DEPLOY MICROSOFT TEAMS THE RIGHT WAY — 5 MISTAKES TO AVOID

Taking stock of some of the most important yet least expected features in a fast-growing enterprise platform

Quest®

Introduction

Most of us in IT will remember 2020 as the Year of the Rush.

We were in a rush to administer domains and hardware without going into the office. We were in a rush to keep our platforms and websites running smoothly for paying customers. And we were in a rush to get our users and co-workers functioning remotely yet productively, which usually meant we were in a rush to deploy Microsoft Teams.

But no matter which year you worked on it, it's likely that you had to deploy Microsoft Teams faster than you'd have liked. After all, Teams plays the role of the Great Unifier for a new, remote workforce moving away from on-premises infrastructure and toward the cloud. By training, most of us in IT would rather read up on, talk about and experiment with such a pervasive service before plunging headlong into deployment.

If only there were time for that.

This eBook explores five of the most commonly overlooked, ignored and unexpected artifacts of adopting Teams. They are features and characteristics of Teams that you may have known you were signing up for, but which you couldn't address in your rush to deploy. You and your fellow Teams administrators will see why things are happening the way they are and discover ways you can make them happen the way you want them to.[1]

1 This eBook is based on the February 2021 iTech Conferences webinar, "Top 5 Mistakes in Rushed Teams Deployment."

Quest

AN OVERVIEW OF MICROSOFT TEAMS ADOPTION

You know what it has been like to deploy Microsoft Teams in your organization. Do you know how many other organizations have been in the same boat?

In November 2019, Microsoft claimed Teams had 20 million daily active users. Four months later, they announced 44 million users. Six weeks after that, they reported 75 million users. By October 2020, they were up to 115 million daily active users. That means volume grew by almost 500 percent in about a year. No wonder Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella is always smiling in the photos.

Microsoft Teams is available in more than 180 countries and more than 40 different languages. More than 2,700 organizations have more than 10,000 users each and more than 100 organizations have more than 100,000 Teams users each. That means you've been in good company as you've rushed to deploy Microsoft Teams.

It also means you've been among the thousands of admins seeing how quickly Teams and Microsoft 365 have evolved. Because Microsoft is continually updating Teams, many of us have noticed moving targets — ways things worked that suddenly changed and features that suddenly moved from one place to another. The dynamic nature of Teams has kept us nimble, even if it has kept our training materials (including this one) in flux.

Finally, it means you're not the only admin looking back and saying, "I wish I had known this about Teams before we took the plunge." Of course, you would still have deployed, but you might have done a few things differently.

We'll look at five of those things and what you can do about them.

Quest

MISTAKE 1:
OVERLOOKING THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF TEAMS

Starting at the architectural level, let's consider the building blocks and what goes into an MS Teams deployment. Think about how the pieces fit together and the advantage in understanding them all before deployment.

Every time you create a new team, you create a new Microsoft 365 group. In fact, you create a unified group, the Microsoft 365 group object that was the predecessor to Teams. Keep in mind that Teams bridges the gap among Microsoft 365 workloads like Exchange Online, SharePoint Online and OneDrive for Business and makes them user-accessible in one place. The Microsoft 365 group is the building block for how all the pieces fit together.

So, whether you instantiate the team from the admin center (see Figure 1) or team-ify a SharePoint site (see Figure 2), you're creating a new Microsoft 365 (unified) group.

Every time you create a Microsoft 365 (unified) group, you also create a new SharePoint Online site. Are you wondering why all of those SharePoint sites keep popping up? A lot of your admin tasks create groups — sometimes inadvertently — and each group you create also generates a site — even more inadvertently.

For example, when you go into your active groups in the admin center and add a group (see Figure 3), a new SharePoint Online site is created. What's more, the members of that group can access the site.
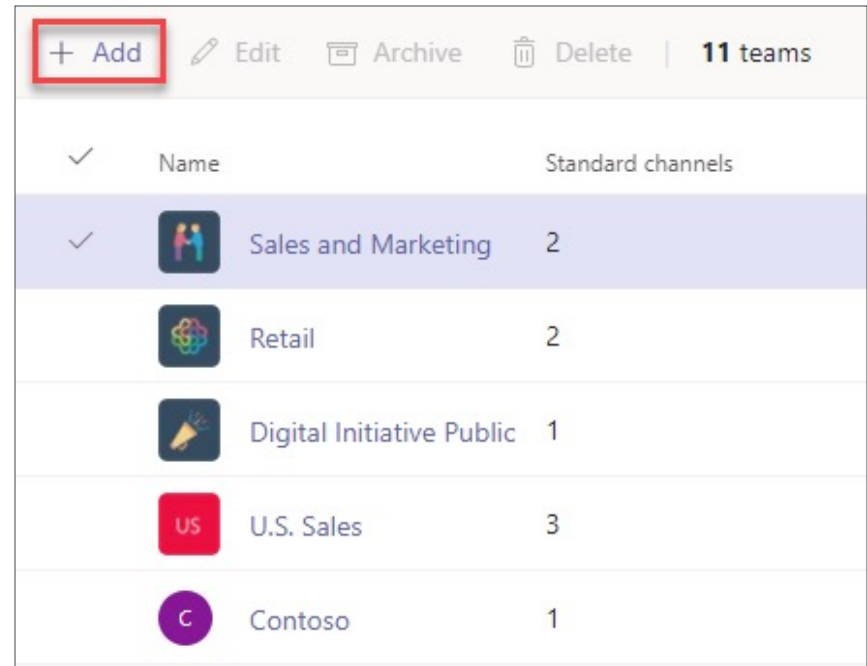

