

# Cloud Collaboration Study: The Benefits of a Secure and Easy to Use Collaboration Platform

Marcia Kaufman  
COO and Principal Analyst

Daniel Kirsch  
Senior Analyst



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## Introduction

Collaboration between employees, customers, and partners has become a foundational requirement for every organization no matter the size or industry. Effective collaboration strategies provide document access across any endpoint, deepen connections with customers and partners and increase productivity. However, this must all be done in a manner that does not expose an organization to security risks. Traditionally, organizations have simply locked down corporate data, only allowing access to those who are behind the corporate firewall. This highly restrictive approach is no longer practical in today's business environment where employees need access from a variety of devices, and data must be shared with third parties outside of the organization. In an effort to more efficiently and quickly share information, many employees have taken matters into their own hands by using consumer-focused cloud based tools to share data, rather than relying on the IT department to provide solutions. Although these employees are simply trying to improve productivity, the use of consumer-focused file-sharing without IT oversight can lead to loss of data and intellectual property and increase the risk of non-compliance.

Businesses are demanding collaboration platforms that are easy to use and can be incorporated into existing workflows with the right level of security and auditability. In this paper, we analyze the findings from a survey of organizations that are using Huddle's cloud collaboration technology to provide a secure, centralized repository for document sharing. The objectives of this study are to identify business priorities for a cloud collaboration platform and to analyze the benefits organizations achieve after adopting the Huddle platform.

## Cloud Collaboration Study – Key Findings

Hurwitz & Associates surveyed 14 of Huddle's North American and European customers. These customers ranged from mid-size businesses to large enterprises and spanned a variety of industries including government, medical, finance, architecture/engineering, and entertainment. All of the survey participants have been using the Huddle platform for at least six months, while the majority of participants have been using the platform for over two years. In addition, customers' deployment sizes ranged from under 50 users to over 1,000 users.

Almost all of the surveyed organizations, found the following drivers to be most important for implementing a cloud collaboration platform:

- Creation of a single document repository. Over 90% of survey respondents identified the need for a single document repository as the top technical and business driver for implementing a cloud collaboration platform. Companies are looking for a secure hub that provides distributed teams with quick access to trusted, accurate, and consistent shared documents at the right time.

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- Need to securely share information across the firewall. Over 85% of survey respondents said securely sharing documents and ideas with customers, suppliers, and partners outside of the corporate firewall was a top technical and business driver for their move to implement a cloud collaboration platform.
- Better connect with partners, customers and contractors. The need to deepen relationships with partners, customers, and contractors through a collaboration platform that they can all access is an important business driver.
- Keep teams up-to-date and productive by providing the most current documentation. The ability to increase productivity by ensuring that all team members have the most current files was an important feature of cloud collaboration tools for survey participants.
- Provide document access to mobile users, no matter the device. Survey participants are looking to support mobile employees by providing them with access to current documents no matter where they are located or what device they are using. Nearly 80% of survey respondents identified the need to support mobile employees as a major driver for implementing a cloud collaboration strategy.

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Respondents identified the following benefits as most significant after implementing Huddle:

- Team members have access to up-to-date documentation. Organizations that participated in the Hurwitz & Associates study averaged a 65% increase in their ability to provide team members with the most current project document.
- Increase the speed of the ability to respond customer inquiries. After implementing Huddle, organizations reported a 63% increase in their speed to respond to customer questions.
- Speed of Documents approval. The Huddle platform enabled organizations to increase the speed of their document approval processes by 58%.
- Reducing IT resources required to manage the infrastructure and software for a collaboration environments. After deploying Huddle, companies that previously used Microsoft SharePoint and other on premises collaboration tools were able reallocate staff away from routine administration tasks to more innovative projects. Huddle customers were able to reduce the amount of resources that were expended on collaboration technology by 53%.

