



//THE DIGITAL AGENDA

Driving innovation through a
collaboration-enabled workplace





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The club brought together 15 senior leaders in Chicago from enterprise-scale businesses to discuss how collaboration can support enterprise innovation, and drive a number of other strategic business outcomes.

The Digital Agenda Club unites industry leaders looking to find a competitive edge in the modern market. We believe in providing an exclusive environment for senior leaders to network and exchange ideas, harnessing the power of collective expertise to tackle key business challenges. Championing collaboration and confidentiality in equal measure, the club hosts quarterly round-table discussions at some of the world's most discrete private dining locations. The Club meets locally, whilst connecting globally. We gather when there's something to say, offering a unique platform for peer-to-peer discussion.

On 31st August at Naha Restaurant, central Chicago, the club united senior leaders from enterprise-scale businesses to discuss the role of technology in effective collaboration and how that can lead to enterprise innovation. With enterprises turning to digital technology to transform the way they do business, we wanted to find out where collaboration features in organizations' digital transformation initiatives, as a way to respond faster to market opportunities and threats, and improve the experience of their customers, employees, or partners.

This document captures the discussion from a high level, exploring a few key outcomes from the night. As dictated by club rules, all quotes and insights have been anonymised and no idea is attributed to any one person.

//GUESTS

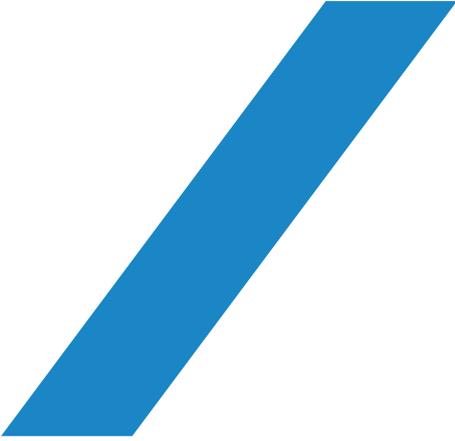
Invitations for this event were extended exclusively to CIOs and senior IT and collaboration technology leaders from enterprise scale organizations such as Aon, Goldman Sachs, AbbVie, Sears, BMO Harris, Oracle, SAP, EY and many others.

//PARTNER

The Club is sponsored by Dimension Data. Dimension Data uses the power of technology to help organizations achieve great things in the digital era. As a member of the NTT Group, they accelerate clients' ambitions by creating collaboration-enabled workspaces. This helps to accelerate employee productivity, drive business agility, and significantly reduce costs. Eight of the global top 10, 75 of the Fortune 100, and 60% of the Fortune 500 are Dimension Data clients. Their leadership is recognized by Gartner's Magic Quadrant Communications Outsourcing and Professional Services (COPS).

//CHAIRPERSON

The chair for the evening was Neeru Arora, CIO for Shared Services and Chief Knowledge Officer at Aon. Neeru is a proven leader with over 20 years of experience, developing, driving and implementing strategies for growth and operational excellence within large organizations. She is responsible for a vast number of portfolios, including sales and marketing, financial management, human resource management, procurement, legal, audit, compliance and treasury. Prior to joining Aon, Neeru served as a consultant at McKinsey, where she worked with global clients from various industries, focusing on areas of technology management, operations outsourcing and financial transparency.



//DRIVING ENTERPRISE INNOVATION THROUGH COLLABORATION

Each Dinner discussion topic is the result of previous discussion outcomes, recommendations from existing members or the result of new research. Each topic is researched by the Digital Agenda team and validated with existing members and partners. The evening's topic description can be found below.

For this event, we asked senior leaders about their experience of collaboration strategies and explored how technology could support such strategies in order to encourage an enterprise-wide culture of innovation.

[An information Week article found the CIOs of Ford, Procter & Gamble and Cisco to all cite improving collaboration as one of their top priorities in 2016.](#)

Furthermore, a recent survey from the Connected Enterprise Report 2016 found that more than 80% of senior leaders believe a more seamless collaboration strategy would drive innovation, accelerate decision-making and improve productivity.

Yet there is a chasm between how we communicate in our personal lives and how we communicate inside of work. This chasm is rapidly widening – in no small part due to the accelerating pace of digitalization. Therefore, it's no surprise that collaboration strategy is next up on the boardroom agenda.