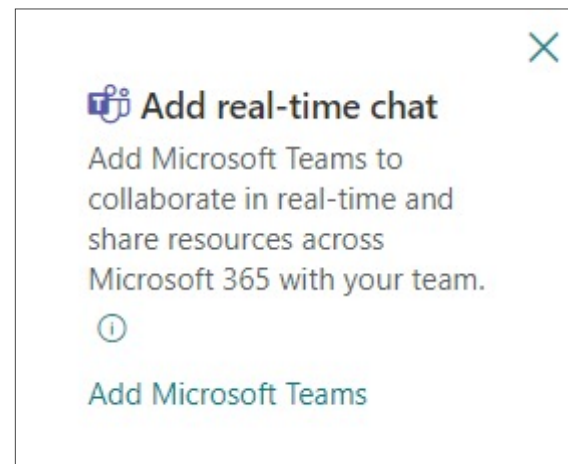*Figure 1: Adding a team from Teams admin center*

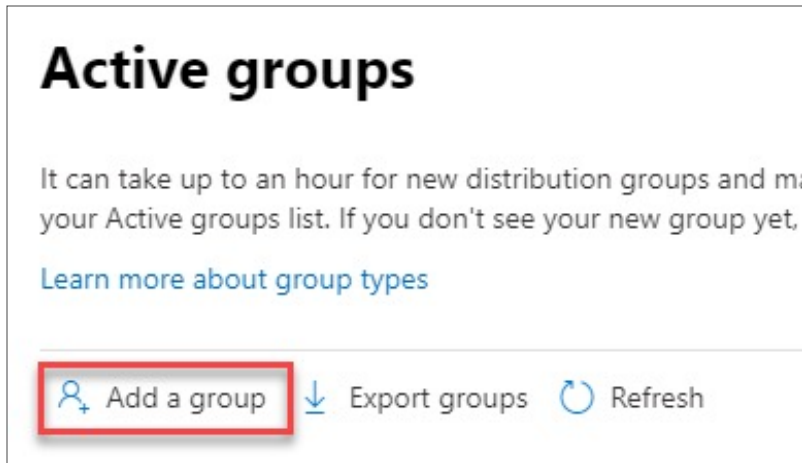*Figure 2: Team-ifying a unified group site within SharePoint*

Quest

Figure 3: Adding a group from admin center

Figure 4: Channel privacy settings in Teams

"All I wanted to do was create a group," you say. And you did — plus the site, plus management of the membership to the site, plus management of the data and content on the site.

Every time you create a private channel, you also create a new SharePoint Online site. Of course, when you create the channel (see Figure 4), you set it as public or private. While public channels are open to all team users, private channels are accessible only to specific users of the team, which may include external users.

Teams creates a SharePoint Online site that applies those unique permissions and reserves the channel's contents to specific users, outside of the unified group that manages the team site.

Figure 5 shows how Teams forms a URL based on the name of the original team site ("USSales") plus the name of the private channel ("NewPrivateChannel"). It points to the site that handles the content of that private channel, separately and independently from the content of the team site.

Thus, private channels are yet another source of sites in your environment.
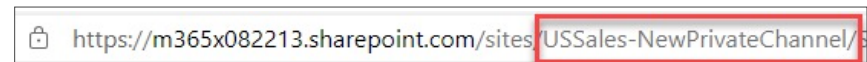

Figure 5: URL of SharePoint site for private channel

Quest

When you record a meeting in Teams, it's stored in Stream. Stream, an internal video streaming and management service, is a separate workload from Teams, with separate access. So being a member of a team is no guarantee of having access to the corresponding Stream in which the Teams recording was stored. Depending on company policy settings defined in the Stream admin center, there may be additional constraints on who can access content stored in the Stream service. Conversely, it's possible for Stream administrators to make all recordings accessible to anyone by default, irrespective of Teams group membership.