## Cloud Collaboration Methodology and Results

Each of the 14 respondents in our study completed a detailed online survey. The survey covered the following areas:

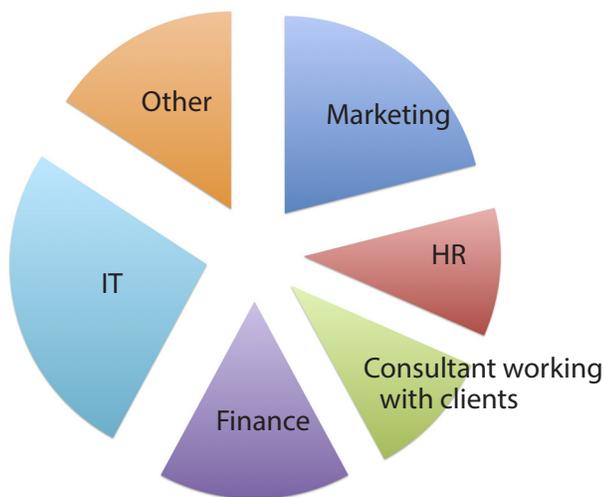
- Business and technical drivers for using cloud collaboration technology
- Current collaboration tools that are used in the organization
- Reasons for choosing Huddle over competing offerings
- Business and technical benefits that have been achieved since implementing Huddle



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After the respondents completed the survey, Hurwitz & Associates analysts followed up with telephone and email interviews with a number of the participants to gain further insight into the benefits of their Huddle implementation. Survey participants came from a range of business types, including highly regulated industries such as health care, investment services and governmental groups, as well as large enterprises and emerging companies. The surveyed organizations are currently using Huddle in a variety of departments for both ad-hoc projects as well as ongoing collaboration efforts. Figure 1 illustrates the departments that are using Huddle within the surveyed organizations.

**Figure 1: Departments that are using Huddle within surveyed organizations**



Source: Hurwitz & Associates 2013

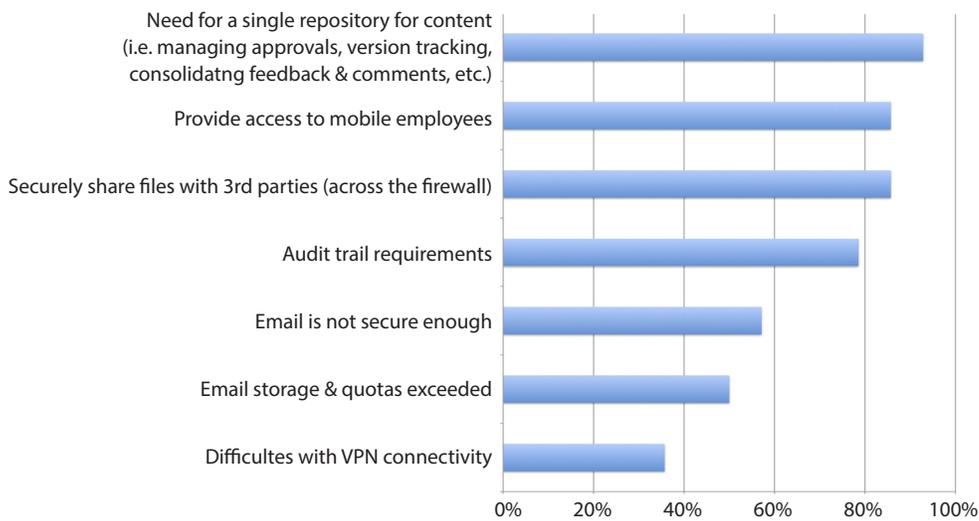
## Technical and Business Motivation for Cloud Collaboration

Respondents were asked a series of questions about their motivation for using cloud collaboration technology from both a technical and a business perspective. Each respondent was asked to rate the importance of the benefit statements for adopting a collaboration platform as “totally disagree,” “disagree,” “agree,” “strongly agree,” “don’t know” or “not applicable.” Figures 2 and 3 below illustrate the percentage of respondents that “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the benefit statement.

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**Figure 2: Technical Motivation for Cloud Collaboration Technology**

Source: Hurwitz &amp; Associates 2013

*Over 90% of respondents either agree or strongly agree that creating a single document repository where team members can all access the same documents is both a technical and business driver for cloud collaboration.*

The top technical drivers for adopting a cloud collaboration strategy include the need for a single content repository, providing access to documents for mobile employees, and the requirement to securely share content with third-parties across the firewall. This growing need to share content across the firewall requires a secure and auditable platform that allows a business to retain control over a document throughout its lifecycle.

Over 90% of respondents either agree or strongly agree that creating a single document repository where team members can all access the same documents is both a technical and business driver for cloud collaboration. From a technical standpoint, administering on-premises solutions, such as Microsoft SharePoint or shared drives, requires time and resources to both implement and maintain. Alternatively, cloud solutions are designed to be user-centric and allow business users to administer their own environments.

