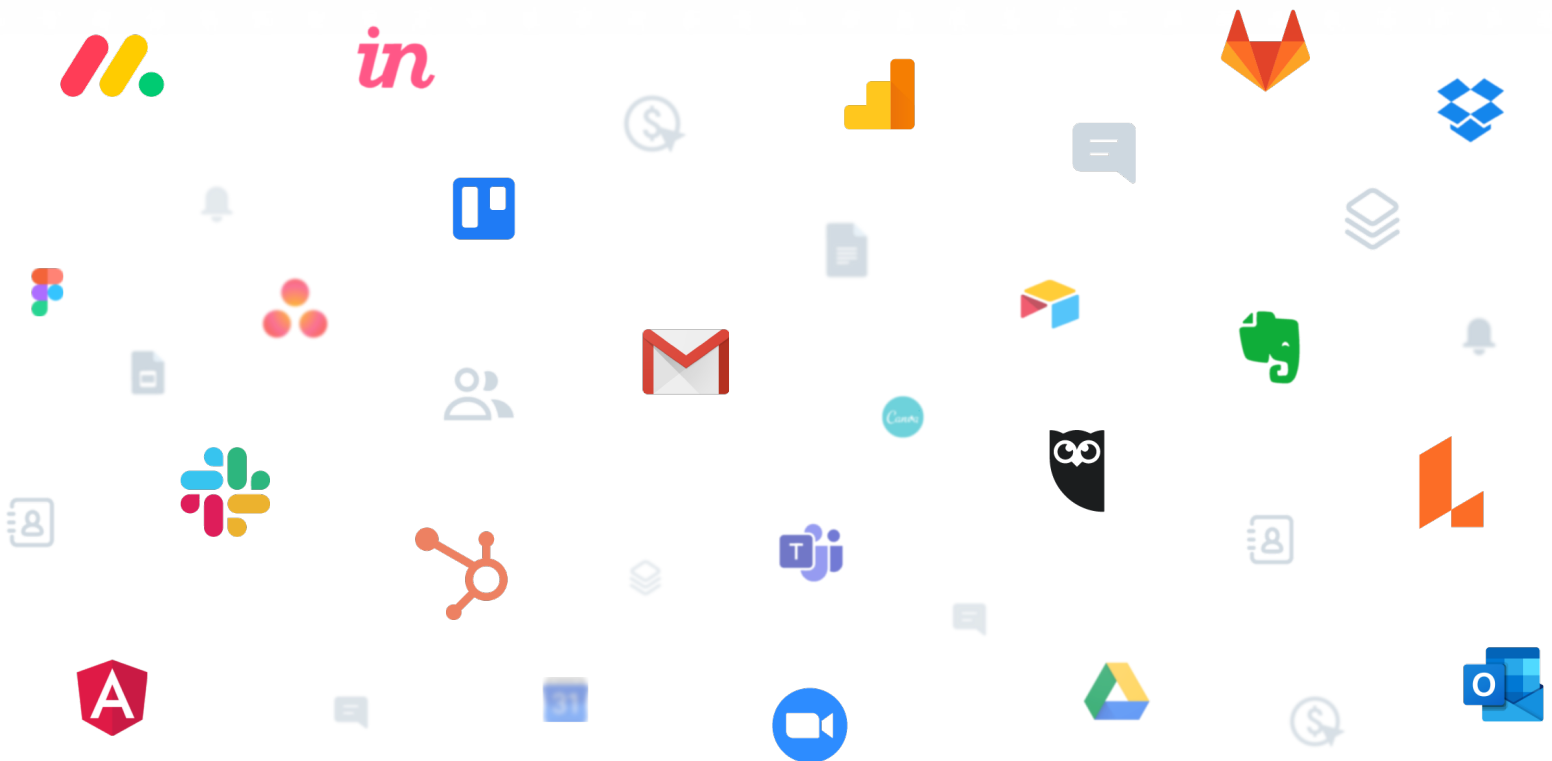


# Dialed

## FIVE KEY CRITERIA TO EVALUATE UNIFIED DIGITAL WORKSPACES

The Foundation for the Focused Work Movement eBook



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## The Five Criteria

Executive Summary	3
1 Unifies Tools & Work	5
2 Easy to find and share resources	6
3 Promote business alignment	7
4 Breaks the cycle of distraction	8
5 Avoids the need for more software or standardization	9

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The day to day life of a modern knowledge worker has increasingly less to do with knowledge--its application and production--and more and more to do with simply keeping afloat. Inundated with information and application overload, with dozens of tabs open, collaborative files zipping around the cloud without a clear home, and communication channels pinging every minute, digital workplaces are fragmented, draining, and full of distractions.

