Microsoft Teams: How it fits into your digital workplace

Creating the best possible employee experience means thinking beyond Microsoft Teams

APPSPACE | **Beezy**

Beezy powers the modern intranet that's part of the Appspace workplace experience platform.

The way we worked has changed

Great productivity tools give us better, more efficient ways to get our jobs done. Some technologies can completely revamp our work interactions and processes. When we start using a new technology, and it works really well, our habits change, and so does the way we work. Many organizations have seen this happen with Microsoft Teams – one of the fastest growing applications in Microsoft's history, with more than 115 million daily active users.*

While not revolutionary in terms of its functionality, Microsoft Teams has opened up new possibilities within one of the world's most successful productivity suites: Microsoft 365.

Teams is a tool that lets employees meet, chat, call, and work together easily. But, as with any technology, it's important to understand its possibilities and limitations, especially before making decisions about how it fits within your organization.

*https://www.businessofapps.com/data/microsoft-teams-statistics/

What chat-based collaboration offers. And what it doesn't.

In Microsoft's words, it's "the hub for team collaboration in Microsoft 365, integrates the people, content, and tools your team needs to be more engaged and effective."

We can assume that, as time goes on, Teams will improve as a tool. But more than that, it will no doubt become more integrated with Microsoft 365. The reality is that Teams is a big hit for Microsoft, and it's proliferating across the digital workplace landscape.

Some enterprises are adopting Teams as a substitute for a modern digital workplace. Other organizations are being more careful, having doubts about how Teams can fit into their overall communication strategy, or how it can help them nurture a thriving company culture. Large global organizations, for example, need to consider a communication strategy that can meet the needs of thousands of employees.

This begs the question:
Can Microsoft Teams deliver the same employee experience as a modern digital workplace? The answer is no. *Let's dig into why*.

How Microsoft Teams has changed work collaboration
Teams is brilliant for quick day-to-day — minute-to-minute, even — communication. It works best in small teams and departments as the main channel for comms, especially if an organization has SharePoint running in the background for longer-term data and document management.

Teams is also great for internal conferencing, keeping track of projects, and giving employees an informal way to work together.

The biggest strengths of Microsoft Teams are immediacy and ease of access. Overall, it's ideal for quick updates, like operational announcements and group discussions. Departments can create specific teams and have conversations as they work. People can react and reply instantly, so it's a natural way to have a dialogue.

The strengths of Teams are also limitations
We can't forget that Teams is a chat-based platform at heart, focused on instant messaging. Conversations happen quickly and Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) is real. One downside to synchronous communication is that people can feel they need to respond right away – and this can be a productivity killer.

Teams wasn't designed to be an employee experience platform that could cover all of a digital workplace's requirements: corporate communication, collaboration, processes, and integrations.

In other, words Teams isn't a full content management system (CMS). And it's not a digital workplace.

Why Microsoft Teams isn't your CMS

Microsoft Teams wasn't designed to have dedicated areas where corporate information could be published, updated, and stay in the same place.

For one thing, the navigation experience works differently in Teams vs. how it works in tools designed for document management. Here's why: In Teams, people don't navigate based on specific content – they navigate based on people.

Let's take an example of someone trying to find an expense form. This person might go looking in the 'Finance Team' area, going through every channel and file tab. It's a time-consuming way to try to find information, and one that could possibly turn up no results. So, the person looking for the form might then start asking colleagues.

On a platform with true publishing capabilities, the user would find the information they're seeking in a specific area – one that's always available, always updated, and fully compliant.

From a governance point of view, Teams is limited. Sure, there are permissions for special teams, which helps stop rogue sharing, for example. But tracking that content is much more difficult.

Organizations need a reliable workflow that underpins content creation and publishing, with an approval process that goes with it. And the ability to delete old or inactive content is a must – especially for global organizations.

Large global enterprises often have many offices and subsidiaries, which makes it challenging and difficult to use Microsoft Teams as a digital workplace.

These organizations need to be able to manage company culture and communicate with thousands of employees around the world, in multiple languages, and across different time zones.