While collaboration is easier than ever in our private lives, many businesses have been slow to leverage the benefits digitalisation can offer in terms of improved collaboration.

This lag to adopt – and benefit from – digitalisation and collaboration is most acute within the enterprise space, where the pace of change can be slow, and presents a considerable risk for those organizations.

Deloitte expects 40% of the Fortune 500 to disappear within 10 years. McKinsey similarly estimates that 75% of the S&P500 will be gone by 2027.

This suggests that significant competitive advantage is there for the taking for those businesses that focus on digitalisation, with collaboration as a major component.

But what is the optimal strategy for enterprise-scale collaboration? Can it really be decisive in driving innovation, accelerating decision making and improving productivity?

And if we agree the benefits are there, what is the role of technology in delivering improved collaboration? Who owns technology decisions around collaboration? And what are the best ways to accelerate user adoption and time to benefit?



//OPENING REMARKS

Neeru Arora

CIO for Shared Services and Chief Knowledge Officer at Aon

We wanted to break geographical and hierarchical constraints, to drive growth and make it easy for colleagues to communicate with each other.

Neeru opened up the discussion by sharing her experience of collaboration at Aon and setting out the topic areas that she felt could be most valuable for the discussion.

"When we did our first employee engagement survey, collaboration was the one thing that stood out" Neeru told guests. "We were very lucky that the business case for collaboration already existed."

Neeru acknowledged that although the business case for collaboration was identified at Aon, it did not have hard commercial targets attached to it. One senior manager told her:

"If you can solve the problem of how to connect colleagues together so we can serve our clients better, that would be progress."



However, the size of Aon's business presented a particular challenge because it meant that its team had to connect on a global level, while delivering local solutions.

Neeru explained: "We wanted to break the geographic borders and connect people, no matter what business unit they happen to work in... We had 400 acquisitions to bring together, so we spent a lot of time looking for a way to unite all these demands under one network. We now have over 60,000 people on Yammer and 10% of them use it to collaborate on a daily basis. It sounds very simple in this day and age, but when we started it was 2010."

"Since we started our collaboration journey it has been a major part of our engagement strategy."

Knowledge sharing and collaboration has been key for Aon, and Neeru set out her current situation: "The first year, we had nearly 10,000 posts on Yammer. People were leveraging it as a collaboration and communication tool. Over time, we have put it all together in a personalised portal for everyone in Aon – this incorporates our corporate directory which informs everyone which business unit and country they're in, along with a new knowledge exchange, targeted communications, and Yammer sitting over the top."

This experience informed the topics for discussion that Neeru hoped the guests would concentrate on during the evening:

- What is the optimum strategy for collaboration?
- How do you ensure that collaboration does act as a driver for innovation?
- How do you make the business case for collaboration?
- What is the role of technology in collaboration?
- How do we consolidate the adoption of that technology to ensure success?

Neeru then asked how many of the evening's guests had a defined enterprise strategy for collaboration and invited our guests to discuss their own experiences.

When we started our journey I was very clear that we didn't want to look at collaboration and engagement as a project. We wanted to approach it in a way that enhanced the whole culture of our organization.

// A CULTURAL CHANGE

Neeru began the discussion by emphasising that her collaboration initiative was focused on a change of corporate culture – not a piecemeal solution.

This approach was picked up on by one guest who firmly agreed that “collaboration is all about people – technology is just a way to get there.”

Neeru concurred saying: “When I talk about knowledge sharing, I’m not talking about SharePoint – the technology we use – I’m talking about the 5Cs:

- Connecting colleagues to each other
- Connecting colleagues to content
- Enabling collaboration
- Enabling communication (with a personalized way to access it)
- And – the biggest one – culture.”

Another guest agreed, saying: “When we launch a new technology, normally it is greeted with a negative reaction. If you focus on business outcomes and take technology out of it then your success rate will just explode.”

The guest continued to argue that collaboration shouldn't be seen as a technology issue; it should be treated as people science.

This led to an interesting insight into one guest's approach to managing collaboration projects for their clients: “Even though we are a technology company ourselves, we see collaboration as the outcome, not the technology. The place we start is user profiling. What do your users want? What do they like or dislike about the current situation and solutions? Then we look at the segmentation of those users. Each person has their own ideal of what collaboration should look like. But what are the common requirements? How do we break that down for all major internal customers – for sales, for HR, for the Execs?”

