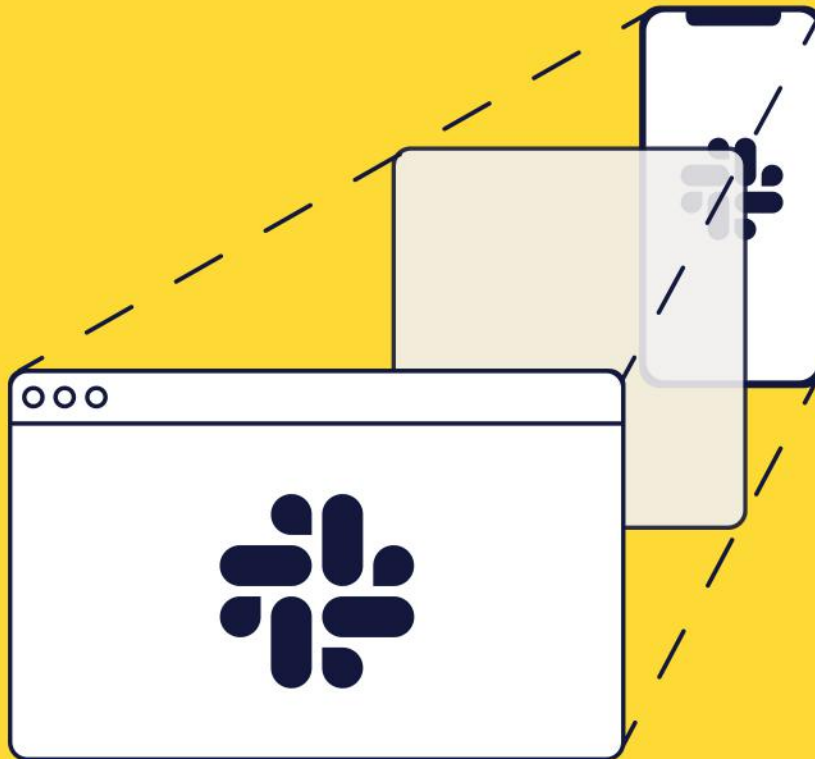


The Ultimate Office Guide to

slack



03



Intro to Slack

04



A Brief History

07



Slack in 2019

08



Slack Hacks: A
5-Minute Guide

10



Communicating on Slack

12



Alternatives to Slack

17



How Secure Is Slack?

21



Our Thoughts

contents

Intro to Slack



In offices around the world, Slack is where employees organize their workflow, update their teams, share documents, and even banter with emojis and memes. It has the instant, easy-to-use quality of texting, with the professionalism and ability to share documents that previously dominated email. It's easy to customize, with the ability to allow notifications for certain channels, and get someone's attention by tagging them in a message. The platform is highly organized, allowing the user to create channels for different conversations that can easily be moved to direct messaging for privacy, and past conversations are searchable.

The company's mission to "... make people's working lives simpler, more pleasant, more productive," has heavily influenced office communications all over the world, with the app being integrated into millions of businesses across a wide range of industries.

In this guide, we explore the ins and outs of Slack, its advantages and its inherent risks in a world of increasingly regular big data breaches. We also hear from the office managers of a few notable companies about their experiences with Slack and how they use it to manage their teams and projects.

A Brief History

How the Founder of Flickr Turned a Failed Video Game Into a Great Office Communication Software

Slack, a Silicon Valley success story and multi-billion dollar messaging app that has infiltrated offices around the world, all started with a failed video game.

In 2012, Stewart Butterfield, the founder of Flickr, threw in the towel on his multi-year mission to create the next big multiplayer online game called Glitch. But the company, then called Tiny Speck, had another asset. Tiny Speck's development team consisted of four employees living in different cities across the country. They needed a way to communicate that was easy, instant, and would store the information so that anyone could open up the chat later and see what they missed. Since at the time, no such thing seemed to exist, they created one themselves.

Because the messaging platform was created for internal use, the Slack team tested the app with outside users so they could learn how people would use the app.

Butterfield told [First Round](#) that the team begged companies to try out the software and give them feedback. Seven months after they first started working on the service, it was ready for the public. On the first day, eight thousand people signed up.