Why Microsoft Teams isn't your digital workplace

Quick messaging, group discussions, and sharing files are critical for getting work done. Still, instant messaging won't ever be able to offer truly structured collaboration. Chats with more than 10-15 people having work discussions result in a lot of noise, confusion, and disengagement.

A digital workplace should make it easy to manage and organize information, collaborate in meaningful ways, and deliver an integrated employee experience.

Achieving all of these things in Teams is a challenge. Currently, IT administrators have to work with and around Teams' issues and quirks.

Microsoft Viva's new Connections module will introduce a dashboard feature that will work with Teams and SharePoint (and also be fully supported by Beezy), but it's important to remember that Teams is still a synchronous tool. For a digital workplace to function in an ideal way, you should strive for a well-considered blend of synchronous and asynchronous communication.

Here are some of the challenges of using Teams as your digital workplace:

In a flat navigation structure, information gets missed. Sometimes, flat navigation is a good thing, because it means you're not getting lost in different levels of information. But in Teams it's a problem and here's why: Teams displays all of the different teams within your organization via a single list, without any kind of structure or hierarchy. When someone joins a team, they simply see channels and single-level tabs. As a result, it's easy to miss important information and silos are reinforced because people can't search and access information about other departments or teams. And without clear and consistent naming conventions, channel names can be vague and confusing.

Governing content can be tricky. A digital workplace needs good governance to make sure information is accurate, up to date, and relevant. This is critical to keep employees in the know and make sure corporate content can be trusted. Governance requires clear ownership, approval workflows, approval requests, restrictions, and useful search capabilities. Teams doesn't have these capabilities.

There's no way to unify your workforce in one single global team. A digital workplace needs to work across different offices and locations. Globally dispersed organizations need a platform that unites all of their local intranets or microsites with a common navigation and governance system. And you have to be able to present global and local content together, side by side. This is all virtually impossible with Teams alone.

Without proper governance, Teams can get out of control. In an ideal world, within Teams you'd be able to govern the way each team works. Controlling the provisioning is an obvious solution, especially in a company with hundreds or thousands of people. But, while it's possible to put approval workflows in place, requiring users to request a team isn't an effective governance system.

Your virtual workplace won't reflect your brand. A digital workplace should look and feel like your organization and match your brand. While you can add your logo(s), Teams can't fully support branding requirements. You're left with the standard Microsoft Teams colors, so the overall look is Microsoft branded, which can be problematic for many organizations wanting to reinforce their own brand and values.

It's tough to engage deskless workers. If your organization's got a lot of frontline or deskless workers, you'll seriously struggle to engage this audience with Teams. You may even need to adopt a separate tool just to reach these workers. Using Teams as the main channel for communication probably won't be effective, even with the Teams mobile app.

There are many ways large organizations can use Microsoft Teams as part of their digital workplace. But that's the point – it's part of a digital workplace. Global organizations can't rely on chat-based messaging alone.

To offer a true employee experience, you'll need more than Teams as a tool for collaboration across different time zones and geographies. You'll need systems and processes for collaboration.

In other words, you'll need the best of both worlds: Microsoft Teams and a digital workplace solution.

Better together

Organization, team, individual

MAIN USER JOURNEY				
Team collaboration Messaging calls & meetings, bots	Small teams	Synchronous	"Fast & furious"
Enterprise collaboration Communities at scale, knowledge and idea management, and more.*	Large teams	Asynchronous	Calm & structured

*Stores, Pages, Sites, etc.

Why do you need Beezy?

Organizations across the board face many of the same challenges:

Siloed groups and conversations, duplicated content and initiatives, and time wasted searching for information.

Beezy and Microsoft Teams work together to solve these challenges.

Let's look at what each solution was designed for so you can see how they complement each other:

- **Microsoft Teams** is, in its simplest terms, a synchronous messaging tool where users are organized in small teams.

- **Beezy** is an intelligent digital workplace, organized around communities and designed to make it easy to manage and share knowledge and support collaboration at scale.

The tight integration between Beezy and Teams means your employees can surface information, files, and conversations in a way that's contextual and user friendly. Your organization can tackle the business challenges you're facing while taking adoption to new levels. And you can take full advantage of your investment in Microsoft 365.

