

3Kites Consulting

So, what has Teams ever done for you ?

Aside from the video conferencing, document storage, wikis, task management, group chats... just what has Teams ever done for you ? And this is the problem many firms face as Teams takes hold like Chinese Bindweed in groups and offices where the pent-up demand for technical answers or frustration with formal document management leads to self-help without the constraints of a managed IT solution.

On the one hand, what's the problem ? IT staff often bemoan the lack of engagement with IT and yet here's a product that users seem comfortable getting to grips with on their own, surely this is nirvana. Err, no – this is chaos and it is a growing issue for law firms as documentation is buried ever deeper in disconnected teams and channels. For KM professionals in particular, whilst they may welcome the ability for users to exchange and discuss ideas informally, this risks confusion and frustration as to what should be found where and brings with it the danger that carefully curated repositories of approved precedents and templates will be bypassed or forgotten.

So what's the answer ? Well it's certainly not to shutdown access completely although there does need to be a more considered approach to the ways in which Teams is used, managed, monitored and supported. If the genie is already out of the bottle, then you will need to think about how to rein this in without alienating those users already deriving value from local islands of knowledge. The first task must be to catalogue what is out there, what it is used for and who is using it – once you know this, you should be in a better position to navigate a way forward that keeps existing users on side whilst introducing the necessary controls.

For those firms that have not yet ventured into the world of Teams, we would strongly advocate defining your strategy and implementing the required controls before encouraging groups to follow a guided path to creating information stores that are able to be joined up where appropriate. Taking a planned approach (with ongoing governance over the creation of new Teams and channels) should help your Teams usage to grow in a coherent and managed way without many of the attendant pitfalls that the earlier adopters are now facing.

Paul Longhurst – February, 2021