A number of factors have coalesced to lead to the current culture of stressful, always-on, rarely-productive work life. As collaborative and remote work styles become the new norm, the strict standardization that historically limited innovation and autonomy but provided order is falling by the wayside. In tandem, there has been a Cambrian explosion of SaaS tools. For example, Martech SaaS tools have risen from around 150 in 2011 to over 8,000 today<sup>1</sup>.

The result?

Despite the best of intentions, this tyranny of application freedom has led to an untenable situation, in which up to 80% of productive time is lost to context switching<sup>2</sup>, and a similar percentage of knowledge workers report feeling stressed about communication and collaboration in the workplace<sup>3</sup>. Spending more time on Slack than your projects? Getting frustrated when you thought you were taking care of a team priority only to learn in a Zoom meeting that the file you were working on has been abandoned in favor of another approach?

You're not alone, and it's not your fault. And while there are some things we can do as individuals to push back against the tide, we also need to call it as we see it: we're operating within a broken system.

Our habits and our environment profoundly inform each other. If we are working in an environment filled with distraction, where putting out little fires in order to look productive is the norm, our habits will adapt around that. We become reactive, anxious, and scattered, constantly on the hunt for little dopamine hits that provide a false sense of accomplishment.

On the other hand, if we create digital work environments that prioritize focus and meaningful work, our habits shift towards making the space and time for deep thinking and longer attention spans. We become less easily triggered by anxiety around reactive communication, or cramming as many 'small tasks' into a day as possible, usually at the expense of what's actually important. We produce higher quality, more fulfilling work.

Luckily, the category of Unified Digital Workspaces, UDW, is emerging to create just such a space. Rather than trying to be the flashy new kid on the block, UDWs take a humbler, but ultimately more impactful approach. UDWs don't try to be or do everything. They don't try to make you change your behavior, or download something new. Instead, they create a simple, intuitive space in which you can organize, access, and work on everything you already use, free from distractions.

Here at Dialed, we are confident that UDWs mark a paradigm shift in how knowledge work will evolve in the next phase of our information age. We wrote this eBook with the goal of explaining what we see as the five criteria that serve as the foundations for successful UDWs. We hope the information below can help illuminate what distinguishes UDWs from other solutions on the market, and how UDWs will pave the way for the Focused Work movement.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://chiefmartec.com/2020/04/marketing-technology-landscape-2020-martech-5000/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://blog.rescuetime.com/context-switching/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2019/03/20/office-communication/3210831002/>

# THE FIVE CRITERIA

Unified Digital Workspaces (UDW) are not another tool with flashy UI and grandiose promises. Think of them instead as meta-platforms, built around five key principles. Consider these five key principles as the criteria for evaluating how you want your digital work environment to function.

1. **Unifies tools and work:** Unified Digital Workspaces neatly assemble everything you need into a single screen with simple navigation, integrated viewing, and search capabilities that don't require context switching.
2. **Easy to find and share resources:** By centralizing all of the relevant files, resources, and links into one space, Unified Digital Workspaces eliminate the need to hunt through emails, tabs, and applications.
3. **Promote business alignment:** Unified Digital Workspaces can be shared among collaborators and the organization, tracking toolsets, and sources of record, as well as providing clarity on organizational priorities.
4. **Breaks the cycle of distraction:** By filtering out irrelevant notifications and reducing context switching, Unified Digital Workspaces optimize knowledge workers' precious cognitive calories.
5. **Avoids the need for more software or standardization:** As an open integration platform supporting all web-based tools, Unified Digital Workspaces allow knowledge workers to select best of breed tools, while providing organizational visibility into what tools are used where.

Through the application of these 5 criteria, Unified Digital Workspaces offer an environment where knowledge workers can feel more calm, focused, and fulfilled by contributing meaningful, productive work.

# 1 UNIFIES TOOLS & WORK

According to a recent study, knowledge workers are losing 32 work days a year just switching between windows<sup>4</sup>. At any given moment, the choice to move between tabs or applications seems minimal, but the cumulative impact is enormous. Part of the impulse to switch between windows is facilitated by the gamification of notifications and the growing culture of juggling a thousand things at once, but another part of the switching comes from a legitimate need, based on the way our digital work environments are currently set up. A link is buried in a Slack channel. The file you need is in a drive tied to a different email. You need to export something from an application you're designing in.

We need to manage more and more information, linked across more and more spaces, and it's nearly impossible. Worse still, every client or project can require totally different tool sets, which means we not only need to learn an ever-growing language of applications, but we lose more and more time navigating between them.

UDWs solve this problem by unifying all of your existing tools and work into one space. Instead of hunting across dozens of applications and tabs, Unified Digital Workspaces neatly assemble everything you need into a single screen with simple navigation, integrated viewing, and search capabilities that don't require context switching. Respond to relevant communications filtered through the communication pane and access all of the resources, links, and integrated web-based applications you need through the resource pane, all while working in the intuitive, centralized work pane.