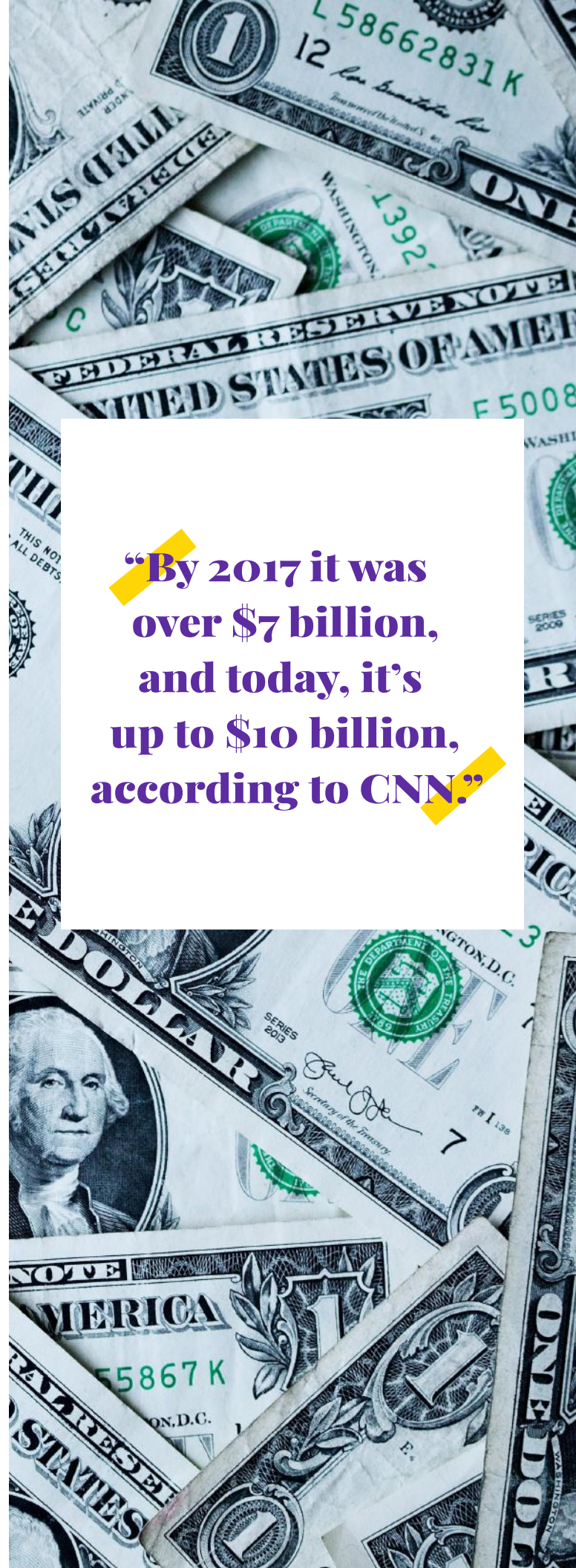
Valuation and Funding History

- Launched in 2013
- Raised Over \$42 Million
- Paid Users: Estimated 3 Million
- Valuation: Up to \$10 Billion
- Over 600 Integrations

“By 2017 it was over \$7 billion, and today, it’s up to \$10 billion, according to CNN.”

The app is lauded as one of the fastest growing startups in history. Within just a few months of its launch in 2013, Slack raised over \$42 million from investors and was receiving upwards of ten funding offers per week, according to [Investopedia](#). By 2017, there were rumors that Amazon, Google, and Microsoft were competing to buy the company, according to [The New York Times](#). That same year, a round of funding valued Slack at over [\\$5 billion](#). By 2017 it was over \$7 billion, and today, it’s up to \$10 billion, [according to CNN](#).

From 2017 to 2018, the app doubled its users. While the majority of users have the free version, according to 2018 estimates about 3 million users pay for the software, [according to Forbes](#). The company also frequently [invests in other startups](#), gaining more integrations as well as a stronger financial portfolio with each addition.



Slack Integrations: Steadily Dominating Office Communications

As of 2018, according to Investopedia, over 600 different software could be integrated with Slack. This makes it more than just a chatroom, but a platform that forms the basis for accessing other services. Much like using Facebook to log into different apps, many see the future of Slack as the basis for accessing thousands of different office tools. Today users can access tools like Google Cloud, Oracle and Github all through Slack.

How Many Companies Use It?

According to Slack's website, 65 of the Fortune 100 companies use Slack. In 2018, Slack reported 8 million users overall, according to CNN, and by January of this year, daily users exceeded 10 million, including 85,000 organizations that paid for the service. According to CNN, up to 50 percent of users are international. Prominent users include: NASA, the New York Times, Amazon, BBC and Lyft.