At least, that's how Teams currently stores recordings. Given the ever-changing nature of Teams noted above, admins may soon have control over where recordings are stored; for example, in OneDrive or in the document library for the team site.

Get used to having a team's permissions defined by the Microsoft 365 unified group. If you're accustomed to administering, say, SharePoint, then you're used to controlling access to a team's site via SharePoint permission structure. That's becoming rare, as permission management in a team is now defined by the owner-and-member model of the Microsoft 365 unified group.

Mind you, the fact remains that a team, and the people assigned to it, can be independently managed from a site under that team. So in the SharePoint admin center you will see the US Sales team's site collection, for example. You can still go to that site (which feeds the team) and set up news lists and libraries, and create new applications. And you can still manage permissions for that site the old way, through the SharePoint permission structure shown in Figure 6.
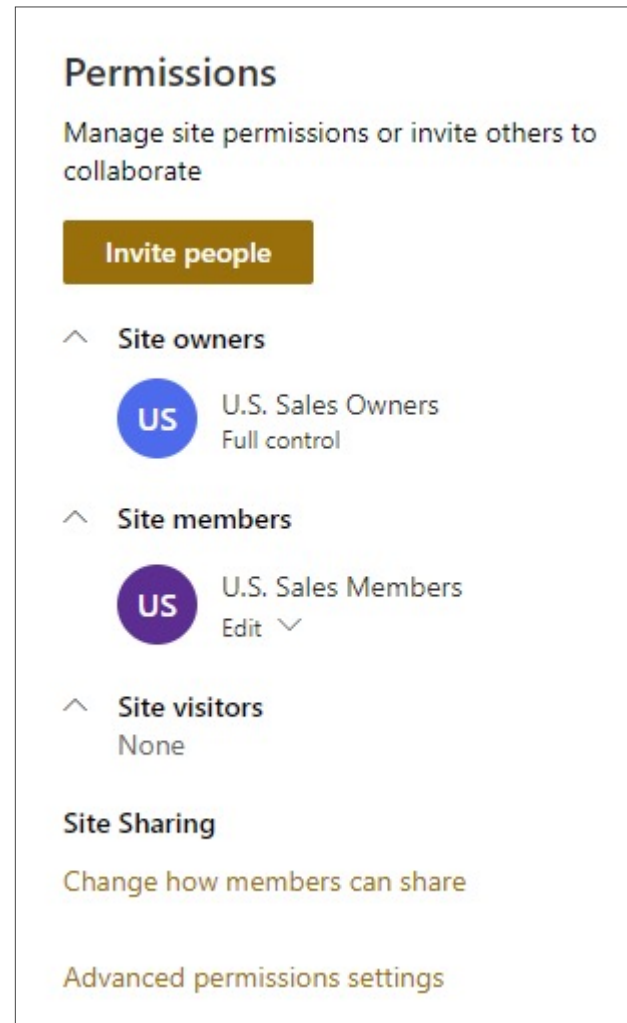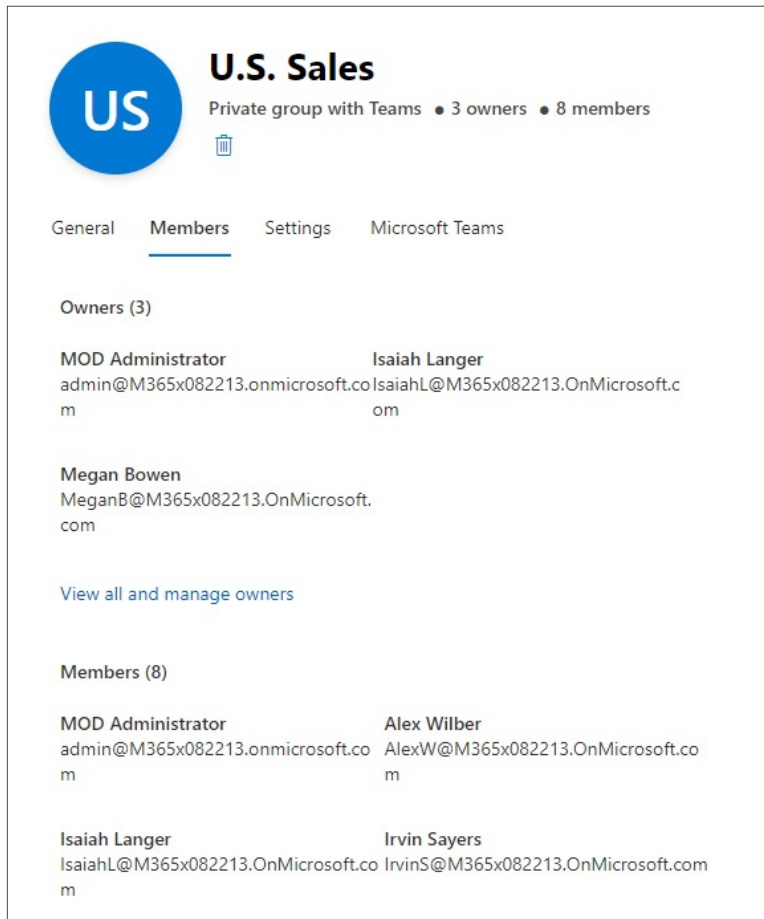