Collaboration at scale:
Why it's important

Let's take a look at collaboration at scale, what it means, and why chat-based communication is too limited to make it happen.

With up to ten people in Microsoft Teams, collaboration is pretty easy, right? You can follow conversations, discuss ideas, and work together efficiently. But think about someone who has to work in a team of hundreds of people, located in various parts of the world (and in different time zones). Collaborating in Teams is chaos. Or let's say you were trying to organize an idea contest in Teams, with 300 people globally, participating at the same time. It would be impossible to do it in a structured, organized way.

Beezy, on the other hand, provides a simple way for people to work together across the globe. With more structured knowledge management capabilities, large-scale collaboration is possible, as hundreds or thousands of employees can work asynchronously.

Here's are two examples of collaboration at scale

1. **Crowdsourcing ideas:** Imagine being able to crowdsource ideas from thousands of employees worldwide, with a clear objective, a validation process for submissions, and a deadline to submit ideas. That's what Beezy's Idea Campaigns were designed to do.

2. **Business continuity planning:** In a crisis or emergency situation, things could quickly get out of hand with a chat-based communication tool. With Beezy, you can push out clear messages from senior leadership for employees to comment on and ask questions. You can include FAQs, links to important policies that may have been updated, and perhaps an invite to a townhall meeting, for example. And you can create a private community for leaders to collaborate and share important information about how to help employees through the situation.

The four pillars of a digital workplace

While Teams might seem like a substitute for a digital workplace, the reality is that it addresses one pillar of a digital workplace: Communication. That's why tools and apps like Teams are best used as part of an intelligent workplace. Beezy supports the four key pillars of an intelligent workplace:

Communication
From a centralized and engaging newsfeed for the broader organization, to department level updates, to private chats, communication needs to flow in all directions. And with Beezy's communication tools and features, it can. Chat-based communication is just one part of it.

Collaboration
With Beezy you can build communities of interest, share ideas, solve problems, and collaborate in ways that make sense, all while delivering measurable business value and improving employee experience.

Knowledge
When information is scattered and people aren't sure where to look, it's a waste of time. With Beezy, you can capture, store, and share knowledge via communities, knowledge centers, sites, wikis, blogs, pages, and stories. And you can easily search for the information you need via tags, Spotlight search, SharePoint search, or contextual searches.

Processes
With Beezy, you can bring intelligence to your newsfeed by combining our rich API with our ready-made connector for popular automation platforms like Microsoft's Power Automate, Nintex or K2.

How Beezy brings your digital space to life

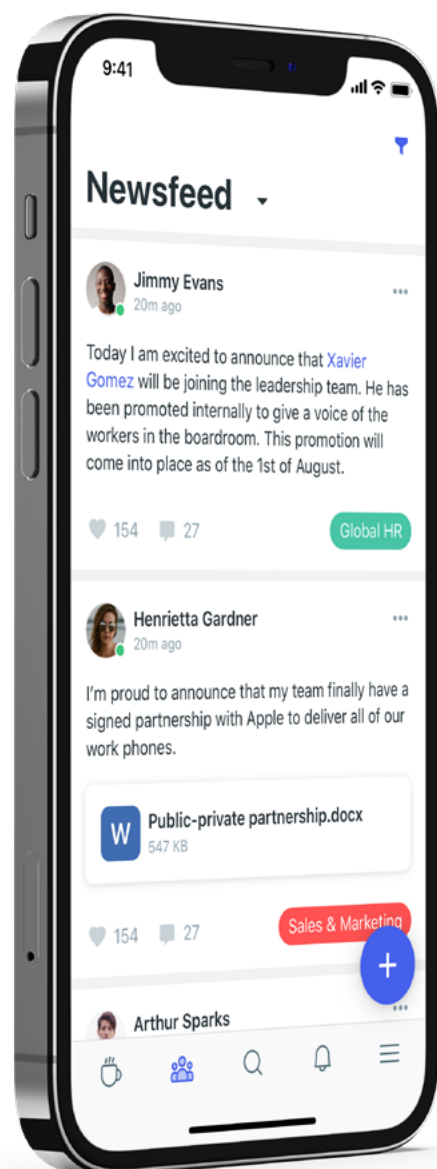**Share and manage knowledge more easily.**
Sharing knowledge in a way that's well-structured and easy to find can be tricky. Beezy is a central hub for all team noticeboards, internal news, and departmental content. We've combined the simplicity of social collaboration with a highly organized filing system to harness the collective intelligence of your organization.