UDWs provide a unified space where you can be confident that you have everything you need for the task at hand, but nothing more.

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.techradar.com/news/how-platform-fatigue-is-ruining-your-company>

# 2 EASY TO FIND AND SHARE RESOURCES

One of the biggest time sucks in current digital workplace culture is the hunt for resources across tabs, applications, emails, and Slack channels. According to a study by McKinsey, the average knowledge worker spends 20% of their week managing email and an additional 28% tracking down internal information<sup>5</sup>.

Despite the growing sophistication of cloud-based storage drives and collaboration software, the day to day lived experience navigating and sharing across these drives is still a nightmare, with everyone trying to corral the information into a format and space that makes sense to them, but conflicts with other people's organization systems.

The problem wouldn't be quite as bad if we weren't undergoing such a boom in collaborative and remote work, but those trends are here to stay, and they are magnifying the issue a hundred fold. Since 2010, the number of employees who work remotely has grown by 400%<sup>6</sup>, and is only rising more steeply in the wake of COVID-19. Similarly, collaboration has become so integral to knowledge work that upwards of 80% of businesses in the US use collaboration software to try and facilitate the new normal of knowledge work<sup>7</sup>. However, despite organizations' best efforts to simultaneously give knowledge workers' leeway to use their favored tools while also maintaining some kind of oversight about where resources are located, the problem is just being felt more and more acutely. In fact, frustration around finding and sharing resources is one of the most frequently mentioned pain points we hear about from our beta users.

UDWs mitigate this unnecessary pain point by providing an easy way to search, organize into different sections and sub sections, and share across teams. The difference between a UDW resource and, say, a Google drive, is not so much a difference in function as a difference in form: UDWs are organized by project or client, thereby paring down the number of resources within any given framework to what is actually relevant to the task at hand. By centralizing what is needed, filtering out what is unnecessary, making it easy to search and share, UDWs provide knowledge workers the much-needed confidence that they and the team are on the same page.

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/technology-media-and-telecommunications/our-insights/the-social-economy>

<sup>6</sup> <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/remote-work-stats>

<sup>7</sup> <https://blog.bit.ai/collaboration-statistics/#:~:text=Collaboration%20in%20the%20Modern%20Time&text=Telecommuting%20has%20risen%2079%20percent,from%20the%20American%20Community%20Survey.>

# 3 PROMOTE BUSINESS ALIGNMENT

Keeping organized as an individual is hard enough, but given the increasingly collaborative nature of knowledge work today, team alignment and organization is essentially impossible. How many times have you sent or received a message asking where a file is, or whether a link can be resent? For most knowledge workers, this is a constant, daily reality.

The ability for teams to stay effectively aligned is getting attacked from all angles. Companies are increasingly welcoming all of the 'best practices' that have grown out of a movement to break down the hierarchy in favor of maximizing empowerment, creativity and innovation. Physically, office spaces have been deconstructed, favoring open seating plans over cubicles or corner offices, or, even more extreme, accepting remote work as the new normal. Where and when employees work has become more flexible, and they are increasingly accustomed to using whatever tools they prefer to get their best work done. Undeniably, these trends benefit knowledge worker's sense of autonomy and freedom, which in turn impact their creativity and overarching workplace satisfaction.

However, managing this 'free-form' work culture can be a complete nightmare--let alone potential liability--for management. How can organizations effectively track toolsets, when companies with 100 or fewer employees use on average just as many applications, with organizations of 1,000+ employees utilizing close to 300<sup>8</sup>?

It's not just a financial issue, either. This "shadow IT" problem leads to a whole range of security and privacy concerns, with files passing through email, Slack, the cloud, and a variety of applications, all of which could potentially be accessed by someone who isn't supposed to.

Perhaps most importantly in the long term, this freeform culture makes alignment around organizational priorities a slippery, sisyphian task. It's like trying to corral a liquid or gas into staying still. That's why a middle way between the strict standardization of the olden days and the wild west of the current SaaS landscape is so necessary.

Unified digital workspaces offer the ability to have a "source of record FOR your sources of record," so that everyone can be on the same page. In this way, UDWs offer a virtual workbench for teams to stay aligned on the tasks at hand.

---

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.blissfully.com/saas-trends/>

# 4 BREAKS THE CYCLE OF DISTRACTION

Anyone who has been paying attention to the news over the last five years is well acquainted with the worrying research and statistics on social media's impact on mental health. What is not as frequently mentioned is how many of the design elements of social media applications have been borrowed and integrated into workplace applications. Instead of viewing the base function of work as a space that requires focus and designing accordingly, applications have instead entered the melee to compete for attention, consequently throwing gas on an already roaring fire.