Figure 6: SharePoint site permissions

When you record a meeting in Teams, it's stored in Stream.

Quest

However, from the Active groups node of the admin center, you can see permissions for the owners and members of the group overall. The underlying SharePoint granularity is visible only from SharePoint, as shown in Figure 7.

Teams is evolving toward the unified group permission structure. Better get used to it.

Figure 7: Teams site permissions

MISTAKE 2: LETTING EVERYONE CREATE AS MANY TEAMS AS THEY CAN

So, the good news for users is that Teams pulls several Microsoft 365 workloads together in one place and its open access model makes it easy to create teams. That's not uniformly good news for IT administrators like you, however, because Teams creates so many things in so many places.

As described above, new teams mean new groups, new SharePoint sites, new private channels and all of the data and content that users share. Suddenly, you turn around and discover a tangle of hundreds or thousands of objects and assets related to your Teams deployment. Now you have to keep track of everything Teams generates.

Suppose Security or Finance comes knocking six months into your deployment, with questions about high data usage and licensing costs. Sure, they admit that enabling users to collaborate without assistance from IT has been great for the company, but it's turning out to be more expensive than anticipated. How can you get your arms around all your Teams-generated assets for an audit?

WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT IT NOW?

You can create an exclusive group whose members alone have permission to create Microsoft 365 groups. This PowerShell script lets you manage who can create Microsoft 365 Groups from now on. It affects services that rely on groups for access, including Outlook, SharePoint, Yammer, Teams and Stream.

Quest

MISTAKE 3: LOOKING FOR SHARED DATA IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES — CONVERSATIONS AND CHATS

Conversations and chats are two methods of communication among users in Teams. Although some of their functions are similar, they store shared data in different places.

A conversation is a unified communication thread for all members of a team, made up of posts among users in a channel. Whenever you create a new channel, you also create a new folder in the document library of the underlying SharePoint online site. The files that the users share in that conversation are stored in that folder.

For example, as shown in the conversation in Figure 8, MOD Administrator shares the file Excited.txt, making it easy for other participants to open the file immediately.
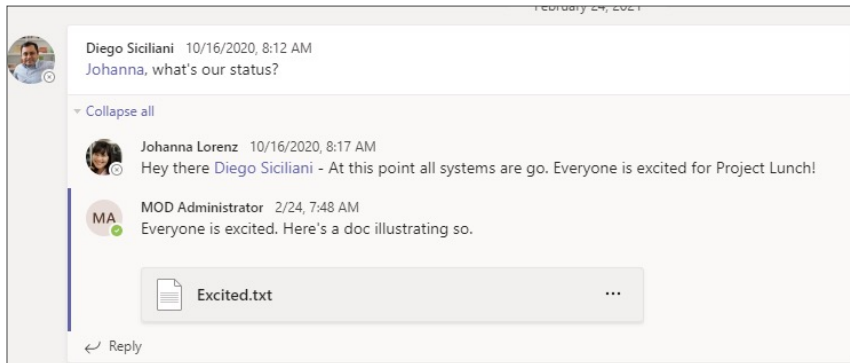
Figure 8: Teams conversation, including a shared file

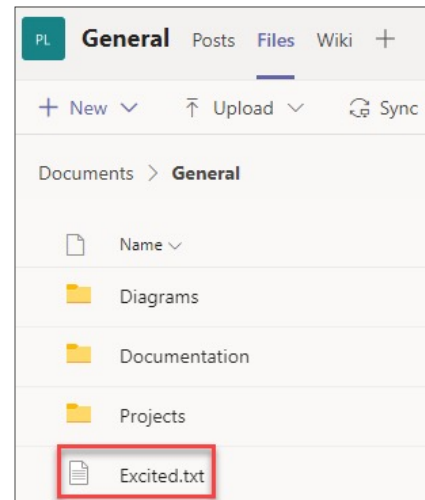That document is also visible from the Files tab in Teams (see Figure 9).
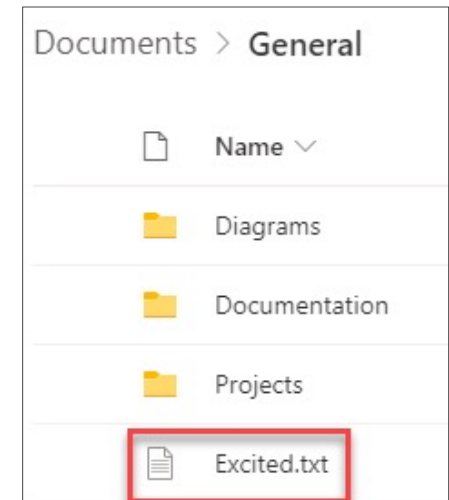