What Operations Manager, Ryan at [Volta](#) says:



"I'm a part of a few Slack groups and one is a group for all the innovation hubs like Volta in the country. I could connect with someone else in Toronto or Calgary if I wanted to ask questions or hold an event. Slack communities have helped me in this way."

Slack faces competition from similar services offered by Microsoft and Facebook. Many have speculated that such well-established corporations would be more successful in this particular market due to their enormous customer base. The business structure and target audience for these companies are already in place to offer something like Slack in their already extensive software bundles. However, by 2018, Slack reported more than double the users of Microsoft's competing service called Teams. In February of 2019, Slack took over a competing app called Stride, according to Wired, who declared that Slack won the office-messaging wars.



Slack in 2019

Why They Chose a Direct Listing Over an IPO

In April of 2019, Slack announced it would go public, with an estimated value of \$10 billion. However, the wildly successful startup opted to file for a direct listing, in which the market determines the price of the stock, rather than having a set price.

When companies go public, they have two options: either an initial public offering (IPO), or a direct listing. With an IPO, a team of investors and other experts is formed to determine the price of the stock. With an IPO, “underwriters” buy shares at a set price and sell them, while company executives can’t sell their ownership in the company for a set amount of time. With a direct listing, employees with stakes in the company sell their shares directly at a price determined by the market.

According to [Market Watch](#), “Direct listings differ from traditional initial public offerings, in that the company doesn’t issue new shares or seek to raise money through the process of going public. Rather, the listing makes it possible for existing shareholders to sell their shares to the public.”

Direct listings can be completed faster and cheaper, and give the company the opportunity to crowdsource funds rather than raise money from a bank or investor. It’s riskier, but has the potential for a huge payout.

According to [Bloomberg](#), this move is significant because it exemplifies Slack’s confidence that it doesn’t need additional investment or publicity that comes with an IPO for its stock to be successful.

Slack Hacks:

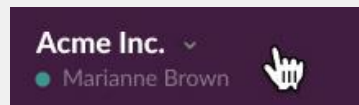
A 5-Minute Guide

How To...

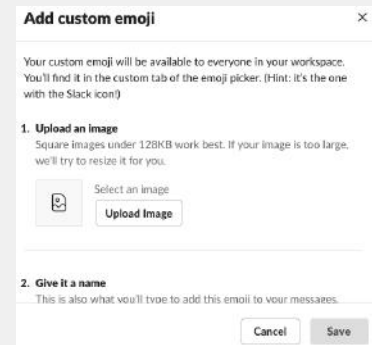
Directions

How to add a custom emoji

1. From your desktop, click your workspace name in the top left.



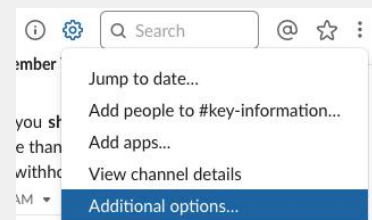
2. Select **Customize Slack** from the menu.
3. Click **Add Custom Emoji**



How to delete a channel

1. Click the **gear icon** to open the **Channel Setting** menu.
2. Select **Additional options**, then **Delete this channel**.

Only Workspace Owners and Admins have permission to delete channels.



How to leave a workspace

1. Right-click the workspace icon in the workspace switcher on the left.
2. Click **Remove**

How to send GIFs on Slack

1. Click **Install Giphy Integration** in Slack App Directory.
2. Type **/giphy** followed by a word or phrase (try /giphy happy).

How To...

How to make a channel private

Directions

1. Click the gear icon in the top right.
2. Select **Additional options** from the Channel Settings menu.
3. Choose **Change to a private channel**

What Office Manager, Brenna, from [Quip](#) says:



"At Quip, we are a dog-friendly workplace so we frequently have 2 to 6 dogs running around the place. The best part of my day is when I get a chance to look at our Slack dog channel where I can see photos of what all the dogs have been up to. My favorite posts are videos of the Quip dogs playing with each other or photos of one of the dogs passed out during a meeting. "

How to create a poll

- Visit the **Slack App Directory**, then search for keywords like "poll" and "survey" to find apps that interest you.

