

■ ■ ■ ■ The best of enterprise technology on the Microsoft platform



Leading the charge

The technologies enabling pioneering enterprises to stay at the cutting edge of business



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Leading the charge

With tools such as Microsoft Teams underpinned by solutions including the Azure Cloud, Dynamics and the Power Platform, Microsoft and its partners are ensuring that pioneering enterprises can stay at the cutting edge of business

BY LINDSAY JAMES

According to analyst firm IDC, 85% of enterprise decision makers say they need to make significant inroads into digital transformation in the next two years in order to avoid falling behind their competitors and suffering financially.

"Today's business leaders are facing seismic shifts thanks to the rise of the digital economy," says Jessica Goepfert, research vice president at IDC. "Navigating this shift successfully will require equally expansive changes to how they approach technology."

At a time when communication across all levels is key, old ways of thinking and doing business will no longer suffice. "Businesses need to rethink their business models," says Craig Simpson, IDC research manager. "The challenge is taking the risk to invent new business models within industries."

While many think of digital transformation as a technology issue, Toby Richards, Microsoft's general manager of partner go-to-market believes that it's more of a people issue. "Whether a project will impact a worker on the factory floor or someone in the accounting department, you need to first understand what those people are experiencing day-to-day to create and maintain the best solution to help them," he explains. "The businesses we see being most successful with digital transformation are the ones that understand the imperative to support and listen to their people to create the value their organisation seeks."

This means leadership needs to have a line into workers, and also workers need a line into leadership. "Fostering that feedback loop is a major part of any digital transformation project," says Richards. "As this relates to partners, we've





adopted a similar mindset – ensuring an open line of communication to best tailor our services and interactions to the needs of our community.”

Microsoft’s effective collaboration with its hundreds of thousands of partners is bolstered by its commitment to offer best-in-class tools that are already leveraged by some of the world’s most pioneering businesses.

“With tools such as Microsoft Teams, we’re helping break down communication silos and improve collaboration among teams across

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TOBY RICHARDS, MICROSOFT



industries and geographies, from the C-suite to the front lines of an organisation,” says Richards. “It’s a unique four-in-one solution that leverages artificial intelligence (AI) and Office 365 to merge chat, video meetings, calling and file collaboration into a single, integrated and secure experience.”

And then there’s the underlying products that form the foundation of many digital transformation efforts – the Microsoft Azure cloud, Dynamics and the Power Platform, among others. “Partners can build their solutions using these technologies, which are helping to bridge the intelligent cloud and intelligent edge, and drive the future of computing forward,” Richards says.

The success of a product can only be measured by the success of its users, and the stats here speak for themselves. Teams has over 13 million daily active users and 91 of the Fortune 100 are using the product in addition to global companies like FedEx, Lexmark and Emirates. Meanwhile, 95% of the Fortune 500 run on Azure.

Unilever is a case in point. The global manufacturer of products like Dove, Vaseline, and Ben & Jerry’s is using Azure to make data accessible across the company and digitally transform its global supply chain network, making production more efficient and flexible. “Using the internet of things (IoT) and intelligent edge services in the Azure IoT platform, Unilever has deployed digital twin technology (a next-generation model of a physical environment) to generate visibility across all levels of the plant and empower employees to use the collected data to mine for insights and patterns and predict outcomes,” Richards explains. “The digital twin solution was custom-built by Unilever’s engineering group in partnership with The Marsden Group, a Microsoft partner, and is hosted on the Microsoft Azure platform. Unilever

is now operating eight digital twins across North America, South America, Europe and Asia. The company is streaming data from 15 of its 300 global plants, with plans to connect 70 factories by the end of the year and another 100 or so in 2020.”

Engineering and construction firm EMCOR has also embraced Azure and, as a result, is realising new levels of connectivity both within and outside of its organisation. “We will be able to collaborate more effectively across multiple divisions and business units using Microsoft 365 cloud-based workplace services,” said Peter Baker, senior director of information technology at EMCOR Group, in an interview for microsoft.com. “It’s easier for our employees to share information with each other, customers, and suppliers.”