Additionally, employees and third-parties are becoming increasingly mobile and are accessing documents from a variety of devices. Eighty-six percent of survey respondents identified the need to support mobile employees as a key driver for cloud collaboration. Employees expect to have the same level of access to documents no matter where they are or what device they may be using.

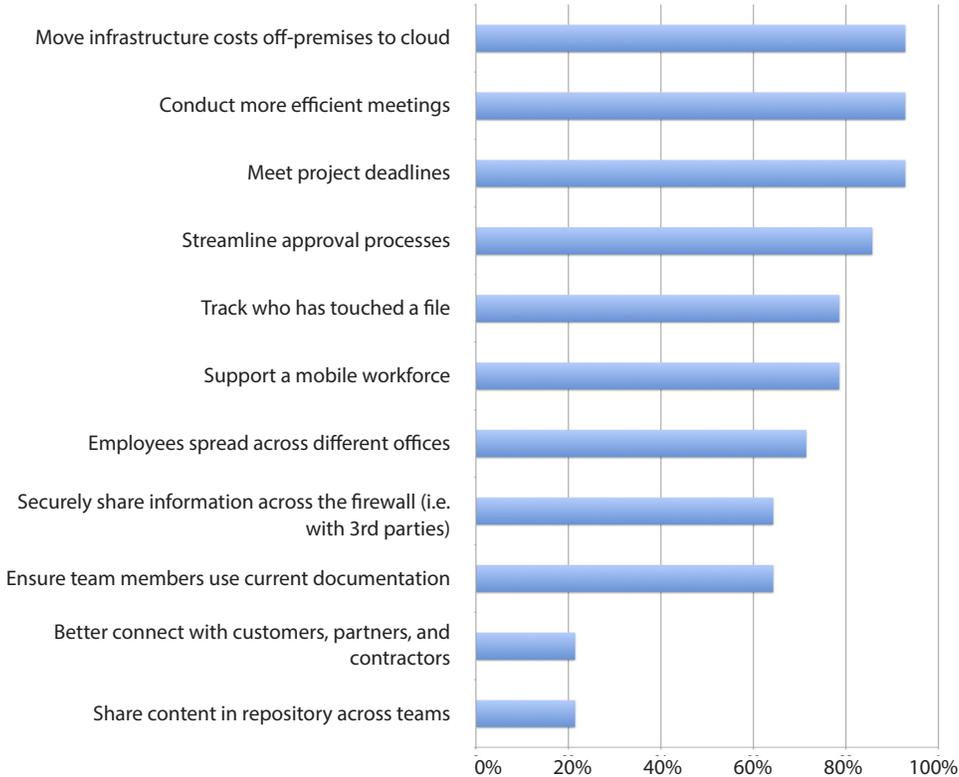
Finally, with regulations and corporate compliance standards rapidly evolving, and security concerns on the rise, IT departments are struggling with ways to allow collaboration while maintaining security and auditability. In the past, many organizations restricted access to corporate data that might contain intellectual property or other sensitive information to users who were behind the firewall or logged in through a VPN connection. For most companies, the need to improve the level of customer engagement and strengthen business level collaboration makes these tightly controlled environments impractical. Companies need to find a balance between keeping information flowing and security tight.



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Eight-six percent of survey respondents identified securely sharing with third-parties as a major technical driver for cloud collaboration, while 79% identified the need to account for who has viewed or altered documents as a driver. Traditionally employees have few options other than email to share documents with outside parties. However, with email, once content is sent, the sender loses all control over who can view attachments, print them and potentially alter them.

**Figure 3: Business Motivation for Cloud Collaboration Technology**



Source: Hurwitz & Associates 2013

*Eight-six percent of survey respondents identified securely sharing with third-parties as a major technical driver for cloud collaboration...*

As illustrated in Figure 3, the top business drivers for adopting a cloud strategy include the desire to create a single content repository across teams, the desire to better connect with customer, partners and contractors, and the need to ensure that team members are all accessing the most current documentation. The desire to create a single document repository and ensuring team members all have access to current documentation are two productivity enhancements that organizations wanted to gain from a cloud collaboration platform. Teams members often waste valuable time ensuring that everyone is working on the most current document. Survey participants commented that document synchronization becomes even more complicated when team members are spread across different offices and time zones. In addition to wanting to create a centralized project or departmental hub, many respondents sought additional



productivity benefits from cloud collaboration. For example, nearly two-thirds of respondents wanted to streamline approvals and help meet project deadlines through the deployment of a cloud collaboration platform.