OR

- **Associate an emoji** with each option you want people to vote on

How to make a Slack bot

1. Add a Bot User and configure your bot user with some basic info (display name, default username and its online presence).
2. Once you've completed these fields, click **Add Bot User**.
3. Next, give your bot access to the **Events API**.
4. Finally, add your bot to your workspace

How to bold/ strikethrough/italicize

- **Bold**: Surround your word or phrase with ***asterisks***
- **Italicize**: Place **_underscores_** around a section.
- **Strikethrough**: Use **~tilde~** to surround the text.

Others

- Making bullet points: Select Opt+8 (Mac) or Alt+0149 (PC).
- Blockquotes: To add angle brackets at the start of your message for indents and quotes, type ">" to indent a single lines or ">>>" to indent multiple paragraphs

Communicating on Slack

The page features several decorative white shapes on a blue background. These include a large semi-circle in the upper right, a small circle below it, a large semi-circle in the middle right, a vertical stack of two semi-circles below that, a semi-circle in the lower right, and a small circle in the bottom left.

Slack Etiquette: Dos and Don'ts of Communicating on Slack

It's critical that you train employees in best practices to maintain security on Slack. Make sure they know that it's a good idea to avoid sharing passwords and other highly confidential information via Slack. Warn admins about the gravity of their position, and make it clear that they shouldn't make other users admins without careful consideration.

Communicating With Remote Teams

Always remember to:

- **Engage in Small Talk**

You're probably not emailing your co-worker just to ask about what they ate for lunch, and when you have only a weekly Skype meeting, it's natural to want to stay on task. Making an effort to get to know your co-workers and what makes them tick outside of work will help build trust and strengthen your relationships in the long run.

- **Over-Communicate**

It's simple. The more you keep lines of communication open, the better you can reduce misunderstandings.

- **Give Each Platform a Purpose**

If there are too many different places to communicate, they can end up serving only as a distraction. By assigning separate tasks for each platform, the whole process is streamlined.

- **Be Careful With Your Tone**

Something that's easy to forget is that text can rarely convey tone. What you might think reads as strictly informational, someone else may read as angry. You can avoid this, to some degree, by stating things very clearly, avoiding sarcasm, and throwing in the occasional exclamation point or emoji.

- **Choose Video Calls Whenever Possible**

Video communication is more authentic and helps you get to know your team. Maybe your co-worker wears the same baseball hat every day. All of those little details help you build the type of relationship you would have if you were working side by side.



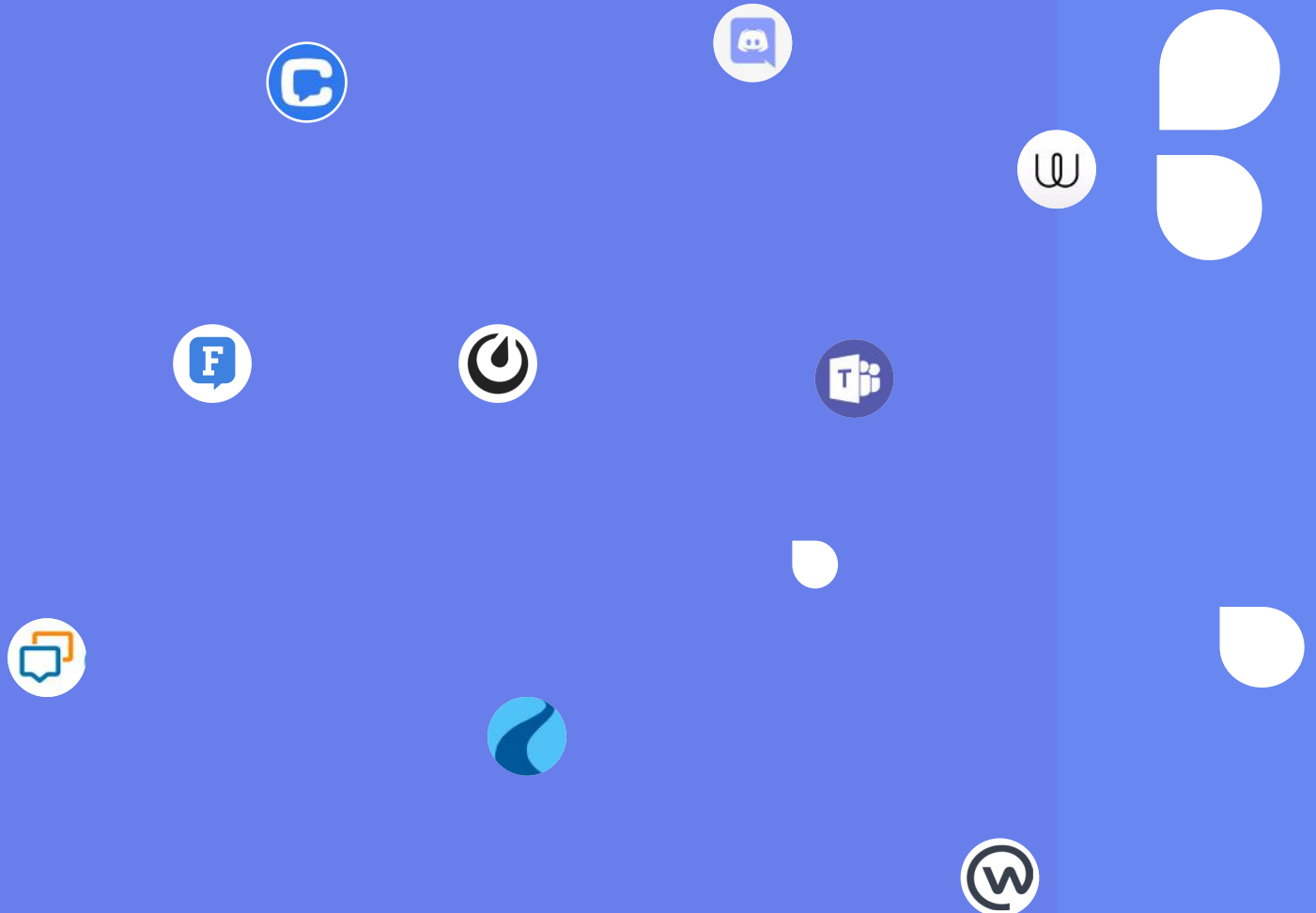
What Office Manager, James, from [SGS Agency](#) says:

"Our company has a Strictly-Slack policy. Emails are for official exchanges between clients and important information only. This helps us stay organized and minimizes distraction."



Alternatives to Slack

While [Slack](#) is a great productivity tool for many businesses, it's not the only option. In the past few years, many companies have released programs similar to Slack that are worth a try. Different systems work best for different businesses. Here are Slack's competitors and alternatives to help you discover which system works best for you.



Slack's Competition

After Slack was released, dozens of brands emerged as its competitors. Here are some of the original Slack rivals that still have countless dedicated users today:



Created in 2015, Ryver organizes emails, messages, and calls all in one program. Unlike Slack, with Ryver, users don't have to download individual apps to communicate, manage tasks, and automate their workflow. Ryver also boasts integration with Evernote, Gmail, Trello, Dropbox, and more, but it doesn't connect with Google Drive like Slack does. While Slack can cost anywhere from \$7 to \$13 per user per month, Ryver ranges from around \$50 to \$400 per month for a set number of users.



Another popular Slack competitor, Chanty, was released just last year. Chanty claims to be intuitive for even the most technophobic users. Unlike Slack, with Chanty, users can "pin" messages in chats and easily find them later. Users can also send voice messages, a feature that Slack doesn't offer yet, and instantly convert any chat message into a task. But Chanty is still working on threaded conversations, something that Slack users are already familiar with. Chanty also costs less than Slack - businesses can use either the free plan or the \$3 per user per month plan.



Mattermost, created in 2015, looks like and is priced like Slack. But unlike other programs, Mattermost is open source and self-hosted. It emphasizes information privacy and security, things Slack doesn't advertise. It also makes it easy to transition from Slack by allowing businesses to import users, public channel histories, and even theme colors into Mattermost. Its list of current customers is pretty impressive, too - ever heard of Uber?



Workplace by Facebook launched publicly in 2015. Visually, it looks very similar to Facebook. There's even a News Feed, just like Facebook's, that displays only the most important information first. Workplace also offers auto-translate for companies that do business internationally. For \$3 per user per month, businesses can live stream video without integrating a separate app, a feature that Slack lacks. There is also a free plan that comes with basic messaging and group project capabilities.



Released in 2017, Microsoft Teams is basic and easy to use, so it's great for businesses that haven't tried collaborative softwares like Slack before. It is priced slightly higher than Slack, with three plans ranging from free to \$20 per user per month. Unfortunately, the more basic plans are very limited in the number of features they offer, which can include project sharing and video conferencing. Teams is compatible with most other Microsoft programs and will easily blend into a Microsoft office.