American supermarket chain Kroger, meanwhile, is using the Microsoft Azure cloud and the Azure IoT Hub, along with Microsoft AI solutions, to better connect store associates and customers alike. “Kroger is building a seamless ecosystem driven by data and technology to provide our customers with personalised food inspiration,” said Rodney McMullen, Kroger’s chairman and CEO, in a Microsoft case study. “We are excited to collaborate with Microsoft to redefine grocery retail.”

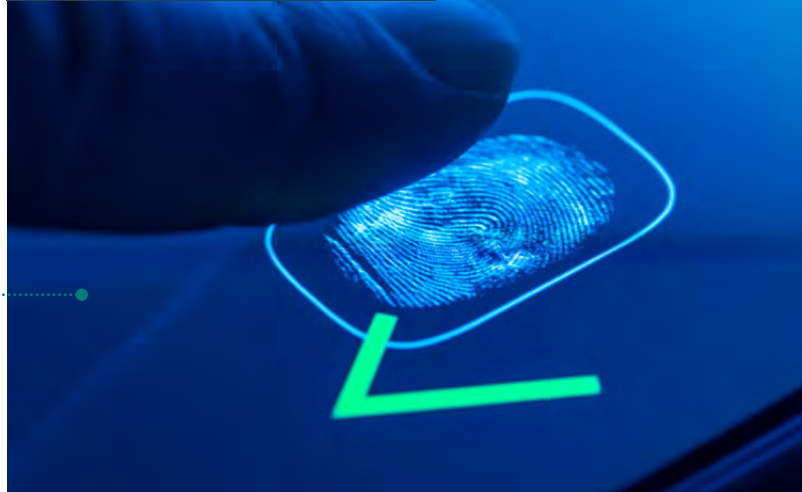
Examples like these cement how Microsoft technology is empowering people around the world to achieve more. But the firm isn’t resting on its laurels. “[There are] two billion first-line workers, and 77% of these feel they don’t have the tools to empower them,” said Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella at the recent Inspire conference. “We’ve always focused our tools with the knowledge worker. But the real opportunity for us is to bring knowledge workers and first-line workers together to empower companies and people.” ■

Partner perspectives

"Microsoft's mission is to empower every person and every organisation on the planet to achieve more. It is doing this by building an intelligent cloud, reinventing productivity and business processes and making computing more personal. In all of this, it maintains the value of privacy and preserves the ability for its suppliers to control their data – something that is achieved through its supplier security and privacy assurance (SSPA) programme. However, complying with these requirements can be challenging for suppliers, who have to complete an annual compliance cycle. As a global risk and technology consultancy, Protiviti can help Microsoft's suppliers worldwide to tackle this challenge. We have been vetted by Microsoft Procurement to perform independent assessments using global standards. A clean bill of health gives all Microsoft's vendors confidence that their privacy and security practices are aligned to the new regulations and customer expectations."



Jeff Sanchez
*Managing director
of technology
consulting, Protiviti*



Christian Sega
*Managing director,
agiles*

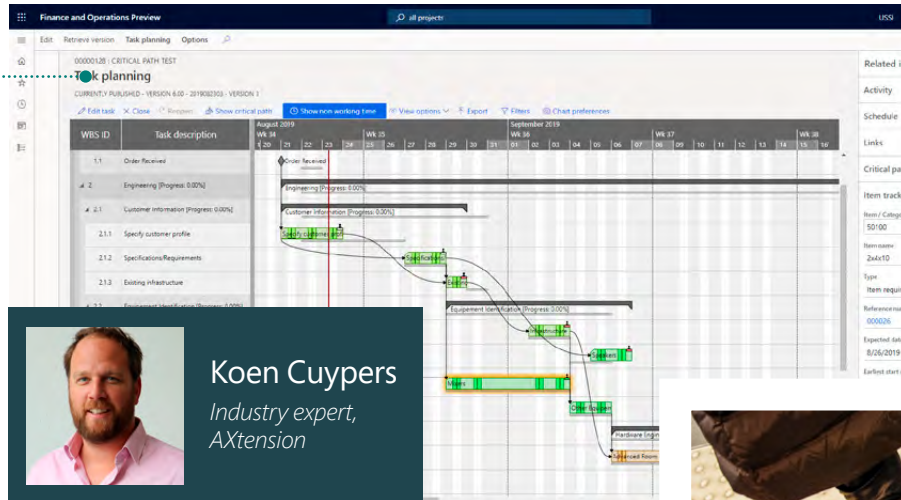
"New technologies allow us one thing in particular: to communicate better at all levels. Only with better communication, we can meet today's essential requirement to put the customer at the centre of our business. For those who want to adapt their daily work to modern standards, we recommend the use of workflows. They are the key to streamlined processes and collaboration. Moreover, they increase the transparency within a company, as responsibilities are clearly visible and micro-management can be prevented. We developed the add-on agilesWorkflow, which unlocks more of our customers' potential through improved and trouble-free communication. The tool is compatible with all tables in Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central and Microsoft Dynamics NAV; individual development is not necessary. It adds several functions to Microsoft's standard workflow and is suitable for numerous scenarios, such as master data management, order processing, invoice release or general project management. Teamwork has never been easier."

