Collaboration Analytics: Unlock the Value of Collaboration

What You Will Learn

You want to expand your collaboration capabilities. You know it’s good for business, but how do you prove it? How do you demonstrate that your collaboration investment:

- Lowers costs
- Mitigates risk
- Accelerates growth

How do you measure collaboration? The answer is big data—data you might be throwing away. Take our Big Data Quiz to see if you are deriving maximum value from your collaboration investment. Learn how to make smarter, more reliable decisions that can help you stay relevant and responsive to your organization.

Big Data Quiz (Part 1)

Our quiz begins with an evaluation of your understanding of how your use collaboration in your organization.

Check any that apply. Do you know:

- Who is using collaboration tools
- How they are using them
- How frequently they are being used
- What impact this usage is having
- What "good usage" looks like
- How your usage compares to others
- How you can apply this information to business problems

Add a point for each checked item

Total Part 1 = _____ points
Challenges

The use of big data has the potential to transform business. According to a recent article in Harvard Business Review, big data can help us measure and therefore manage more precisely than ever before, allowing organizations to:

- Make better predictions
- Make more informed decisions
- Target more effective interventions

"You can’t manage what you don’t measure.”

W. Edwards Deming, American Statistician, Professor, Author, Lecturer, and Consultant

Of course, there are challenges to becoming a "big-data-enabled organization," especially when it comes to measuring collaboration-fueled change. It can be difficult to determine:

- Why collaboration works for some and not for others
- How collaboration can improve sales
- What collaborative innovation looks like
- How collaboration can reduce costs (for example, for travel and real estate)

End-user surveys are inaccurate, because people are not very good at reporting their own usage. They do not tell you how, or even what, to fix. The only way to know if collaboration is working is to analyze it; by measuring user adoption and return on collaboration investments.

However, the sheer volume and velocity of collaboration data can be overwhelming. How do you:

- Gather collaboration data
- Know which data to analyze
- Take unstructured data and make it useful

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1 Harvard Business Review, Big Data: The Management Revolution
Collaboration Data: Use It or Lose It

If you are not gathering and analyzing your collaboration data, you are losing valuable insights. That is why Cisco partnered with MIT’s Center for Collective Intelligence to develop Cisco® Collaboration Analytics. Based on big data analytics, this service aggregates network traffic data that enterprise IT departments are already collecting—and typically “dumping” after 30 days. Although these logs were designed for auditing and debugging, Cisco Services use collaboration analytics to help transform this data into intelligence (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The Levels of Collaboration Analysis

Customers who use this service are moving beyond collaboration as a utility to collaboration as a strategic business tool. By analyzing actual usage, they can:

- Identify key collaborators
- See what these individuals are doing and with whom they are collaborating
- Learn how connections are made and which tools broker the connections
Big Data Quiz (Part 2)

This portion of our quiz is designed to help you gauge your ability to benchmark collaboration usage in your organization.

Check any that apply. Can you look at data by:

- Product
- Person
- Functional group
- Geography
- Subsidiary or acquired company
- Organization

Add a point for each checked item

Total Part 2 = _____ points

You Are Here: Benchmark Before Analysis

Before you can begin to apply advanced analytics to your collaboration data, you need to establish benchmark and baseline levels of usage to determine how often your company uses real-time collaboration tools. Then you can measure change as new tools or collaborative processes are rolled out. An important part of this process is to understand where your organization “sits” compared with industry best practices (Figure 2).

Figure 2. It Is Important to Establish a Baseline for Collaboration Usage
According to a recent Forbes study that Cisco commissioned, “Those who see the greatest value in collaboration technology are the ones who use it the most”. Heavy users, or collaboration “leaders”, perceive a strong correlation between using collaboration tools and achieving transformational business metrics in areas such as productivity, knowledge sharing, customer satisfaction, cost control, and more.

**Big Data Quiz (Part 3)**

This portion of our quiz is designed to help you determine how well you can quantify the strategic business value of your collaboration investment.

Check any that apply. Can you demonstrate that collaboration has positively affected:

- Sales
- IT leadership
- Mergers and acquisitions
- Engineering and product design
- Organizational development
- Leadership development and organizational design
- Inclusion and diversity

Add a point for each checked item

Total Part 3 = _____ points

**Quantifying the Benefits of Collaboration**

When Cisco looked at the collaboration traffic of Cisco Sales, the goal was to get a clearer picture of how strategic (as opposed to transactional) the Cisco salesforce is and how use of collaboration tools affects the sales process. Specifically, we wanted to know:

- How our sales people spend their communications time
- If internal operations limit selling
- If customer feedback is shared across the company
- If best practices are shared across the organization
- What makes our best sales people successful

“By comparing the collaboration patterns of four regional Cisco sales teams, we made a strong correlation between selling performance and sales team collaboration. This finding represents a $300M opportunity for Cisco.”

Stori Hybbeneth, Engagement Manager, Cisco Systems
Many organizations do not have or underuse the rich collaboration tools available to them in favor of email messages and phone calls. This situation was certainly true for some of the Cisco sales teams we compared. However, when we compared the collaboration patterns of the four regional teams we studied, we also discovered and were able to measure the following:

- High achievers collaborate more through Cisco WebEx® meeting applications.
- Collaborative sales teams sell more.
- High volumes of collaboration with internal operations may represent an opportunity to free time for additional selling to customers (Figure 3).
- Light traffic to product management indicates customer and partner feedback may not be shared.
- Sales-to-sales traffic suggests active best practice sharing.