In addition, organizations are searching for ways to work more closely with partners and customers. Thirteen of the fourteen survey participants stated that their organization was looking at cloud collaboration as a way to more closely connect with third-parties. Currently many organizations are only using email to share documents outside of their firewall. By implementing a cloud collaboration strategy, organizations expect to have a centralized platform, where users cannot only exchange documents, but also share ideas and comments on existing work.

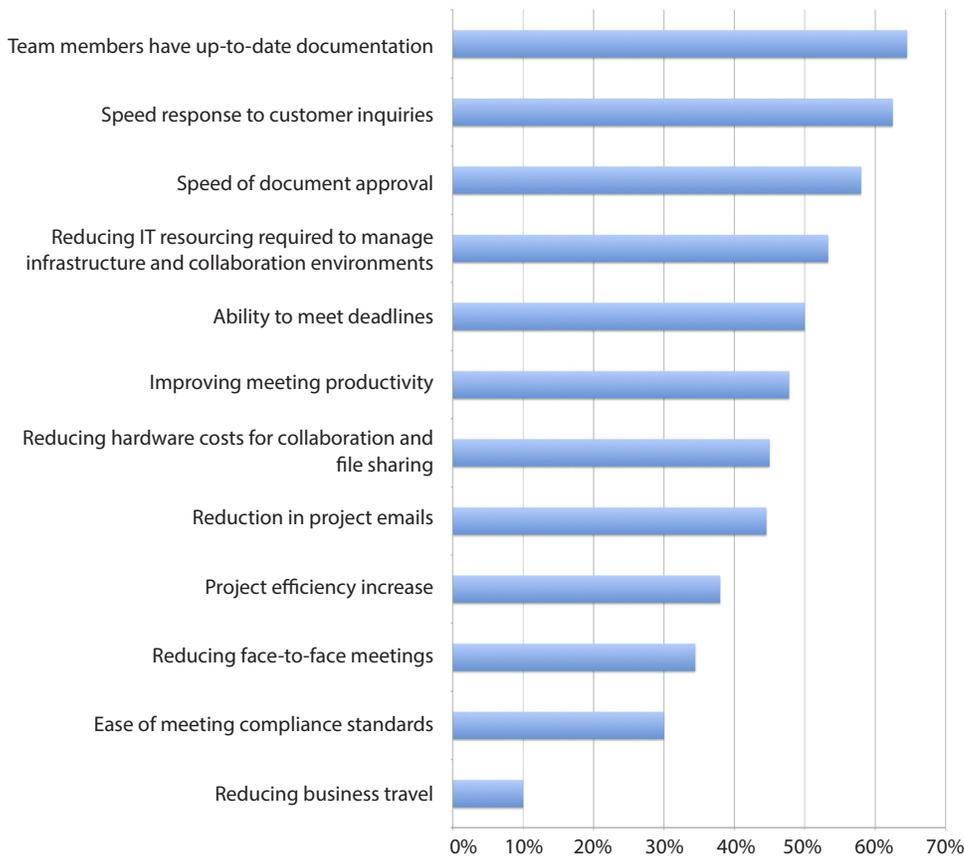
Finally, in addition finding ways to deepen relationships with partners and customer, 86% of survey respondents stated that they needed a way to securely share with third-parties. The respondents were clear that both from a technical and business perspective the collaboration environment must provide a sophisticated level of security. From a business perspective, organizations must be able to share valuable intellectual property and customer data while keeping full access control.

### Customer benefits after implementing Huddle

After implementing Huddle, organizations gained significant productivity benefits while also improving their security and control over intellectual property. As illustrated in Figure 4, the organizations represented in the study were able to gain a 65% increase in their ability to provide up-to-date documentation to teams. Additional benefits included improvements in response time to customers. Leveraging the centralized repository of current documentation central to the Huddle platform enabled survey respondents to improve their rate of response to customer inquiries by 63%. As a manager for an agricultural trade group remarked, with Huddle, "It is so easy to get people from all over the world to come to one place and see what they need to see, and work on what they need to work on." Furthermore, organizations that implemented Huddle were able to increase productivity by streamlining document approvals. Survey respondents reported a 58% improvement on their documents approval processes. Rather than sending out emails and needing to manually track approvals and feedback, teams were able to use Huddle as a centralized hub to review and approve documents.

