Achieving the Next Phase of Client Engagement

The enterprise communications and collaboration environment has undergone a rapid change in the last year. More than 68% of companies have adopted team collaboration applications to support contextual messaging and workstream collaboration. More than 82% now use video conferencing to enable rich virtual meeting experiences for distributed participants. And, more than 94% now use cloud-based file sharing. These tools have enabled organizations to better enable virtual employee collaboration, but they are not optimized for persistent client engagements that are built around long-term, repeatable processes, and that require granular security in to meet compliance and governance needs.

At the same time, companies are investing in digital transformation initiatives designed to improve customer engagement, but these efforts are primarily geared at the contact center to support customer inquiries.

In neither case are efforts optimized to support high-touch environments requiring repeatable persistent, multi-channel client journeys such as loan processing, health care delivery, financial advising, professional services, or any other process requiring managed workflows, on-going conversations, and meetings. For example, a workflow with trigger events, such as the reception of a signed loan application triggering a task for underwriter review is not supported by platforms that are solely designed for messaging and video conferencing.

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Context

What's needed in the market is a collaboration platform enabling automated, repeatable, virtual, persistent engagement between organizations and their customers, as well for busines-to-business scenarios. An ideal client engagement platform not only provides the foundation for conversation and information sharing through meetings and chat, but also enables configuration and automation of pre-defined and flexible workflows to support repeatable business process at onboarding and throughout the engagement lifecycle.

COVID-19 has forced organizations to adopt solutions to quickly and digitally scale their operations for the duration of the pandemic. Today, the majority of companies have adopted team collaboration applications for contextual messaging and workstream collaboration, video conferencing to enrich virtual meeting experiences for distributed participants, and cloud-based file sharing applications for content management.

Unfortunately, most deployments of applications like video conferencing and file sharing, are designed to support isolated interactions. Today, a meeting may use video conferencing. Files may be shared in a file sharing application. And messaging may occur in a shared team space, or via email.

This approach doesn't lend itself well to optimizing repeatable, long-term engagements with structured workflows to minimize complexity and expense. Current approaches also do not provide for a common security policy across multiple interaction touchpoints, creating potential risk from data loss through disjointed collaboration channels.

In addition, most collaboration approaches implemented since the start of the pandemic are focused on internal employee use. External collaboration often falls back to email, or necessitates the individual configuration of guest accounts for access to workspaces, configuration of file repositories with their own sharing controls, and enabling of appropriate controls to meet governance and data loss prevention requirements.

Specific requirements for data privacy, protection, and retention are often needed for regulated industries, such as financial services and healthcare. Beyond establishing secure integrated collaboration, organizations are likely to have pre-defined, repeatable processes and trigger events, such as a loan application requiring a credit check and the issuing of specific forms to the applicant, or an insurance claim requiring dispatching of an adjuster and the submitting of information including loss estimates and purchase records.

Context

The need for external collaboration is continuing to accelerate. Unfortunately, companies are often failing to proactively meet that need. Today, fewer than 37% of organizations are enabling external access to their team collaboration workspaces, largely through guest accounts, to support cross-company messaging and file sharing. Though almost 59% of companies have plans to digitally transform customer engagement, these efforts are primarily optimizing customer interaction in the contact center. **Neither of these initiatives are designed to meet the growing need for secure, persistent client engagement in a manner that unifies multiple channels, that supports customer journeys, and that provides templates for automatically configuring repeatable engagements.**

Plans to allow external access to team collaboration apps?