Neeru agreed this was a great approach, admitting “we're not quite there yet. We're looking at personas and content and wondering how do we widgetize this content for particular user groups?”

There was general agreement that technology wasn't an answer in itself, but it plays a vital role as an enabler of cultural change.

Are the drivers
top-down or
bottom-up?

//STRATEGIES FOR ADOPTION

One guest raised the question of whether anyone was experiencing a strong clamour for collaboration in their business.

"If so, was that clamour happening at a mid-level within the company?" he asked. "Or was it top-down with an attitude of 'you need to do this'? Were the initiatives just launched into the ecosystem and people left to get on with it? Is it possible to organically attract users?"

In response, one guest shared their experience, saying: "We realized that within the business we were creating different solutions to the same problem over and over again. We needed to find a way to focus and come together to understand what had already been done. We needed more convergence, to change the culture and give people collaboration tools. So we said 'here are the anchors where you need to start the discussions' and that was a huge earthquake in the company."

In this guest's experience, the approach was very much top-down.

However, Neeru's experience was different. For her, the call for collaboration came from the employee engagement surveys, so it started from the bottom-up. This bottom-up demand was then matched with top-level support.

However, Neeru acknowledged that in her experience timing was everything.

The discoveries from the employee surveys coincided with a change in direction in IT, and their new IT service provider could offer the solutions the business required.

The role of technology did play a major role in the discussion on the night, with one guest ruefully saying: "If there was a single collaboration tool that would get everyone engaged, I'd get it tomorrow, but I don't think there is a single source of truth. The Chat functionality is great for in-the-moment collaboration, but a shared document platform is more effective for other uses."

Most guests agreed that even if there isn't a clear bottom-up demand for collaboration, user-level engagement is key to successful adoption, with one guest saying: "the major dimension of success is knowing 'what do people want?'"

However, there was some disagreement about how to achieve this.

Now what's on our CEO's mind is growth... Over the next 24 months we will be focusing on maintaining the engagement within the company and begin to develop the collaboration strategy to drive organic growth.

//IT'S ALL ABOUT INTENT

Although most guests agreed that understanding what users want is key to successful adoption, one guest pointed out that being seen to fulfil a key business need was also a vital element of success.

However, another guest shared a different approach, saying: "We took the view that we would let people use the systems the way they wanted to. Some of the other execs complained that the customized offerings created a collaboration strategy that was "noisy", and even disruptive to productivity. But we'd rather encourage engagement with the technology by offering these customizations and focusing on how people want to use the system.

This was not a popular view, however.

"We need to remember what it is that we are all collaborating about," pointed out one guest.

They explained that while sometimes it is about hard savings, other times it is about stopping people bringing in consumer-grade collaboration tools into the business.

Another guest saw unity and "bringing everyone under the same tent," as an important goal of their own collaboration project.

Whatever your business goal is, it will determine strategy and implementation. Or, as one guest put it: "It's about having a problem you need to solve. Not: let's just share some information because we're all great."

"That may sound obvious. But I think it sometimes gets lost when we're focusing on the technology or even in the collaboration in and of itself."

Neeru agreed, offering the example of Aon's desire to support its Account Executives with better information and relevant, up-to-date content in order to drive growth.

"Every good growth company does this," she said, "so we want to make sure our knowledge systems put the right information in front of our Account Executives."

Once widespread adoption has been achieved, the next step is to start sweating the asset: developing the ways that the new collaborative culture and systems can support business growth.

//JOIN US



JOIN THE DEBATE

Do you want to join the debate? If you're a senior decision maker within an enterprise-level organization we would be delighted for you to join us. During 2016, we will be hosting dinner meetings on a regular basis to discuss key operational challenges in the market. For further information, and to apply to join us, visit our website: www.digitalagenda.club or contact club manager Lindsay at: lindsay.pope@digitalagenda.club



CHAIR A DINNER

We are always looking for new leaders with interesting perspectives and experiences to chair these dinner meetings. If you or somebody you know would be an ideal Chair, please contact us. Alternatively, if you have a topic you feel the Club should debate please also drop us a line via the website.



ABOUT OUR SPONSOR, DIMENSION DATA

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