

Making more of collaboration



Our story

William Buller from O2 shares a personal perspective on the workplace climate and its importance, alongside Unified Communications technology, in realising the benefits of collaboration.

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Make better decisions, faster.
Improve cost management.
Share knowledge easier.
Do more to find and keep happy employees.

There's a long list of reasons we all want to drive better collaboration. But to make it work at O2, we had to change the way we worked.

Collaboration should be easy to achieve. By nature we're sociable. We pull together in times of adversity. And we have done since we first came together to hunt woolly mammoths.

Most of us instinctively choose to collaborate – the growth of social media demonstrates how we strive to communicate even when we can't be together. But at work, it seems to be more difficult. It's not as intuitive. The way some organisations are structured can make it harder. And sometimes the tools and systems in place inadvertently prohibit it.

Then there's the issue of dealing with change. Change can be the bane of any big organisation. People don't want it. They don't think they need it. At worst, they actively distrust the reasons behind it.

At O2, improving collaboration and changing the way we do things is a work in progress, but what's been a surprise to me is just how easily we've been able to make change a positive experience. Most of our employees see a collaborative culture as being highly desirable and that's helping to drive up the level of engagement our people have with us.

Carol Rozwell, Vice President and distinguished analyst at Gartner, identified five factors necessary for successful collaboration – technology, roles, process, metrics and workplace climate.

As you'd expect from a leading comms company, here at O2 we've got the technology angle sorted, with tools including Skype for Business and Cisco Hosted Collaboration Solution (HCS), which we can integrate with Enterprise IP Telephony and our full suite of Enterprise Mobility solutions to make it easier for our employees, partners and suppliers to work together and share information. But after all we learned when we implemented flexible working, we chose to start by focusing on improving the workplace climate.

We are concentrating on four elements to transform our collaboration efforts: contacts (who we know), content (what we know), communication (how we connect) and communities (why we collaborate).

Each of these elements covers different technologies and ways of working, and has different cultural implications. So we managed the change in steps to ensure we laid the groundwork for more successful collaboration:



Get more connected

Getting everyone in the organisation connected to each other and to the sources of knowledge is the first step. We used to have an endless stream of emails about a particular subject. Now we use SharePoint to share documents that are relevant and ensure easy access to the most up-to-date versions. Email is a great tool for working on the move, but only 44% of people who use just email to collaborate are satisfied with it. At O2, we hear the same gripes, so tools like Skype and SharePoint are really helping us.

We make sure we can reach people too. Our heritage is mobile so you'll know that we believe in the value of email and apps on smartphones, but we implemented a BYOD policy that saw over 1000 devices come online in less than ten weeks. We've now moved on to Skype for Business with video on PCs, tablets and smartphones.



Get more social

Once connected, we wanted to encourage people to reach out beyond their existing networks, interact in ways they hadn't before, and become more social in the way they work. Getting them to follow each other via Yammer and holding 'YamJams' to drive debate. Encouraging comments on SharePoint to gain feedback about what we're doing.

We've found that 'thinking social' is helping us to build stronger relationships across the business and improve collaboration.



Get better results

The Holy Grail! This is where the value of collaboration becomes clear. Results are measured by traditional business outcomes, whether that's cost reduction, quicker completion of tasks, increased innovation or greater employee engagement. We track a number of metrics, but our first step was to empower our people to change the way they work. In part, it was down to the right tools and technology – our sales people have smartphones and tablets, so apps like [Salesforce.com](https://www.salesforce.com) let them manage their pipeline from wherever they wish.

We also use technology that lets us share ideas face-to-face over the web, like Skype for Business and video conferencing suites. And even simple audio conferencing like Just Call Me.

More productive, happier people – and significant cost savings. That's what we've gained from using the right technology to power better collaboration

But we found that people were still travelling to a number of meetings because that was what they'd always done.

So back in 2012, when we were already looking at ways to work smarter, we asked people to think: "Do I really need to make this journey?" With around £14 million being spent on travel, we knew there had to be a better way.

And those journeys generated a whopping six million kg of CO2. That's equivalent to roughly ten return flights between London and New York. Every day. For the whole year.

Then there's the personal side. Between us, we spent 12,000 nights in hotels. That's 33 years away from family and friends.

By collaborating in the best way possible, we've realised significant cost savings, and made our people more productive and happier by using the right technology.

As Rebecca Bromwich, Acquisition Manager, O2 Enterprise put it, "My working life has become so much easier by being able to complete tasks on the go. I regularly make use of coffee shop or train wifi, or even working from a lay-by or car park using 4G if I arrive somewhere early. I can make use of what would otherwise be 'dead time', and it keeps me productive and efficient in core working hours."

As a digital telco, we've got the experience and expertise in the Unified Communications technology that underpins collaboration. We're seeing the benefits of this with our customers on projects as diverse as asset management and flexible working. For example, Network Rail is building a complete and accurate asset register for its entire

infrastructure and equipping its people with the skills and technology they need to record and maintain information: "People whose jobs mean they're often isolated in the field now feel more connected, so they're happier and more productive."

ISS is a services organisation that manages the everyday running of customer premises. So its safe to say efficient collaboration is essential to their success. Our workforce automation platform is at the core of their ability to meet customers demands. Their engineers now have the upgraded handsets, email and app access, and tools they need to react faster and work more effectively with colleagues and customers as they optimise routes and stock control.



Find out more

Get in touch to meet with one of our consultants who specialise in Unified Communications. We'd also be happy to share our experience in more detail. Just talk to your Account Manager.

Contact us

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