36.9%

63.1%
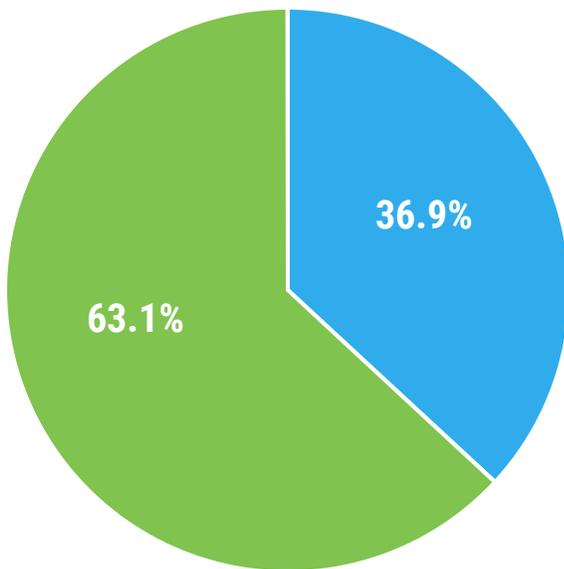
- Using now
- Do not allow

CX Transformation Initiative Plans

41.2%

58.8%
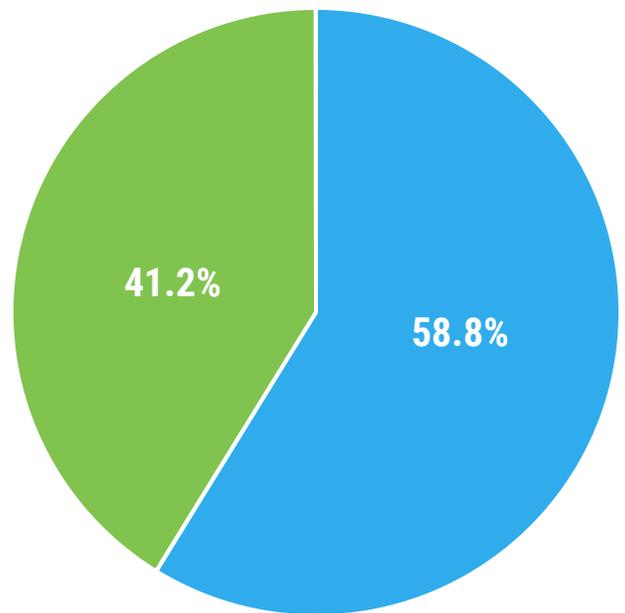
- Underway
- None

The Challenges of Client Engagement

To date, most digital transformation initiatives to improve engagement have focused on the contact center. Persistent client engagement may involve separate email, file sharing, portals, messaging, and meeting services with little to no integration among them, no ability to create templates for repeatable, pre-defined engagement, and no ability to implement consistent security, compliance, and governance policies across all client touchpoints. The result is that IT and business leaders are missing the opportunity to transform persistent client engagement from inefficient, disjointed applications to an integrated set of capabilities that meet organizational requirements and that support repeatable types of engagements.

For example, a process to approve a life insurance policy may include:

- An email, form submission, or phone call from the client to initiate the engagement
- Phone calls or video meetings to review the application process with the client
- Distribution of necessary electronic applications via email (or paper applications via traditional mail services)
- A secure file store for uploading of applications and other paperwork

- Inbound fax for obtaining signed documents
- Email or text messaging to provide application and underwriting updates

Each of these steps may have additional sub-steps such as signing of forms, providing of medical records, completing of a health survey, scheduling of an in-person physical exam, and so on. Automating these workflows has the potential to

1. **Reduce friction** by integrating partners into a common workspace
2. **Increase knowledge** sharing between employees and clients
3. **Reduce operating** costs by eliminating manual processes

Transforming client engagement into an easily repeatable unified workspace that integrates workflows, communications, and security reduces potential for errors, delays, and risks, and offers the potential to improve the entire client engagement experience.

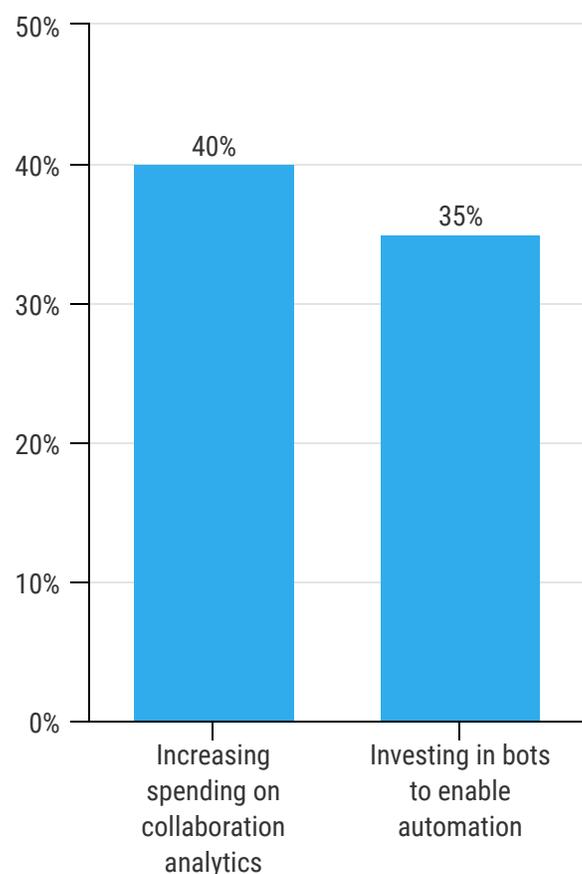ℛ metrigy

Defining the Ideal Client Engagement Model

The ideal client engagement model:

1 **Unifies** messaging, meetings and files through a central workspace

2 **Defines** and manages workflows and triggers

3 **Creates** templates for repeatable processes

4 **Supports** enterprise security requirements, including: granular access controls, data preservation, digital loss prevention, and compliance with applicable standards such as GDPR, HIPAA and SOX

Moving beyond disjointed applications requires embracing a platform specifically designed for persistent client engagement. In this approach, all conversations, documents, and meetings, live in a single, on-going workspace that can be accessed by clients, partners and employees.

Additionally, the ideal client engagement model should enable automation and analytics, enabling those responsible for the engagement to quickly identify potential trouble spots, and to have sufficient visibility to manage all aspects of the engagement to ensure success.

Metrigy 2021 Projections

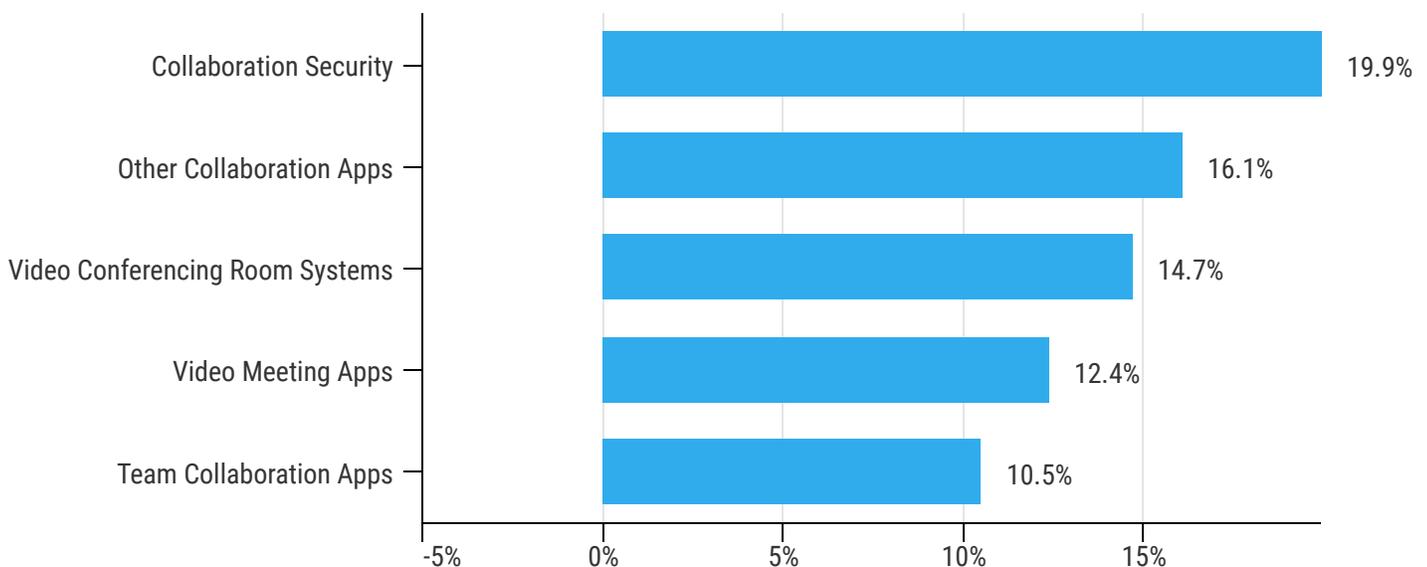| Category	Projection
Increasing spending on collaboration analytics	40%
Investing in bots to enable automation	35%

Ensuring Security

Collaboration security is growing in importance among Chief Information Security Officers / Chief Security Officers, with 63% of companies having a proactive approach to securing both internal and customer-facing collaboration. More than 40% of IT leaders say that end-to-end encryption of all data shared internally and externally is a critical requirement for successful collaboration, and more than 55% are increasing spending on collaboration security in 2021.

The growing security threats is also driving organizations to the cloud, with 35% of those who have adopted cloud-based communications services saying that security was a primary driver, second only to reducing cost. For many, the cost and complexity of protecting against security threats has led to an acceleration in cloud migration that takes advantage of the unique security expertise, and resources, that cloud providers often possess.