"Deploying Microsoft Teams is the best way to improve enterprise business. However, it needs preparation and correct implementation to ensure its success. For example, users are likely to stop using it if the quality of a call is less than satisfactory. GSX Solutions provides a real-time experience monitoring solution for Microsoft Teams. It allows enterprise IT teams to prevent and understand voice quality issues, which improves the success of the deployment and the end user's experience. Businesses can use the solution to host meetings with clients all over the world, improving their productivity while limiting operational and financial risks."

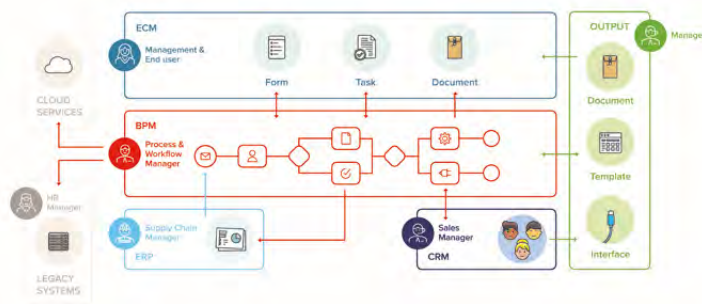


Jean-François Piot
*Vice president of
Microsoft and strategic
alliances, GSX Solutions*

"Projects are not successful because tasks have been moved on time; they are successful through teamwork. Each change influences cashflow. Each risk and opportunity impacts margin. The availability of valuable knowledge and skills is required at the right time and at the right place and the supply chain needs to act within the given timelines and communicate proactively. The decentralisation of invaluable information in people's minds and systems is a liability that comes with huge overhead expenses. AXtension offers full project management capabilities as part of your Dynamics 365 for Finance and Operations environment to guarantee a single point of truth that influences your entire organisation, from accounts payable to HR. Projects for all, all for projects!"



Koen Cuypers
Industry expert,
AXtension



Shyamal Addanki
Vice president for
North America, FireStart

"Communication is more than just exchanging information, it should be about an efficient flow of information across all levels, in a process context. Single question-response types of correspondence reflect a transactional style of communication where each individual exchange is isolated and managed without a proper holistic process view. For example, any individual might have a stack of emails that need to be replied to, with no real view of the upstream or downstream requirements of information. FireStart's business process management (BPM) platform is a way to transform digital communication by creating executable processes to handle tasks and transactions with live system data, real-time monitoring, and escalations. With FireStart's BPM platform, users can receive tasks in their email that contain all the relevant information needed in order to complete their action, and have a better understanding of their role in the end-to-end business process, thereby transforming the old office email into an intelligent process communication tool."

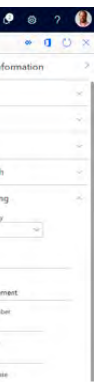


"Enterprise businesses have amazing tools at their disposal today, which help them to communicate and collaborate across their organisation. Despite the emergence of tools like Microsoft Teams and Yammer, every organisation in the world has room for improvement when it comes to communication. This is particularly important in terms of which information should be shared and how that information moves up and down the organisation. Wrike is a collaborative work management platform that helps teams plan, manage, and measure how work is executed. In Wrike, tasks can be organised by projects or folders, and multiple projects can be grouped or linked to form strategic initiatives. Company leaders can report on strategic initiatives from a 40,000 foot view, or drill down into the individual supporting tasks. This transparency empowers the entire organisation to enhance the quality of communication and collaboration among teams at all levels."