Find what you're looking for – fast.
Beezy makes it simple to find expertise within your organization, share files, work on documents collaboratively, and search for information. You can do these things with Teams, but there's more risk. In other words, if people aren't on the right team, or don't know where to search, information can fall through the cracks.

Monitor and personalize your content.
Beezy has amazing capabilities when it comes to built-in publishing approval, specific audience targeting, and multilingual requirements. Teams has permissions tabs, but that's as far as it goes when it comes to content management. It just takes one document to be published incorrectly for a business to realize the limitations of Teams.

Manage organizational complexities.
With Beezy, you can replicate your global organization's size and complexity through an information architecture and navigational structure that mirrors your organization. Allowing users to find whatever they need in the maze of a large enterprise. Teams is not built for that. It's too focused on the user's Teams circle.
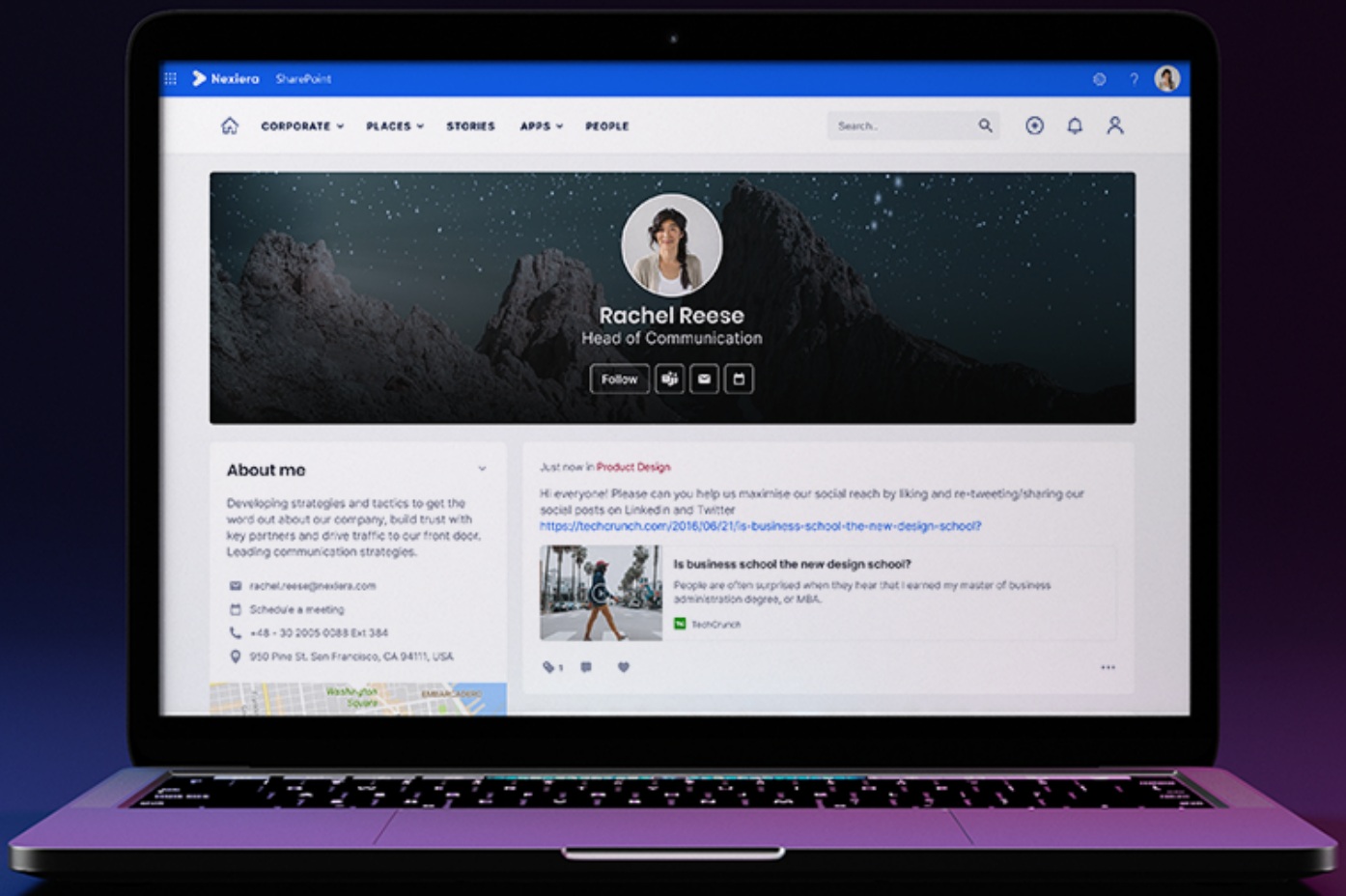
Be more productive.
Beezy provides excellent findability, with several types of search, using tags and filters. Making the finding of content extremely easy. Microsoft Teams alone can't do that, even if we combine it with SharePoint, giving each team its own SharePoint site.
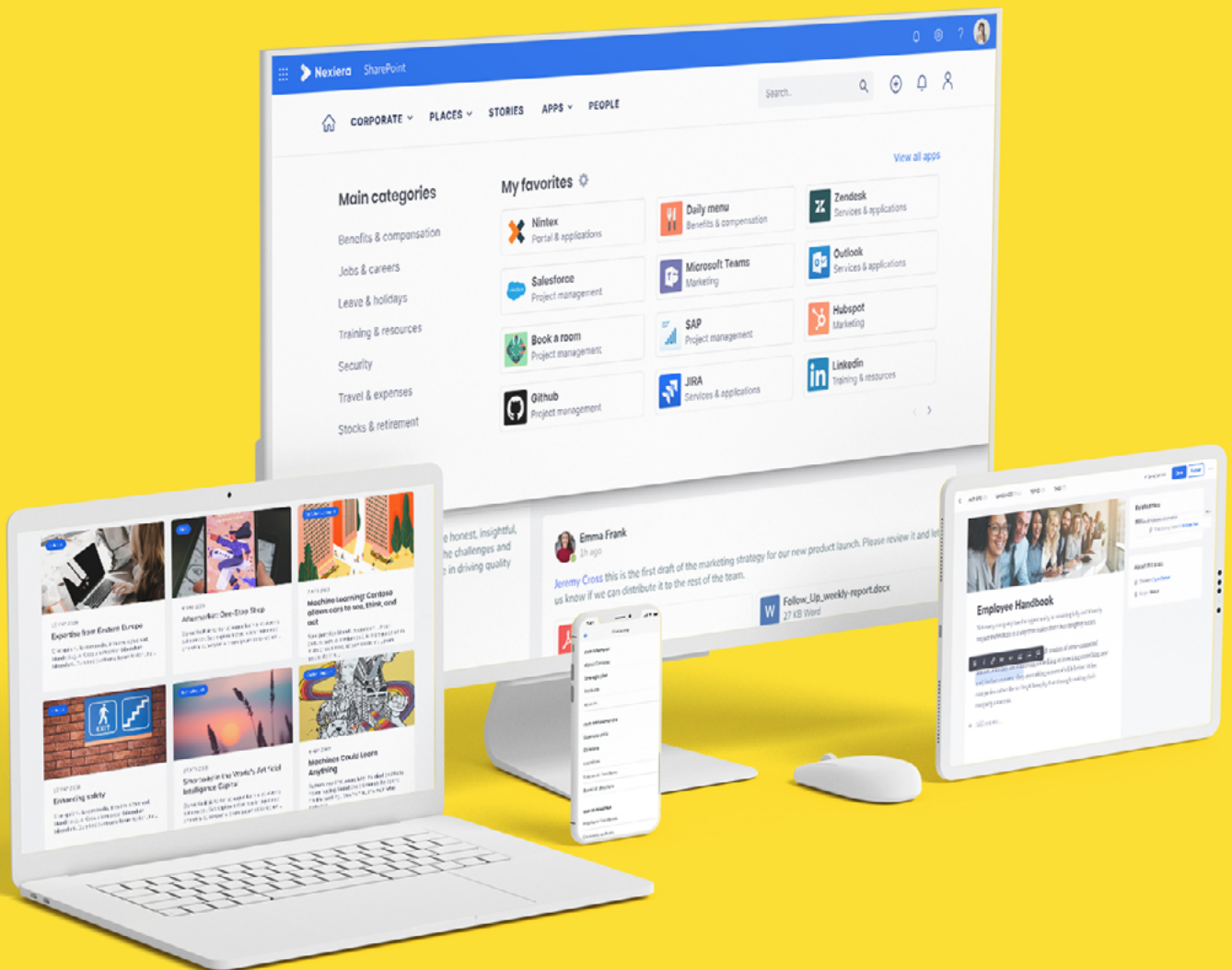
Keep your people engaged.
While Teams is excellent for synchronous peer-to-peer communication, it becomes hard to manage when you have to meet the needs of several different audiences, dispersed in various teams, communicating in multiple languages. Beezy gives you a structured communication system with effective audience targeting and multilingual capabilities.