Figure 9: Teams view of shared file

Figure 10: SharePoint site view of shared file

That Files tab is a web part viewing the document library in the SharePoint site underneath that Team. So if you visit the site, as in Figure 10, and navigate to the shared document library's General folder for the channel hosting this conversation, you'll see the document.

Conversely, a chat is a user-to-user message. It too supports sharing of files, but Teams stores those files differently.

Quest

If you're in a Teams chat with MOD Administrator and you share the Excited.txt file, Teams stores it not in SharePoint but in OneDrive. MOD Administrator will find it among the files Shared by you (see Figure 11) and you will find it among the files Shared with you (see Figure 12).

Figure 11: OneDrive files Shared by you

Figure 12: OneDrive files Shared with you

The more your data is spread out across the organization, the harder it is to track it, audit it, govern it and keep it under control. Features like this SharePoint-OneDrive difference can trip you up when you're responsible for finding and backing up all of your Teams-related data. Administration of Teams is not always easy, and switching among Microsoft 365 admin portals is one of the main reasons for that.

If you're in a Teams chat and you share a file, Teams stores it not in SharePoint but in OneDrive.

Quest
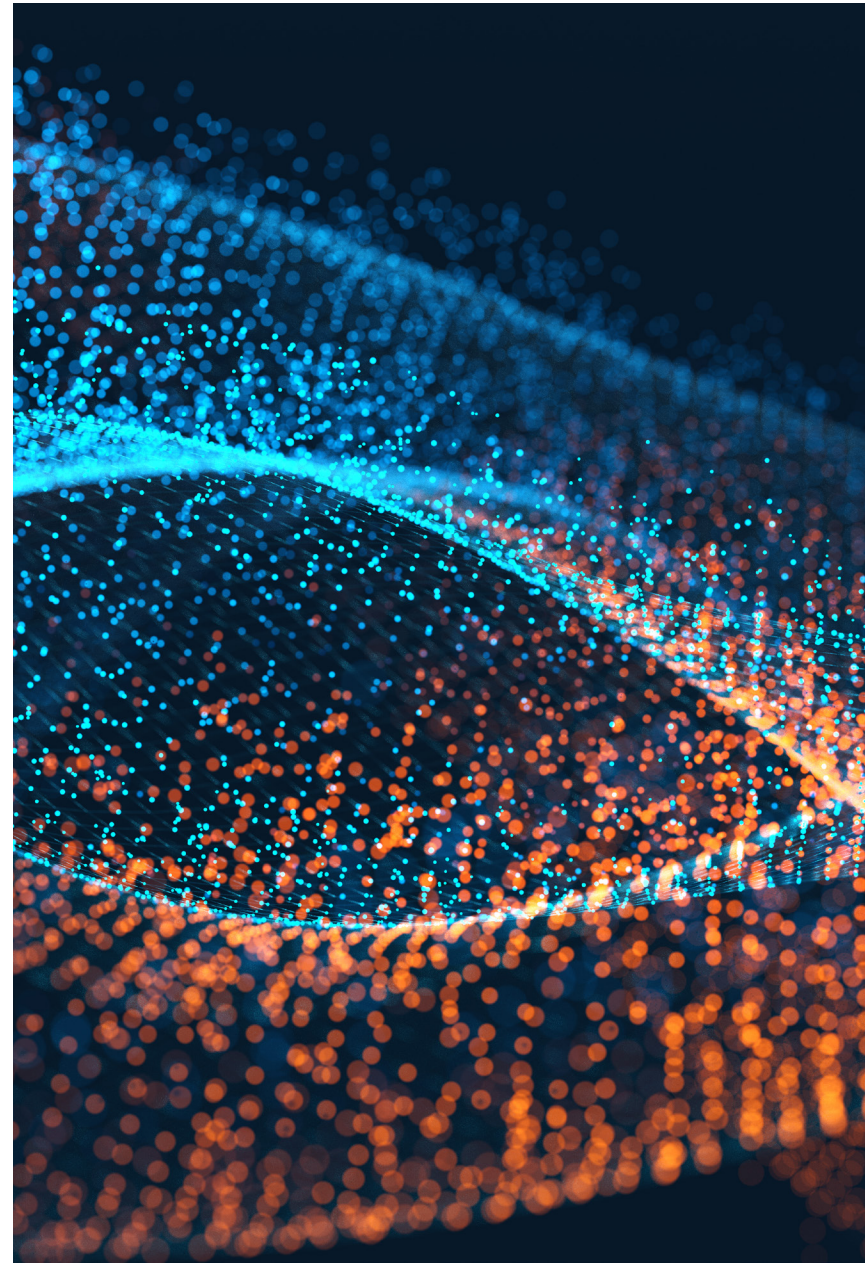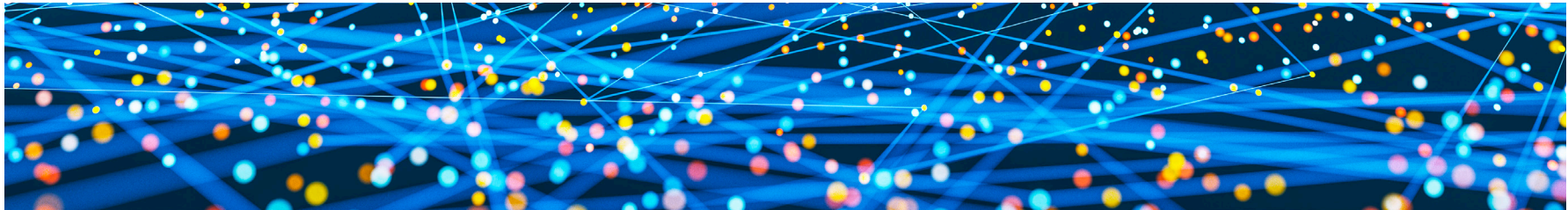
MISTAKE 4: WILD-WEST NAMING CONVENTIONS