*An agricultural trade group needed to collaborate with members and staff from around the world as well as external advertising companies. The organization needed a way that everyone involved in a project could have one centralized view. After implementing Huddle, a manager stated that "It is now so easy to get people from all over the world to come to one place and see what they need to see, and work on what they need to work on."*



**Figure 4: Improvements in Business Metrics After Deploying Huddle**

Source: Hurwitz &amp; Associates 2013

*Organizations that deployed Huddle were able to avoid making infrastructure investments because Huddle is offered as a service (Software as a Service).*

Finally, Huddle customers reported the ability to refocus internal IT away from routine maintenance and administration and onto more innovative projects to support the business. Survey respondents reported a 53% reduction in the resources required to manage collaboration environments. Organizations that deployed Huddle were able to avoid making infrastructure investments because Huddle is offered as a service (Software as a Service). As opposed to traditional software that requires a software license as well as maintenance and support, the Huddle platform is hosted on external servers. Each customer's data is stored in an encrypted container. In addition to the deployment model driving down costs, Huddle customers were able to have business users administer the environments rather than IT. Huddle workspaces could be initiated and fully administered by a business user without the assistance of corporate IT.

### The power to collaborate without security risk

Organizations were able to gain these productivity benefits while also providing employees with a secure platform to share and collaborate. Eighty-five percent of the organizations that participated in the research had the presence of



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consumer cloud sharing tools on their corporate network. Many of these organizations expressed concern over the presence of insecure and unmanaged collaboration tools. After deploying Huddle, business users were able to file-sharing without needing to worry that they might be exposing sensitive corporate data to inappropriate parties. As a technical lead at a health facility remarked, "One of the greatest benefits of Huddle is the ability to share files with partners in other organizations and not have to worry about the security."

In addition, 63% of organizations indicated that they chose Huddle because of its independent certificates and assurances. To meet the needs of the enterprise, Huddle has successfully completed an SSAE16/ISAE 3402 audit and all aspects of handling data from end-to-end are covered by its ISO 27001 certification. Huddle offers specific services to meet the requirements of both US and UK government entities. In the United States, Huddle offers a FISMA-compliant service that encrypts content to FIPS 140-2 Level 1 standards. For the United Kingdom, Huddle has been pangovernment accredited at IL2 and has wide use throughout all levels of national and local government. A UK government officer stated that their greatest benefits after deploying Huddle were "data management and version control, auditability and security."

Finally, Huddle allows each customer to fine-tune the security protocols on their deployment. For example, business users can easily accomplish workspace administration, although internal IT can also take on the role. The administrator can invite the appropriate internal and external collaborators and set granular access controls for each person. The administrator can, for example, choose a certain group of users to review content, while others may be able to also edit and download the content. Furthermore, administrators can easily revoke access from employees or partners if job functions change or a relationship with a partner ends.

## Conclusion

Companies are increasingly looking at new technology to increase productivity, enable mobile employees and better connect with customers, prospects and partners. The results of this study indicate that organizations that have adopted Huddle as their cloud collaboration platform have been able to extract significant value. The most significant benefit that Huddle users have achieved is the ability to better connect and securely share content with both colleagues behind the firewall and third parties. In addition, organizations have been able to increase their responsiveness to customer requests and gain significant productivity benefits. The ability to share information more easily, and deliver content to employees no matter their location or device has been achieved by customers while at the same time increasing security and control over intellectual property.

*A healthcare facility struggled with how to share information securely between physicians, support staff and other facilities. Physicians also needed to access information from home and while on the road. After implementing Huddle, the organization is able to securely collaborate on files without "hav[ing] to worry about the security." This has allowed physicians to change the way they interact with each other and support staff. Business problems are now being solved without the need to contact senior staff.*



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13A Highland Circle • Needham, MA 02494 • Tel: 617-597-1724  
[www.hurwitz.com](http://www.hurwitz.com)