Make sure your brand and values are reflected.
Beezy lets you create a virtual version of your organization, fully branded to match your colors and style, and everything else that makes your organization unique.

Meet your global and local needs.
Beezy makes it easy to manage global and local requirements by bringing together local intranets under a common navigation and a governance system.

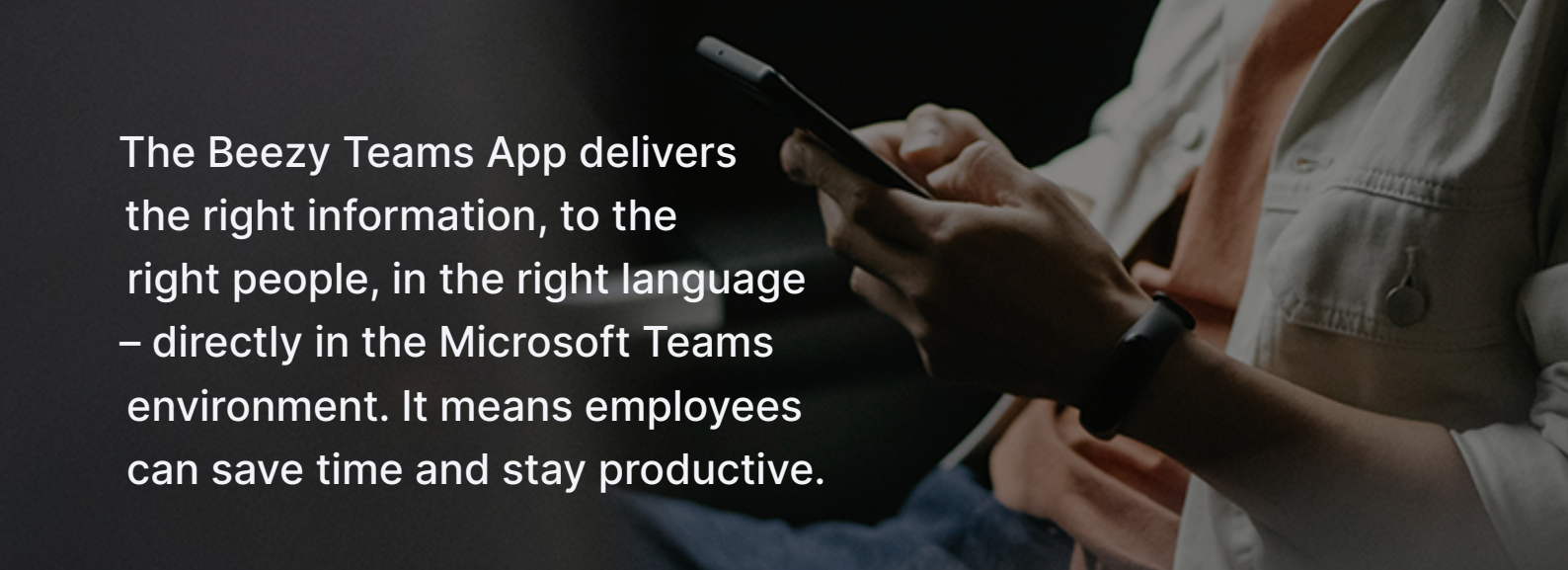**Structure information in a way that makes sense.**
With Beezy, you've got many different types of menus, mega-menus, and navigation options to make sure your users can always get to the people and information they need.