The Best Slack Alternatives

The five competitors above have been well-tested. But now, newer options have arrived that can keep pace with Slack while offering additional features. If Slack just isn't cutting it anymore, try one of these hidden-gem alternatives instead:



Wire

Wire, released in 2014, has end-to-end encryption to keep your information safe. Users can invite others to join Wire conversations and send messages that self-destruct. Other features include the ability to mute notifications, read receipts, a dark mode, and the option to shorten lengthy URLs. Wire is targeted towards businesses and offers three plans that range from €4 to €6 per user per month, with discounts for educational and non-profit organizations.

Wire vs Slack:

- Wire: Has encryption, great design, and the ability to edit messages you've already sent.
- Slack: Has channels for conversations, the ability to connect with other apps, and more advanced search features.



Discord

Since 2015, Discord has reigned as the leading chat program for gamers worldwide. Now, many businesses use Discord for its voice and text messages, customizable design, screen sharing, and the ability to chat with people outside of Discord. Users also enjoy the ever-responsive Discord staff, the ability to designate primary speakers in conversations, and Discord's availability on both Windows and Mac. Finally, Discord is free, so it's a good option for companies who want to test out collaborative software before actually implementing one.

Discord vs Slack:

- Discord: Free, can be set up in minutes, and has more messaging features.
- Slack: Built for businesses, can connect with more apps, and has task management options.

What Carl, CTO of [Kisi](#) says:



"We switched to Discord very early on at Kisi. It was optimized for performance because gamers have an allergy to lag – and our tech team liked that. As a svtartup, it also helps that it's way cheaper than what Slack costs."



Fleep

Fleep, created in 2012, offers both a free plan and a €5 per person per month plan. With Fleep, users can see who's reading and writing messages, pin messages, and access a list of all documents and files sent in a chat. And unlike Slack, people who don't use Fleep can be added to Fleep conversations. For businesses who want to include customers or clients in their discussions, this feature is essential. Fleep also offers an app for iPhones and Androids and does not include any advertisements in its free version.

Fleep vs Slack:

- Fleep: More organized, offers status messages (such as "working from home"), and allows users to create private tasks that only they can see.
- Slack: Slack has direct messaging, screen sharing, and threads.



Glip

Glip was released by RingCentral in 2015 and offers a free plan and a \$5 per user per month plan. Like Hive, Glip is clean and minimalistic, but still user-friendly. Glip's features include the ability to mark up documents, unlimited guest users, group video meetings, screen sharing, and integration with over 50 apps. Glip also has 24/7/365 free live support, in case any problems arise. There are no extra fees for scaling up, so Glip is great for both large companies and start-ups.

Glip vs Slack:

- Glip: No limits on messaging and storage in the free plan, better task management, and video without a third-party app.
- Slack: Has channels, threads, and email integration.

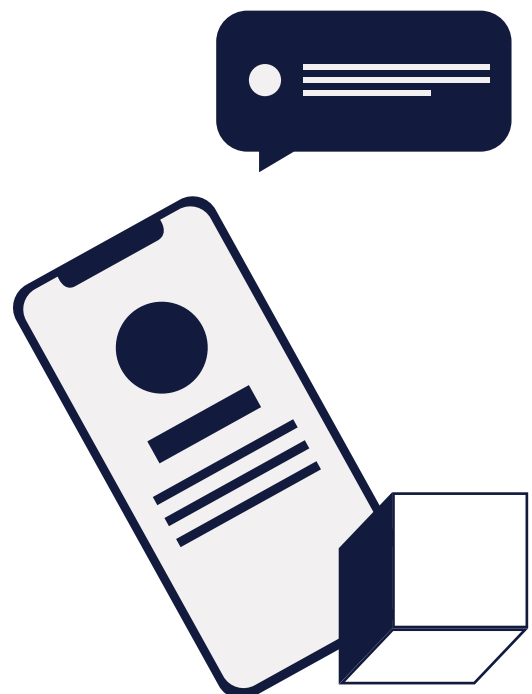


Hive

For \$12 per person per month, Hive is a platform for managing tasks and projects that has been around since 2015. Hive is modern, clean, and extensively color-coded. It's targeted towards businesses that need flexibility and is currently used by Starbucks and WeWork. Features include "forms" that Hive users can send to non-Hive users, four different project layouts, time tracking, the ability to turn notes into tasks, repeatable tasks, and lists that combine all tasks from different projects in one place.

