

Great Project Management Apps - And How Your Business Can Use Them

By Chuck Cohn; January 16, 2015

Well-functioning organizations consist of any number of effective cogs, and one factor that often defines them as a whole is a coordinated workflow. Team members communicate regularly and projects are completed successfully. When this symbiosis exists, it is possible to achieve even the loftiest of goals. A coordinated work effort does not appear by happenstance. Instead, it is the result of thoughtful planning, ongoing team-wide commitment, and oftentimes, the use of some great project management apps.

Of course, new apps are developed and released on what seems like a daily basis, which can make it hard to know which software packages or apps to use. Here are a few examples of great project management apps, some that I have used with my Varsity Tutors team, as well as what we have learned about how to best use them:

Google Docs (and other online office suites)

Google offers a number of apps that are ideally suited to project management, including Calendar and Docs. Google Docs is especially powerful with tools that enable you to create presentation slides, spreadsheets, and text documents – and Docs retains many of the functionalities that you find in Microsoft Office.

One of the best features of in-the-cloud suites like Google Docs, OpenOffice, and Zoho is the ability to edit and share files from any location with an Internet connection. With cloud-based software, you can collaboratively revise files with your team, as well as access any document from almost anywhere in the world. You no longer need to remember which computer that file is on or where you left that USB drive.

You can also avoid the old process of emailing a document back and forth each time you edit it and have to share it with team members. When multiple team members can access a cloud file and add comments and revisions in real-time, you no longer have to ask yourself, “Am I editing the latest version?” or, “Is my team waiting for me to send this back?” By some estimates, 58% of Fortune 500 companies are using some parts of Google Drive, the cloud service that includes Docs, Sheets, Slides, and more.

Evernote

This note-taking app is perfect for much more than compiling your grocery list. Evernote enables you to share notes within and between teams, as well to track their progress on projects. You can also upload important company files as PDFs and then organize them into notebooks for easier reference. Evernote’s search feature even eliminates the need to thumb through hundreds of documents; instead, simply type in some key words relevant to the document for which you are searching.

Evernote syncs across Android, Mac, and Windows devices, which means you can jot down notes on your iPhone on-the-go and later access those notes to write an article or blog post on your laptop. This is a fantastic way to ensure that the ideas most important to you and your company are never lost. The basic Evernote app is free, and there is a premium version that gives you more storage space. There is also a business version that lets team members easily share documents and lets you add extra security to protect company information. This app surpassed the 100 million user mark in mid-2014.

Basecamp and Asana

Consider, for a moment, how your business begins, sustains, and completes a typical project. Discussion notes and ideas are likely scattered across desks, email threads, and file folders in office cabinets. Your milestone statuses are likely scribbled on different whiteboards, individual calendars, or post-it notes.

Asana and Basecamp are two examples of apps that aim to streamline the project process so that staff members with diverse roles and responsibilities can work together more efficiently toward a common goal. Both apps are designed to simplify team communication and task tracking, and to minimize those friction points that arise from “work about work.” For example, when did project staff last touch base with Client A? Where are the latest ideas for this specific conversation topic for this project? What ideas did the team pitch, who led the discussion, and how did Client A respond? Basecamp and Asana can help you focus your efforts where they matter most.

Asana’s tagline is “teamwork with email,” and its app strives to eliminate much of the friction and delays of work coordination that arrive when projects are managed via multiple email threads. The Asana app is currently free for teams of up to 15 members, with paid subscriptions required for larger teams.

Basecamp offers a 60-day unlimited use free trial, as well as packages that start at \$20 per month. The app enables you to keep discussions, project to-do lists, and all relevant files under one project “dashboard,” giving you easy access to useful information.

Which apps are best for my company?

The apps that are more likely to benefit your organization are the apps that complement your business strategy and company culture. The easiest way to find them is to try them.

If an app requires a subscription fee, one great idea is to investigate whether it also offers a free trial. Many programs are freemium – they only charge you once you exceed a certain number of users or a specific storage capacity. This can make it easy for project leaders to test drive apps before committing their entire team to them. It can also minimize lost time, since utilizing project management software requires an upfront investment in staff training.

Many of the project management methods that businesses use today were developed before the Internet and smartphone age of 24/7 connectivity and instant communication. The best project management apps make use of modern technology to increase operational efficiency and ultimately help your business achieve new heights.

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/chuckcohn/2015/01/16/great-project-management-apps-and-how-your-business-can-use-them/3/>