Reach and engage deskless workers with mobile.
Beezy has one of the best mobile apps in the market and has a specific access for deskless workers called Kiosk mode, providing full engagement to every employee.

Integrate with third-party tools – beyond the Microsoft environment.
By integrating with Microsoft Teams and third-party software like Salesforce, ServiceNow, and Workday, Beezy makes sure you have everything you need, all in one place. That means IT isn't having to deal with rogue tools – and employees aren't wasting time jumping from screen to screen and app to app.

The Beezy Teams App delivers the right information, to the right people, in the right language – directly in the Microsoft Teams environment. It means employees can save time and stay productive.

The Beezy Teams App

As we've highlighted, Microsoft Teams is a tool that allows employees to collaborate effectively on a smaller scale. But organizational leaders need to think about the bigger picture and make sure everyone stays connected to what's happening across the organization. We developed our own Microsoft Teams app to address this issue and create a one-stop digital workplace. Our goal was to bridge the divide between apps, tools, and time zones to create a better employee experience.

The Beezy Teams App brings the full Beezy experience into the Teams environment to reach employees right where they're working. So there's no toggling between Teams and Beezy. Through the Teams app, we've made it simple to direct corporate messaging to relevant departments, teams, and individuals. Employees can interact with the content via comments and likes – and organizations can see how employees are engaging with content, even when it's delivered in Teams.

With the app, you can:

Access relevant content with just a click.
You can pin the app in the Teams navigation menu for quick access. So there's no need to go to the Beezy Startpage, for example, to access corporate content.

Manage files easily.
Every document shared in Beezy is stored within Microsoft 365. So when you click on a file in Teams, it will automatically find that file in Beezy.

See all corporate content within Microsoft Teams.
The app provides a similar user experience to Beezy, so you can read, react, share, comment, and search for Beezy Stories, Video Stories, Pages, other content created in Beezy. If all of this information lived permanently in Teams, it would likely get missed.

Reach everyone in the company.
Internal comms and HR can always reach their the right people and make sure they get every important announcement, as well as news, documents, and so on. The content generated in Beezy and delivered in Teams can always be personalized based on an employee's location, language, department, function, or division.

The value of the Beezy app lies in its ability to deliver a seamless user experience that reduces information silos, brings together apps and business tools, and makes collaboration easier. It's ideal for smaller groups collaborating synchronously because it brings the benefits of Beezy to the context they're working in.

Note: *The Beezy Teams App isn't available in any official app store – but it's available to all Beezy customers.*