Left to their own devices, users tend to push the envelope of creativity when it comes to team names. The result is not always innocent or professional, so it's useful for you as administrator to adopt and enforce a strong naming convention.

Keep in mind the open access model in Teams: by default, anyone in the organization can create new teams and channels without moderation. Also by default, there is no policy enforcement or convention on how teams and channels are publicly shared with and shown to users.

Figure 13 illustrates a handful of sample team names. Without a naming convention, your teams directory could end up with numerous names that are not at all indicative of the purpose or content of the team. Note also that Teams prevents duplicate entries by appending numerals to its placeholder name, "NewTeam."

When people can create and name a team however they want, they will do just that. The need for a naming convention becomes more pronounced the larger the organization, as different departments and groups build out their Teams footprint independently. The sooner you implement policies and conventions, the smoother your long-term path with Teams will be.
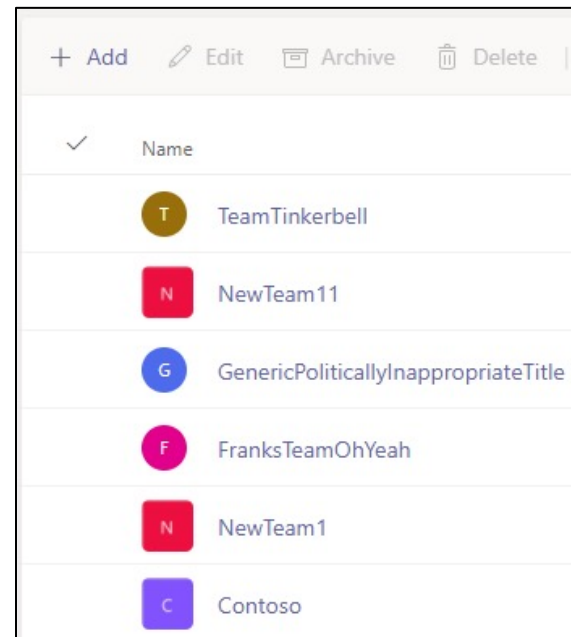

Figure 13: Team names in Teams

The sooner you implement policies and conventions for team names, the smoother your long-term path with Teams will be.

Quest

MISTAKE 5: KEEPING A TEAM AROUND FOREVER

Do you think about teams in the context of their lifecycle, their useful life? Are teams meant to last forever?

Naturally, your job as administrator is to provide everything your co-workers need so they can create and use teams for maximum productivity. But your co-workers are not responsible for lifecycle; you are. So consider lifecycle-related issues:

- license consumption

- audit trails

- data retention in general

- compliance

- goals and purposes of teams

- recognition and next steps once goals and purposes have been accomplished

For instance, if a team is created for the next release of your company's product, or for this year's customer conference, what happens after the event, when the team's purpose is fulfilled?