**Figure 3. Categorization of Internal Cisco Sales Email**

Analyzing our network traffic data has allowed Cisco Sales to change behavior. This behavioral change, in turn, will help ensure that the investment in collaboration technology is delivering the desired business outcomes.
Predicting Success

One of our large retail customers is merging with another national retailer. Both organizations know that mergers and acquisitions are often unsuccessful and can destroy shareholder value. The retailers are using Cisco Services Collaboration Analytics to gain early insight into how the merger is going, so they can “course correct” if necessary. By using this service, they hope to:

- Ensure a successful merger
- Reduce the time it takes to fully integrate the two companies
- Derive maximum value from the merger

Big Data Quiz (Part 4)

This portion of our quiz is designed to help you identify your ability to measure the intangible business benefits of collaboration.

Check any that apply. Can you:

- Identify the change agents within your organization
- See where innovation is happening
- Locate people who collaborate outside their functional areas
- Pinpoint innovation blockers in project teams
- Figure out why some teams have excellent results while others struggle
- Determine if your IT department is collaborating globally
- Identify which supplier relationships are strategic vs. transactional
- Know advance if an acquisition will be successful

Add a point for each checked item.

Total Part 4 = _____ points
Successful mergers depend on economies in consolidated operations as well as synergies in sales. Progress on both can be easily detected in collaboration traffic (Figures 4 and 5).

**Figure 4. No Connections Between Existing Sales Team (Left) and Newly Acquired Sales Team (Right)**

**Figure 5. As the Merger Moves Forward, Connections Between Sales Teams Begins to Develop**

By monitoring these connections we can determine whether or not groups are working and selling together.

The merged companies also plan to monitor collaboration patterns over time to ensure (Figure 6):

- The collaboration network between functional areas is stable
- There is no overlap between sales teams supporting specific customers
- Knowledge and best practice sharing is embedded in the culture
- Conducting business between the two organizations is routine
Mapping Innovation

The same principles can be applied to innovation. Our work with Peter Gloor, Research Scientist at the MIT Center for Collective Intelligence, has helped identify several measures of innovation that can be tracked by analyzing collaboration data. These measures include:

- Rotating leadership: Individuals switch between central and peripheral roles.
- Strong leadership: One or a few people are significantly more central than others.
- Eminent contributors: Some people are significantly more active senders and recipients of information than the rest.
- Rapid response: Members of high-performing teams are faster in responding to requests than others.
- Outspoken discussion: Members discussing are computed for a well-balanced emotionality by sentiment analysis.

These dynamics characterize high-performing teams. They are observable, quantifiable, measurable, and learnable.
“Patterns of communication are the most important predictor of a team’s success.”


Research by MIT’s Human Dynamics Laboratory suggests that the type of team doesn’t matter. The researchers studied innovation teams, post-op wards in hospitals, customer-facing teams in banks, backroom operation teams, and call center teams. They concluded that collaboration patterns are “as significant as individual intelligence, personality, skill, and the substance of discussions—combined”.

Big Data Quiz (Part 5)

This portion of our quiz is designed to help you determine if Collaboration Analytics are a “good fit” for your organization.

Check any that apply. You have:

- A sizeable collaboration portfolio
- A large user population
- Questions not readily answered by other systems
- A substantial financial stake that would otherwise be “money left on the table”
- Need or interest in demonstrating value of collaboration technology to stakeholders

Add a point for each checked item.

Total Part 5 = _____ points

Now that you have filled out all five segments, add the points from each part to determine your total.

(Lower is better.)

- If your total lies between 22 and 32, call Cisco Services today.
- If your total lies between 11 and 21, strongly consider investing in Cisco Collaboration Analytics and be at the forefront of the big data revolution.
- If your total lies between 0 and 20, give yourselves a pat on the back and call us anyway. We can help you further maximize your Cisco Collaboration Solution.

Using collaboration analytics, you’ll gain insight into how your company’s employees collaborate using the communication tools you have provided. You will be able to demonstrate the value your collaboration tools are delivering to your business. These insights will allow you to increase your responsiveness with business stakeholders and allow you to make smarter, more reliable decisions that go beyond usage data and into a strategic tool for business transformation.
Why Cisco Services

Collaboration Analytics is part of Cisco Change Management Services, which also include collaboration business analytics and Organizational Network Analysis. These new collaboration services based on big data analytics can help you:

- Achieve the expected benefits of collaboration more quickly
- Promote effective collaboration usage to achieve targeted benefits and business goals
- Measure and review usage levels of collaboration tools
- Improve data use to promote better decision making and outcomes

Backed by deep networking expertise and a broad ecosystem of partners, Cisco Services enable you to successfully plan, build, and manage your network as a powerful business platform. Whether you are looking to quickly seize new opportunities to meet rising customer expectations, improve operational efficiency to lower costs, mitigate risk, or accelerate growth, we have a service that can help you.

Use Your Data to Derive Maximum Value from Collaboration

Reference this paper and blog to learn more about Collaboration Analytics and other Cisco Change Management Services:

- Increasing Knowledge Worker Efficiency through a "Virtual Mirror" of the Social Network
- The Correlation Is Clear: Measuring Collaboration Is Directly Tied to Better Adoption of Collaboration Tools