Joe Merrill
Head of partnerships,
Wrike

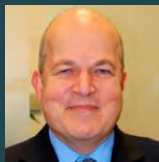
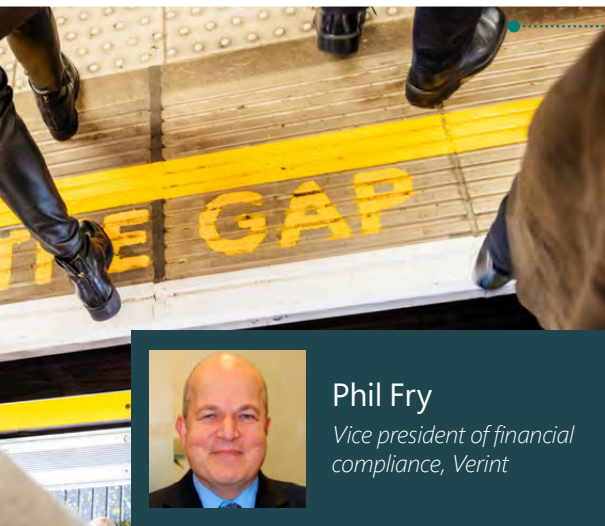




"Enterprises are more commonly taking a cloud-first approach to their production workloads to improve communication and general processes. However, there needs to be a clear definition of who is responsible for the data, how long the data will be kept, and what it will take to recover. Data belongs to an enterprise even if it is in the cloud. A solution that can backup and restore all of this, regardless of its location, is key. For businesses to streamline processes and support business service-level agreements, they must also make use of features such as a single pane of glass to see their data and the ability to retain information long-term. Being able to eliminate duplicates and compress backed up cloud data will also significantly reduce the necessary storage and simplify the ownership of data, enabling it to be searched through quickly, and giving peace of mind that recovery will happen whatever the situation."



Theresa Miller
*Principal technologist,
Cohesity*



Phil Fry
*Vice president of financial
compliance, Verint*

"The Akumina employee experience platform, which is built on Office 365 and SharePoint and integrated with Teams, delivers personalised content to pre-configured groups within your organisation. With our communications platform, you can leverage two-way messaging that enables employees to respond and interact with you personally, multi-lingual support so that your message is translated into the languages that your employees speak and read, and persona-based delivery so that everybody is reading content that matters to them, and nothing more. With our collaboration engine, you can connect all of the components of project management in a single location, allowing everyone on your team to share knowledge and view task status. Nobody is left out, and everybody is kept on track."

Unified communication and collaboration tools, such as Microsoft Teams, are powerful enablers of better communications at all levels within an organisation, but run into trouble when used in a regulated environment. From a compliance standpoint, not being able to capture all of the communication modes found within platforms like Microsoft Teams, creates a compliance gap. To exploit their capabilities, solutions like Teams need to be augmented with recording and interaction capture tools that will render them compliant with requirements common to many industry and government regulations. Verint is working with Microsoft to empower better communications by addressing this disconnect – introducing communications capture and compliance capabilities for Teams that allow regulated organisations to take advantage of the latest collaboration and communications tools."



Alexandra Detweiler
*Global director of the
Microsoft Alliance,
Akumina*



James Rossell
COO, Wirehive

"Enabling better communication is at the heart of most digital transformation projects. However, it is about so much more than driving adoption of collaboration software like Microsoft SharePoint or Teams. The real impact opportunity comes from the democratisation of information across the organisation. In our experience, this usually occurs when you move to integrated cloud infrastructure and business applications where there is a single published information set. Power BI isn't often thought of as a communication tool, but in our experience, it is crucial to the 'change mission' of any company looking to modernise. The combination of data visualisation and real-time insights not only leads to better informed employees but empowers user champions to come up with solutions to company problems. Implemented well, it allows enterprises to unlock the potential of their huge talent base and even gamify the right behaviours in mission critical business processes."