The best of both worlds

The larger an organization, the harder it can be to keep everyone connected. With teams working in different places, it's easy for people to feel disengaged from their colleagues or struggle to reach their full potential. Microsoft Teams can help address these issues. But it's not enough.
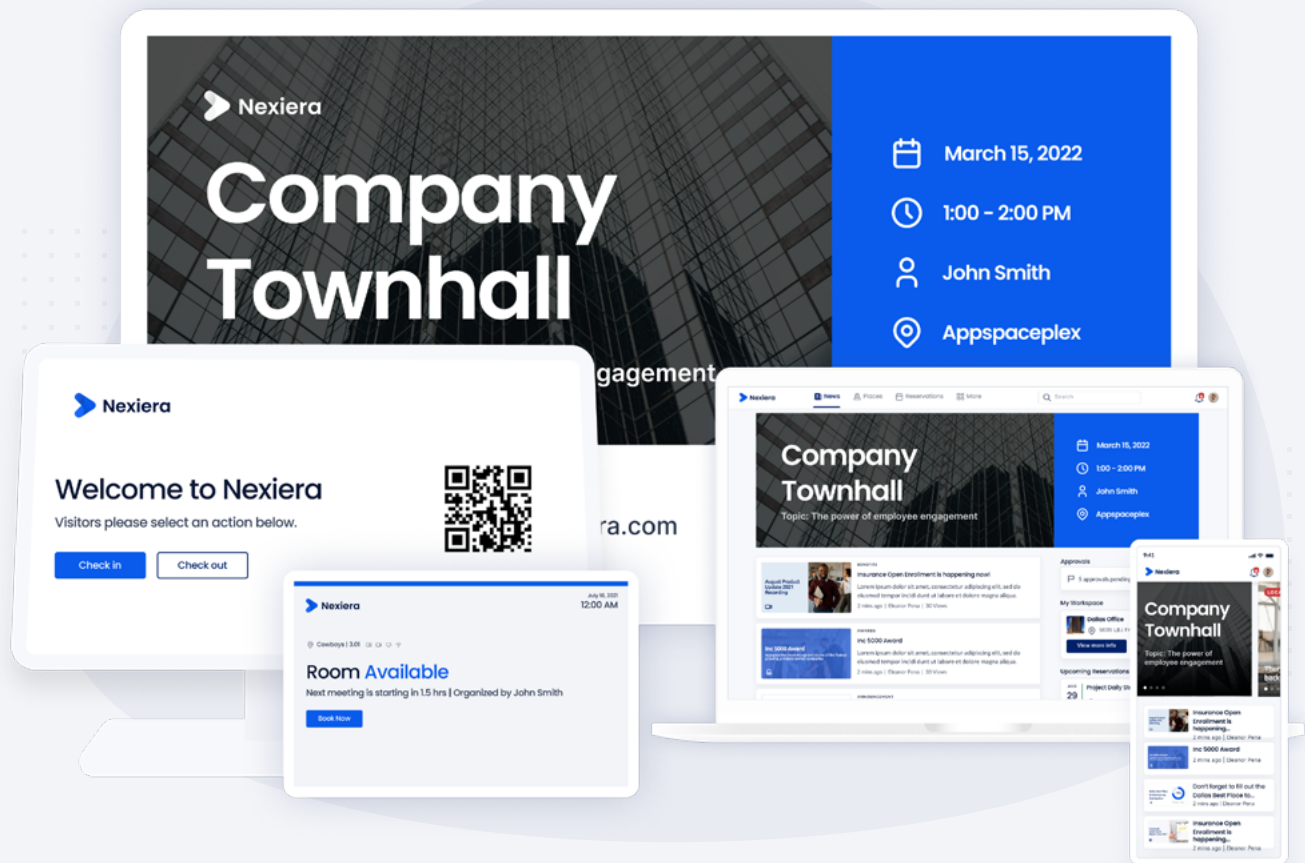
Beezy is an intelligent workplace, created to deliver the best possible experience for the people using it. Designed by sociologists and user experience specialists, Beezy helps you get the most out of Teams by bringing together the best of the Microsoft 365 productivity suite.

We designed Beezy to help bridge the gaps and open up true collaboration possibilities, with our third-party integrations and award-winning user interface.

The result is an exceptional employee experience.

At Beezy, we understand the kind of structure and access to information global enterprises require, even for employees who need to 'live' in Microsoft Teams most of the time. For most international organizations, the management of information, processes, and communication between them are critical to success. Additionally, we've got industry-leading integration capabilities, bringing action-based experiences from third-party cloud systems, including SAP and Workday, inside of Teams.

The integration of Beezy and Microsoft Teams will deliver the best of both technologies working together to make your business work better and provide an intelligent digital workplace. The result is an empowered workforce with personalized and relevant knowledge base available on any device, in any language, and at any time.

Employee App

Intranet

Space Reservation

Wayfinding

Digital Signage

Content & Publishing

Visitor Management

ABOUT US

Appspace is the workplace experience platform for communications and workplace management. It's the first to combine a modern intranet (powered by Beezy), space reservation, digital signage, and more – all in a single, easy-to-use platform. Now organizations can replace siloed products that are costly to integrate and unite their physical and digital workplace. More than 150 Fortune 500 companies, and 10 million on-site, remote, and frontline employees, are using Appspace to make work a more connected and engaging experience.

Learn more at appspace.com