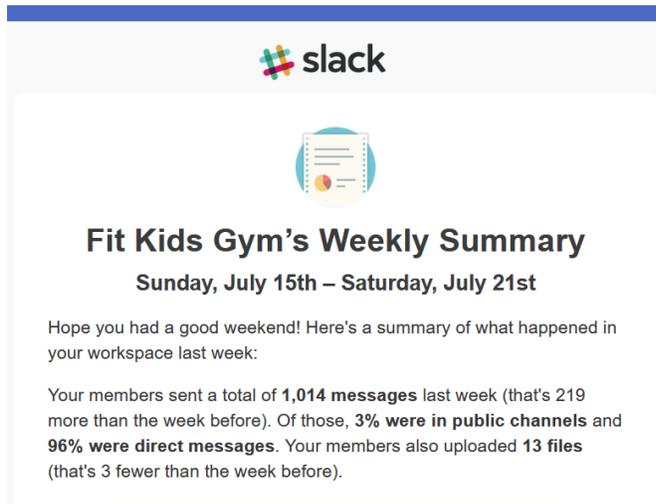


Slack for Communication & Productivity



Two and a half years ago, I wrote an article about a staff communication app that we use and have become very reliant on. It is called Slack. Here is an update on our current use.

Our company, Fit Kids Gymnastics Center, has 2 locations that are open 7 days a week, with a total staff of 40 employees. Of that total, 34 are part time, working an ever changing mix of days and times during the week. Through the years, one of our biggest challenges has been keeping the entire staff in the company's communication loop. Making sure everyone

knew of an important change in the company was always a challenge, and "I didn't know" was a common statement. Our previous method of group texting, leaving notes on the staff room bulletin board, and individual phone calls was not cohesive enough for our specific needs as a company. With all the communication technology available these days, we knew there had to be some sort of solution out there somewhere. Could there be an app, a program, or a system that could handle our business' unique and varied communication needs?

As it turned out, there was. Slack - a messaging app for enhancing companywide communication. Slack is available in both mobile and desktop platforms. It has proved to be something that not only provided a great solution to our company's needs, but was also enthusiastically embraced by our staff.

Slack has transformed our company communications through its ease of use and user-friendly features. It works for our specific company in many ways:

- **Staff Adoption & Use:** As it turned out, this was the easy part. According to technologist John Mayeda, people in the US check their phones 150 times a day. That translates into once every 6.4 minutes. By using Slack, our company is able to take our staff's existing behaviors and leverage them to make our company better. After only 2 months of use, we were up to 384 messages per week company-wide. That's pretty good adoption. Recently, we just broke our record with over 1,000 Slack messages in one week.
- **Slack is our official company communications method:** We get to write the rules of use, such as requiring messages to be responded to in a timely manner, and other "play nice" rules that keep everyone wanting to participate. We have even added new lingo to our gym. Instead of telling co-workers to text us, we now say "slack me". One thing to be careful of though; requiring "off-the-clock" hourly employees to carry on work related messaging with their managers can run you afoul of your state employment laws. It is very important to get qualified consultation on how to best use Slack in your state.

- **Channels:** In Slack you can set up communication categories called channels, which can be public or private. Messages in a channel only go to those who are members of that channel. At Fit Kids, all of our channels are public. Some of our most important channels include:
 1. **Managers:** This channel is where messages pertinent to all managers are sent, such as a clarification from our HR department regarding rest and meal break requirements for our employees.
 2. **Customer Service:** Any message that applies to the Customer Service Dept. goes here.
 3. **Teachers:** All messages that would apply to the entire teaching staff are sent to this channel
 4. **Team:** A message to the entire team staff would go to this channel
 5. **Substitutes:** Our most popular channel. When someone needs a sub, this is the channel they go to in order to ask, beg, plead, or bribe others to sub for them. 😊
- There are two automatically generated channels that go to everyone: General and Random. You'll like the random channel - it's where all the goofy, fun posts and messages go. Be sure to learn how to post "giphys," they are a crack up!
- **Direct Messaging:** Messages that do not apply to an entire department can be sent directly to one or more members of your company, and all direct messages are private. Attaching a pdf, picture or video is also easy to do in Slack.
- **Search ability:** Slack has search functions that enable you to easily go back and find old messages, documents, or attachments.
- **Free or Paid Versions:** You can subscribe to a basic version of Slack which is free. If you want to take advantage of enhanced features, there is a paid plan available.
- **Notifications and Do Not Disturb Settings:** You can set up how and when you want to receive message notifications.

Here are some comments from members of different departments of our company sharing what they like most about Slack:

- "Separates "work" and "pleasure" - one place for all your work communications without having to weed through text messages. And the channels help keep everything really organized." – Erin R. (Manager)
- "Great for organizing and having everything work related in one place. Personally I am one to accidentally delete messages all the time, but having everything work related on this app I no longer have to worry about deleting important messages about subbing etc. It also gives everyone a good laugh with all the giphys which is a fun way to get away from work related stuff." – Amber H. (Class teacher)
- "I like that there's a centralized place to communicate with our staff. Channels are open, so we can see what's going on in other parts of the company. I also like the ability to file share, and not mess with email/text distribution lists. Lastly, there's a level of accountability to our staff, because they must respond, unlike texts that can be ignored." – Olivia B. (Manager)
- "The part I like the most, from an office standpoint, is that I can use it on a computer. This makes it possible for me to use Slack without pulling out my personal phone while I'm at work. Throughout the work day I am able to communicate with staff members who aren't working at

the time ...notifications pop up on the desktop so I can easily see it (or hear it) even with multiple other windows open. If I'm busy helping someone on the phone or in person, the notification stays up and I can check back to see that there's a new message waiting to be opened when I'm finished." - Kimberly C (Office)

Our staff is not alone in its high opinion of this app. Slack is used by thousands of companies worldwide and was named Inc.com's company of the year for 2015. I have only covered a few of the ways Slack has helped our organization. To find out more, visit Slack.com and see what slack can do for your business.