Some companies use the Archive feature in Teams to retire or suspend activity. Selecting a team and clicking Archive, as shown in Figure 14, freezes all team activity.

Admins and team owners can still add and remove members and manage roles. As admin, you can opt to make the SharePoint site read-only for team members (see Figure 15).
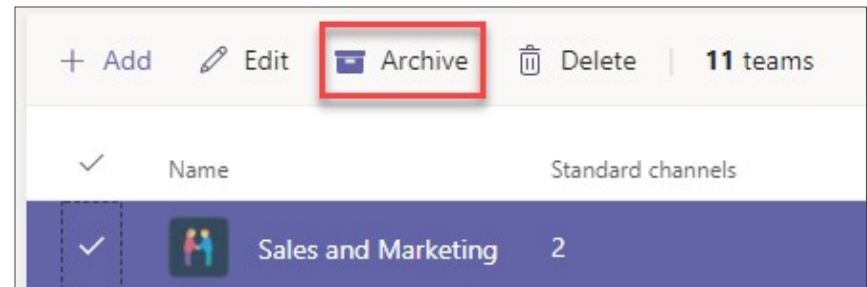

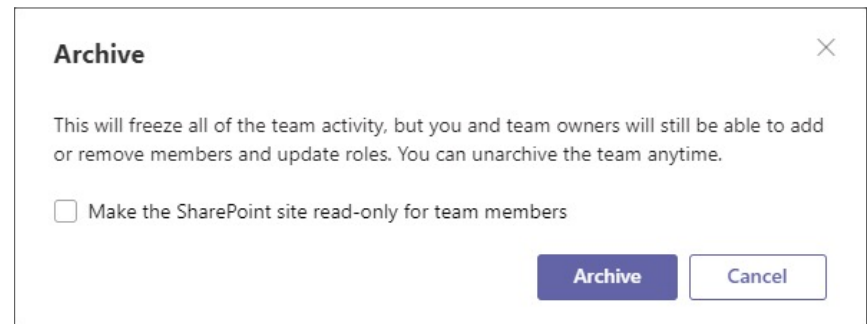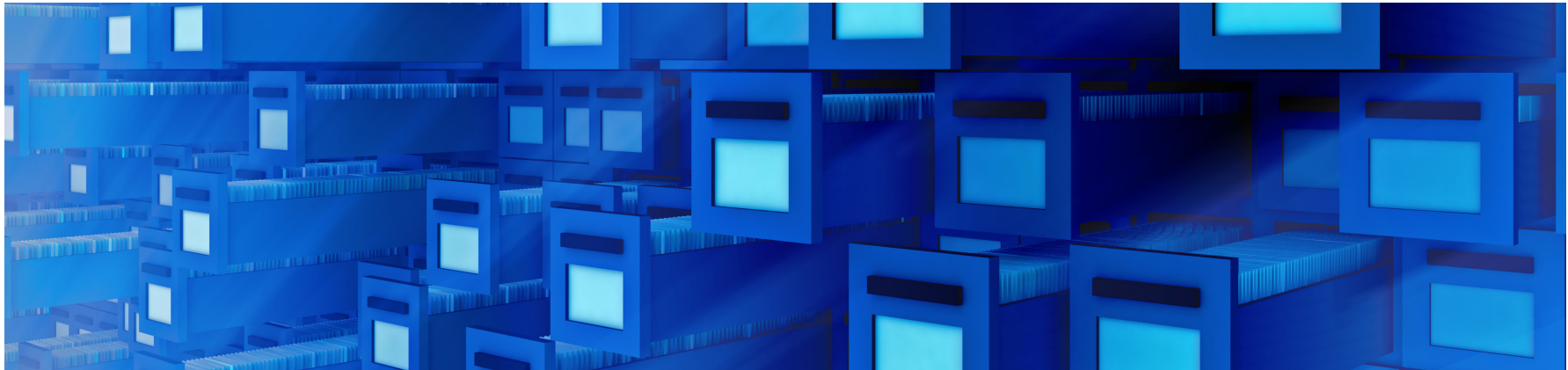*Figure 14: Archiving a team from Teams admin center*

Figure 15: Archive option

> Do you think about teams in the context of their lifecycle, their useful life? Are teams meant to last forever?

Quest

If archiving is not the way your organization chooses to permanently remove Teams content and assets, then what is?

As administrator, you're left with a number of questions about end of life in Teams:

- What happens when an admin or a team owner deletes a team? Does the team completely disappear? Do all related objects like groups and SharePoint sites disappear? That would have obvious disadvantages if you ever needed to account for the content.