As a result of the shortcomings of existing collaboration solutions, IT leaders in successful organizations (defined as those that have demonstrated the highest ROI, or productivity gains, for their collaboration investments), are increasing their spend on collaboration security and additional collaboration applications in 2021 more than they are increasing spend on any other technology.

Where do successful companies spend more?

| Category	Value
Collaboration Security	19.9%
Other Collaboration Apps	16.1%
Video Conferencing Room Systems	14.7%
Video Meeting Apps	12.4%
Team Collaboration Apps	10.5%

Quantifying the Value of Digital Engagement

Investments in digital engagement result in quantifiable business benefits. Examples include:

1. **Drive additional revenue** by creating enhanced customer engagement experiences, leading to improve retention and upsell opportunities

2. **Reduce costs** by eliminating application redundancies and process inefficiencies and by leveraging automation

3. **Improve productivity** by reducing the need for those responsible for customer experience to work across disjointed applications

4. **Automate workflows** to reduce repetitive tasks

Automation of repeatable client engagement activities will help streamline current processes by removing potential for error, and by reducing time required both begin and manage engagements. **Today, just 38% of companies are investing in automation technologies to improve engagement with their clients and customers, meaning that the rest are missing out on quantifiable benefits from leveraging automation to improve repeatable client engagements.**

Automation Adoption for Client Engagement

38% Using Now
32% Planning for 2021
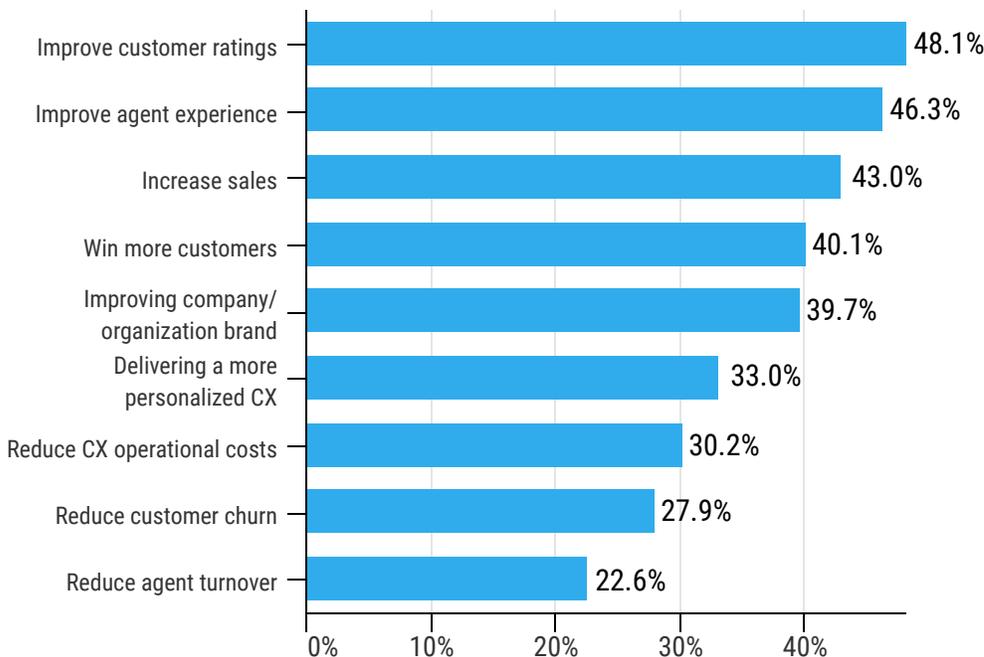40% Not using
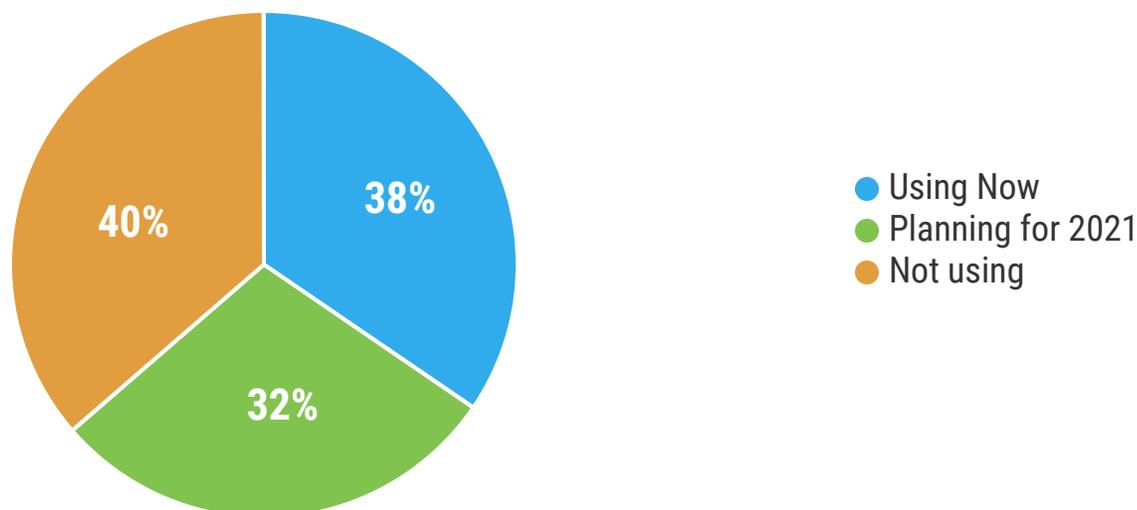
Building the Future of Client Engagement