UDWs, on the other hand, are built with cognitive research in mind, and with the singular goal of ending distraction and promoting focus. We know that we only have 4-5 hours of precious cognitive calories to use every day<sup>9</sup>. We know that every time we switch tasks it takes up to 25 minutes to refocus<sup>10</sup>. And yet the very apps that are supposed to help us be productive at work are often designed to pull us in a million directions and do nothing to protect us from a barrage of incoming information.

We don't want UDWs to fight for your attention. Your attention is stretched thin enough, as is. Instead, we want you to feel comfortable within a digital environment that works with you, rather than against you. By filtering out communications that aren't relevant to the task at hand and centralizing all of your work into one, simple space, UDWs break the cycle of distraction, so that you can do your best work and feel good doing it.

---

<sup>9</sup> Deep Work.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.vox.com/recode/2019/5/1/18511575/productivity-slack-google-microsoft-facebook>



# 5 AVOIDS THE NEED FOR MORE SOFTWARE OR STANDARDIZATION

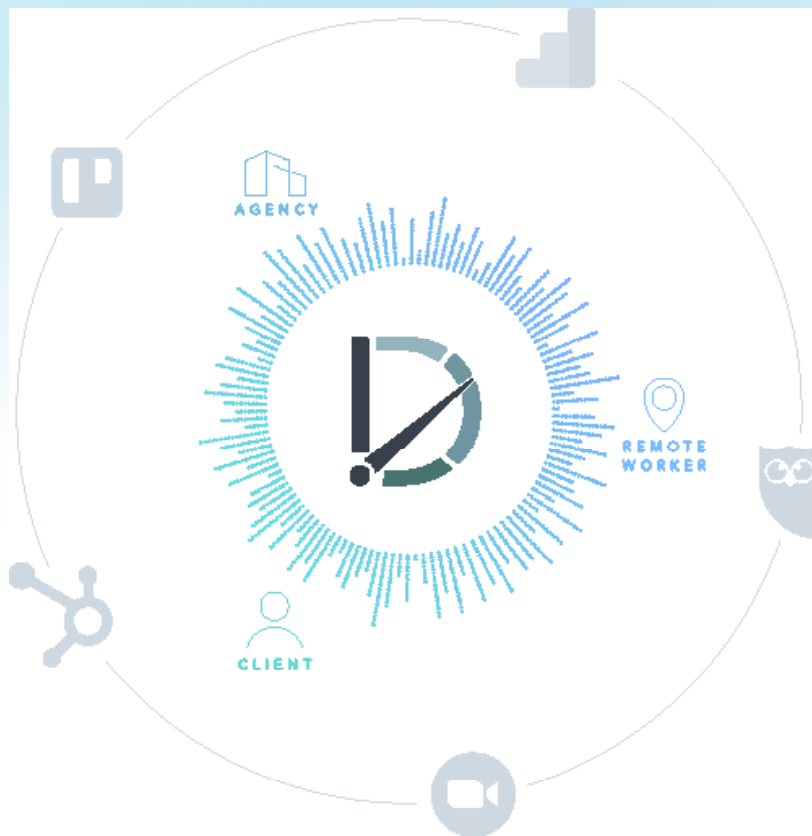
The problem of fragmented work in today's digital workplaces is well known, researched, and documented. But the solutions out there thus far have fallen into the same trap over and over again. By trying to solve the issue of information and application overload by adding yet another application that attempts to corral everyone into one, standardized sandbox, we don't end up with a more organized work environment. We just end up with more competing tool sets, making collaboration more and more challenging.

One of the most distinctive features of UDWs is that they don't require any new software to be downloaded, and they require no new behaviors. UDWs don't force you and everyone who works for you (and with you) to standardize onto the same application. Instead, they allow you to access the best of breed tools you already use, put into one organized space that filters out distraction and protects your focus.

UDWs are beautifully simple in this regard: they aren't requiring you to do anything different. They are just empowering you to do what you already do, in a more focused way.

# ABOUT DIALED

At Dialed, we are committed to advancing the emerging movement of Unified Digital Workspaces through thought leadership and working with knowledge workers, organizations, and the industry at-large to push back against fragmented work and increase workplace satisfaction and productivity. With years of experience facing the problems outlined in this paper, our team has developed Focusboards, a simple solution that organizes existing tools, relevant communications and resources by project or client. The result is a focused, unified digital workspace, accessible on any browser, and designed to feel familiar.



For more information about Unified Digital Workspaces and early access to Focusboards, visit [www.Dialed.ai](http://www.Dialed.ai) and follow us on our socials.



eB5Criteria09302020