- Does the content all get archived independently?

- If users delete content from the library at the SharePoint layer, can it be restored from the Teams interface? And, if they delete it at the Teams layer, can it be restored from SharePoint?

- Does deleted content go to the Recycle Bin, such that it can be undeleted?

- Is deletion handled differently on the SharePoint side, the OneDrive side and in the shared mailbox?

Microsoft 365 takes some steps to address those questions when individual components are deleted independently. For example, when the group is deleted, the Team disappears from the admin center over time. However, the Teams interface does not yet provide a single method of ensuring or reporting on deletion.

WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT IT NOW?

As governance and management come to play a role in Teams administration, it will be important to have policies for the end of a team's useful life. Consider starting a conversation to confirm that people are still in need of the team; if not, ask whether it is safe to archive the team.

It's also important for you as administrator to have contingency plans in place for ensuring teams are not accidentally archived and content is not inadvertently deleted forever. Depending on retention policies in Microsoft 365, that could be as simple as undeleting a team and its content from the Recycle Bin.

Quest

NOT A MISTAKE: COMPLETE TEAMS LIFECYCLE MANAGEMENT FROM QUEST

But there are better options for that kind of enterprise-level disaster recovery within Teams.

As customers have become more dependent on Microsoft Teams and watched it evolve in their organization, Quest has adapted its solutions accordingly. Quest has built a complete lifecycle of solutions to help customers unlock Teams adoption barriers, control the growth of Teams and prepare their organization for the long haul with Teams.

Admins use Quest solutions to better manage Teams along the entire lifecycle:

- **Governance and control —** Rules-based creation for teams and underlying Microsoft 365 groups keep you in front of Teams growth instead of running to catch up. Ongoing attestation of those teams and groups helps prevent wild growth. And granular delegation of admin roles for teams ensures least-privileged access across Microsoft 365. Governance and control can help with problems due to Mistake 2.

- **Access and configuration —** Define and enforce best practices for policies, then keep an eye on how they are being observed. Consider policies to deal with naming conventions (Mistake 4).

- **Auditing —** Track and store audit data from Teams, and from other hybrid AD and Microsoft 365 workloads. That data encompasses all user, admin and configuration changes, with alerts on suspicious or anomalous activity. That helps you address Mistake 1 and Mistake 3 by giving you an inventory of all the assets generated by Teams.

- **Reporting and adoption management —** Measurement facilitates management. With detailed reporting on Teams and other Microsoft 365 license usage, you can measure adoption and utilization. That shows you which users are buying in and which ones need guidance. This is useful if your users are constantly creating new teams (Mistake 2).

- **Recovery —** Restore teams and groups that have been accidentally or maliciously deleted. One facet of the lifecycle management in Mistake 5 is inadvertent deletion of Teams-related assets, and recovery is always a valuable feature.

- **Migration —** Move teams easily from one tenant to another; for example, when your organization undertakes a merger or acquisition.

Quest

CONCLUSION

After administering Microsoft Teams for a while, most admins become aware of things they wish they had accounted for during the initial rush to deploy. As a unifier of multiple Microsoft 360 workloads, Teams brings about unique IT situations that are not always foreseeable. Some situations are behavioral — users approach Teams differently from most other applications — and some are architectural — Teams generates lots of objects and stores them where admins don't always look.

Admins who understand the architecture and deployment of Teams are better equipped to provide for its growth and can help their organization get the most out of it. Proper, long-term administration of Teams is a combination of IT elements like governance and control, configuration, auditing, reporting, data protection and migration.

NEXT STEP

Quest offers its solutions for Teams adoption and lifecycle management as software as a service (SaaS), with no need for on-premises software or hardware.

Visit Quest.com/solutions/teams to gauge the fit with the growth of Microsoft Teams in your organization. Quest solutions are available in 30-day-free-trial versions.

Quest

ABOUT QUEST

Quest creates software solutions that make the benefits of new technology real in an increasingly complex IT landscape. From database and systems management, to Active Directory and Office 365 management, and cyber security resilience, Quest helps customers solve their next IT challenge now. Around the globe, more than 130,000 companies and 95% of the Fortune 500 count on Quest to deliver proactive management and monitoring for the next enterprise initiative, find the next solution for complex Microsoft challenges and stay ahead of the next threat. Quest Software. Where next meets now.

If you have any questions regarding your potential use of this material, contact:

Quest Software Inc.
Attn: LEGAL Dept
4 Polaris Way
Aliso Viejo, CA 92656

Refer to our website (www.quest.com) for regional and international office information.

Ebook-MPM-5MistakesRushedTeams-US-LR-64884

Quest