Effective client engagement requires persistent workspaces that allow for organizations, and their clients to meet, communicate, and collaborate throughout the length of an engagement, and that automate repeatable processes. Therefore, an ideal collaborative workspace includes:
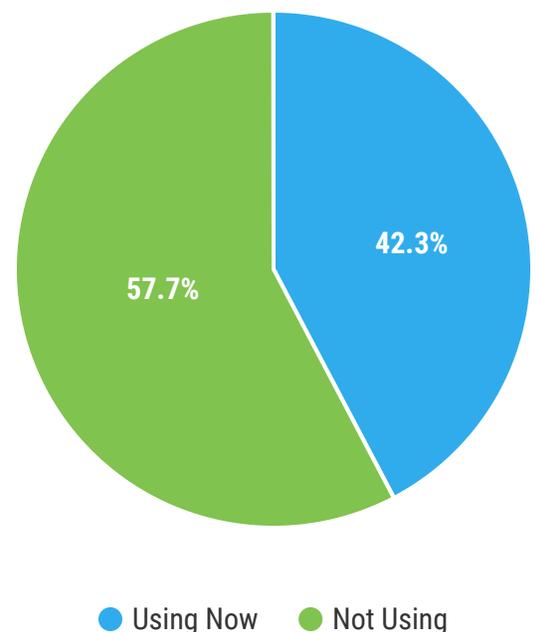
- Integrated messaging, file sharing, project and task management, and video meetings, all within the client workspace
- Governance, compliance, and security controls that enable collaborative workspace owners to implement a consistent set of data governance approaches
- The ability to create pre-defined templates for repeatable processes that enable automated workflows based on trigger events

Beyond the core engagement environment, successful organizations are investing in AI to optimize analytics, improve workflows, and increase experience personalization. Integrated search and AI functions enable workspace participants to easily find information across all project-related functions, while AI-enabled analytics provide the opportunity to see interrelations between projects, for example all projects related to a single customer or partner, or sub-projects that are part of a larger engagement. Today, more than 42% of companies are using AI for customer engagements, with another 29% planning on doing so by the end of 2022.

What is driving you to use AI for customer experience?

Category	Value
Improve customer ratings	48.1%
Improve agent experience	46.3%
Increase sales	43.0%
Win more customers	40.1%
Improving company/organization brand	39.7%
Delivering a more personalized CX	33.0%
Reduce CX operational costs	30.2%
Reduce customer churn	27.9%
Reduce agent turnover	22.6%

Artificial Intelligence State of Deployment

- Using Now: 42.3%
- Not Using: 57.7%

Recommendations

To deliver effective client engagement requires workspaces to unify communications, collaboration and meetings across an engagement, and automation to make interactions and repeatable processes more productive.

In addition, a successful strategy must protect customer, client and enterprise data, ensuring a high level of security that includes support for appropriate regulatory compliance.

Business, IT and customer experience leaders should:
- Adopt client engagement platforms that integrate features such as meetings, file sharing, and messaging into an accessible workspace
- Evaluate platforms that are optimized for persistent client engagement and that allow incorporation of automated, repeatable workflows based on operational need
- Assess security capabilities of competing solutions to ensure that they provide a high level of information protection and that they meet compliance requirements
- Implement analytics and metrics to measure improvements in engagement including increases in revenue, reductions in operating costs, and improvements in productivity