Hive vs Slack:

- Hive: Hyper-organized, has a list of more features coming soon, and can integrate with Slack.
- Slack: Focused on messaging and communication, has voice calls, and offers less features that may confuse users and waste time.



Slack Pros and Cons

No matter which side of the debate your office is on, examining Slack's pros and cons can be beneficial for a number of reasons. Here's the long and short of it:

Why do some people still choose Slack?

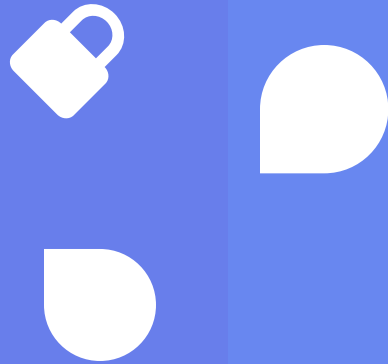
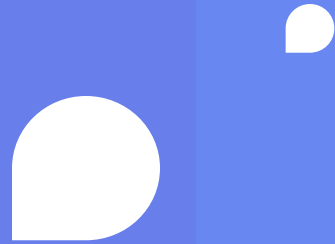
- It's popular; many businesses use it
- Slack is compatible with all computers, iPhones, and Androids
- Slack works well for real-time collaborating and when quick, direct action is needed
- Slack has powerful search features
- Slack is intuitive to use

Why do other people not use Slack?

- Employees without smartphones can't access Slack when they are away from their computers
- Limits on features in Slack's free plan can be too restrictive
- Slack doesn't work as well for collaboration on large-scale projects
- When multiple conversations start to happen within one Slack channel, messages and files can get lost
- Some feel that Slack can be addictive because their company culture dictates that employees should always be active on Slack. When they miss Slack activity that happens while they're asleep or taking a day off, they feel guilty.

How Secure Is Slack?

Slack seems like a no brainer. But as with any platform, it comes with risks. Most people using Slack aren't tech geniuses, but there are many aspects of Slack that managers need to be wary of. From users downloading messages to default settings that make links public, there are [key security risks](#) you'll need to weigh.



How Is Your Data Being Protected?

Company Security



Employee Access

Slack makes adding new employees quick and painless, but it's important not to underestimate the power of adding someone new to a channel full of confidential information. This is particularly relevant when it comes to employee termination. If employees leave on bad terms, every minute that they're still in a Slack channel is a minute that confidential company information could be at risk. To avoid security breaches, make sure removing former employees from Slack is a routine part of the exit process, every bit as important as changing passwords and deactivating their company email. Check out the Slack guide to adding and removing users [here](#).

Make sure to also review any external people that may have access. Whether it's a client or someone who comes to fix the computer, Slack users should be reviewed regularly to maintain a secure system.



Be Wary of Linking Third-Party Apps

Though it's tempting to connect Slack with all the other apps you use regularly for maximum convenience, it's important to think critically about who will have access to what as a result and what security breaches it may leave you vulnerable to. When you link third party apps, there's always the risk that the log-in procedures will change and individuals will have access to the apps and information they normally wouldn't have access to.

In 2016, [a routine audit revealed](#) that by integrating Google Docs with Slack and failing to adjust log-in procedures, the General Services Administration, (a government entity) left confidential information exposed for months. To be safe, avoid linking other apps. The small amount of extra work it will take will be worth the security it brings.



Public Files

Because of Slack's default settings, when a user creates a link to a file shared on Slack, it is automatically a public link. Anyone can click on it and have full access without any sort of password or log-in. Now imagine all the documents that get shared on Slack on a daily basis. Would you want all of them available to the public? It's a good idea to disable this feature on the Settings and Permission page in Slack.



Admins

Assigning certain employees as Slack admins is a great way to delegate and create an efficient workflow. But don't underestimate how much power admins have. They can create and delete channels, which may be full of key information, and create new admins, neither of which are reversible actions. They have access to settings which can allow any user to create and delete channels and add any new users they want. They can view any and all files that are shared in public channels in your workspace, and export much of it with ease.



Hackers

As Slack has gained popularity among businesses everywhere, it has unsurprisingly become a target for hackers. Back in 2017, a security company discovered a glitch that could have allowed hackers to easily get into different accounts and access individuals's messages and documents. It was the modern day equivalent of the old email scam: Click on a suspicious link and next thing you know your account is in the hands of a hacker. Slack has since fixed the bug, but hackers will no doubt search for other weaknesses.

