	Unito	PieSync
Pricing	Free forever, with advanced plans starting at $9 per user per month.	Starts at $10 per month.	Free trial. Plans start at $49 per month.
Integrations	✅	✅	✅
Mobile app	✅	✅	✅
G2 Rating /5	4.4	4.5	4.6
G2 Ease of setup /10	8.7	8.0	9.2
What makes them unique	Focus on email collaboration starting right inside Gmail, integrating 2-way with Slack, Trello and via API.	Focus on workflow management to integrate work done from one platform to another (like Asana, Hubspot, Jira, etc.).	Focus on keeping customer data in sync across business apps with a total of 253 apps available for integration.

Workflow automation: where to start.

What part of your team workflows can and should be automated?

❶

Workload distribution

Spend less time distributing and assigning tasks. Set Service Level Agreements within your team and across departments. Create automation rules to distribute workload on chosen triggers.

❷

Outreach and follow ups

Streamline repetitive outreach. Automatically trigger internal notifications and reminders. Engage and pre-qualify customers with AI-powered chats.

❸

Meetings

Reduce the number of unnecessary meetings. Automate scheduling to avoid the back and forth emails.

❹

Hiring processes

Allow candidates to schedule appointments. Eliminate repetitive tasks when sorting candidates. See a bigger picture on which stage each candidate is.

Pitch

In their words**.**

> " Audit of low-return time-consuming activities

Workflow automation

> " Any tool which will reduce the manual work

Less grunt work

> " I want more doing, more clarity, less meetings

More focused work

Company transparency:
7 best practices you can use.

Why increase transparency?
It plays a key role in employees' alignment,
provides visibility of the bigger picture,
and it's especially crucial when everyone
is working remotely.

1
Identify your go-to project management methodology

2
Embrace asynchronous communication

3
Create a company wiki

4
Set the stage for smarter meetings

5
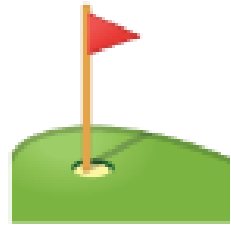Set clear goals

6
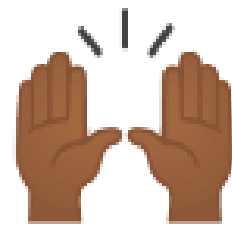Make team performance visible

7
Make your team happier

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Can we fix teamwork? Yes. Most definitely, yes.
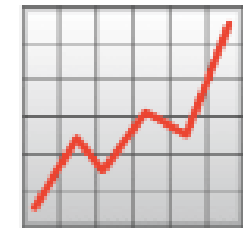
We simplify teamwork.

Focus on what matters

Enable your teams to remains flexible & aligned

Increase workload transparency

Measure & Optimize your processes

gmelius

The collaboration platform for teams using Gmail.

About the data●

We asked customers and potential users to take a 17-question online survey between the end of November and December 2020. 162 respondents took the survey. Then we analyzed their answers and designed an actionable guide to help teams improve digital collaboration in 2021 based on the insights we uncovered.

Respondents profile

🏢 Company size

Of the 162 total respondents, the largest group (31%) worked in companies of 50-250 employees. 26% worked in companies with up to 10 employees, 26% worked in companies of 10-50 employees, and 15% in companies above 250 employees. The remainder were independent entrepreneurs (3%).

🙋🏻‍♀️ Team size

The largest group of respondents (43%) declared working within teams of 2-5 members, followed by teams of 6-10 (25%), teams of 11-25 (15%). 8% declared working in teams larger than 25 people and the remainder declared working independently.

🌙 Seniority

The largest group of respondents were Team Managers (37%), followed by CEOs and business owners (19%), Team Members (17%), and then Senior Executives (13%). 4% worked as IT administrators and the remainder declared either working as an independent (3%) or other (5%).

Pitch