According to MarketWatch, hackers are increasingly stealing data in order to blackmail users. That rant you went on to a coworker over private messages about your boss? In a blackmail hack, you may be forced to choose between paying up or being exposed.

Most recently, Slack reportedly closed a loophole in the Microsoft Windows version of the app which would have allowed hackers to download messages, [according to Engadget](#).

When Slack went public in April 2019, it went so far as to [warn investors](#) that cyber security hacks posed a risk to the stock's earnings. While many of the security breaches that have received publicity didn't actually lead to data being shared inappropriately, the potential for grave consequences is ever present. There's no simple answer as to whether Slack is uniquely vulnerable to attacks, but as of right now, there's no question it's a high value target.

Employee Privacy



Can Slack Read Your Conversations?

According to the Slack website, employees only see messages when it's absolutely necessary in order to fix a bug.

But even if Slack employees aren't reading your messages, security concerns could arise from within. As of last year, certain users can download messages without others being notified. This means that even if you follow all of the best practices for removing former employees immediately, they may be able to hold onto confidential company information. Workplace owners can download all messages and files from public channels, and those with the Plus plan have the ability to do so with private channels and direct messages, [according to NBC](#). Those with the free or standard plan are required to obtain consent from applicable employees.

Mashable outlined how to check whether others have the ability to download your private messages. "When logged into Slack, head on over to slack.com/account/team. Once you're on that page, scroll down to the bottom. Under "Exports," check and see what privileges are listed. If it only lists "PUBLIC DATA CAN BE EXPORTED," then the spokesperson assured us that your boss cannot pull your DMs. If it lists private data, well, then you're out of luck."

“Any claims that are not independently verified arise a certain amount of suspicion.”



How Does It Work With GDPR?

On its website, Slack features a lengthy list of all the ways it complies with the GDPR, or General Data Protection Regulation, a law passed in Europe that went into effect in 2018. You can read it [here](#). One of the ways Slack promises compliance is through "self-certification" under the E.U.-U.S. and Swiss-U.S. privacy shield. Any claims that are not independently verified arise a certain amount of suspicion.

[Enterprise Ready](#) breaks down how Slack has handled one of the biggest concerns of GDPR, exporting messages on public and private channels.

Our Thoughts

While Slack has undeniably transformed the office environment, along with managers' ability to communicate with remote teams, the app has caused some contention in the professional world. From privacy concerns to too much distraction in the workplace, offices seem to be divided on the cost vs. benefits of Slack. Many office managers report that Slack has contributed to a more streamlined, connected work environment, while others say the platform is too distracting and easily abused by workers not using it strictly for project management. However, its mission to "...make people's working lives simpler, more pleasant, more productive," is firmly demonstrated in the amount of integrations and partnerships it has achieved with an extensive variety of companies in other industries. From sales and communication to health and wellness, and many more categories, Slack has become the dominant communication platform for dozens of markets.

As a company that has recently gone public, the Slack strategy has taken a somewhat non-traditional path for a tech company by filing for a direct listing rather than an IPO on the stock exchange. This move has many financial experts stumped, since a direct listing denotes extreme confidence in the company's ability to raise funds while taking on heavy risk. However this unusual move is perhaps

consistent with the company's equally unique growth strategy when they first launched. In the early days of the company, Slack bypassed expensive marketing campaigns and adopted a more gradual go-to-market strategy. Within a few short years Slack became a powerful yet mysterious player in the office communications sector, having achieved millions of users with very little advertising, a lean sales team, and a rather conservative amount of funding compared to other unicorn startups.

The question now becomes whether Slack is indeed a disruptor in the market, as many proponents claim. Will the app ever completely replace email? With each new integration and expansion of its services, the increasingly ubiquitous nature of Slack suggests that it is intent on moving toward this goal.



We Would Love to Hear From You!

Arming your team members with a keyless office entry system does more than eliminate keys—it builds a vibrant office culture. Our simple web dashboard and easy-to-use app save administrators and employees time, result in fewer interruptions, and add up to a positive work experience day after day.

Get in touch with our sales team. Give us a brief summary of your needs and we'll get back to you within one business day.



Call Us: +1 (646) 663 4880



Email Us: sales@getkisi.com