

The Forrester Wave™: Collaborative Work Management Tools For The Enterprise, Q4 2018

The 10 Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

by Margo Visitation
October 24, 2018

Why Read This Report

In our 34-criteria evaluation of collaborative work management (CWM) tools providers, we identified the 10 most significant ones — Airtable, Asana, Clarizen, Microsoft, monday.com, Planview, ServiceNow, Smartsheet, Workfront, and Wrike — and researched, analyzed, and scored them. This report shows how each provider measures up and helps application development and delivery professionals make the right choice.

Key Takeaways

Smartsheet, Asana, And Wrike Lead The Pack
Forrester's research uncovered a market in which Smartsheet, Asana, and Wrike are Leaders; Clarizen, monday.com, Microsoft, ServiceNow, Workfront, and Planview are Strong Performers; and Airtable is a Contender.

AD&D Pros Look For Visibility, Mobility, And High User Adoption

The CWM market is growing because more AD&D professionals see it as a way to address their top challenge; they want to increase adoption of highly flexible tools that show the progress of work performed by cross-functional teams.

Collaboration, Machine Learning, And Pace Of Innovation Are Key Differentiators

Traditional project management technology doesn't adequately support the needs of organizations going through digital transformation. Vendors that can optimize team productivity by delivering flexible collaboration and process optimization through machine learning and by responding to their customers' needs will lead the market.

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Table Of Contents

2 Collaborative Work Management Is Essential For Digital Business

The CWM Market Is Poised For Continued Innovation

3 Collaborative Work Management Evaluation Overview

Evaluated Vendors And Inclusion Criteria

5 Vendor Profiles

Leaders Offer The Most Optimized Collaborative Work Management Experiences

Strong Performers Provide Solid Core Features And Options For A Variety Of Needs

The Contender Provides Core Competencies But Needs More Accessibility

11 Supplemental Material

Related Research Documents

[The Forrester Tech Tide™: Enterprise Collaboration, Q1 2018](#)

[Now Tech: Collaborative Work Management Tools, Q2 2018](#)

[Portfolio Ecosystem: The Central Nervous System For Delivering Business Strategy](#)



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The Forrester Wave™: Collaborative Work Management Tools For The Enterprise, Q4 2018

The 10 Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

Collaborative Work Management Is Essential For Digital Business

Every knowledge worker is a project manager, whether they know it or not. The increased pace of digital business requires cross-functional teams to work together to deliver digital products and services to their customers. Market differentiation demands increased speed to market, but maintaining that velocity while balancing complex business processes highlights the need to access critical data at the team level to make time-sensitive decisions. Unfortunately, unlike customer relationship management (CRM) solutions that become the customer system of record, or enterprise resource management (ERP) that is the financial system of record, firms lack an *operational* system of record, relying instead on a menagerie of tools to actually manage the way they work.¹ Companies don't have a single vendor solution to support an operational system of record. However, CWM's flexible use cases and consumer-grade usability create common workspaces that act as an execution-level system of record.

The CWM Market Is Poised For Continued Innovation

Today's workforce is motivated by productivity. Seventy-five percent of global information workers responding to the Forrester Analytics Global Business Technographics® Workforce Benchmark Survey, 2017, agree that they are very productive at work most days, and 71% also agree that their job requires deep concentration and focus; however, 21% say that their work gets interrupted at least weekly because they can't find or access the appropriate information they need to do their job, and 20% say that this occurs at least monthly.² Forrester's evaluation reveals that CWM tools are in the midst of a wave of innovation that will expand their capabilities and raise their potential ROI. The CWM market continues to evolve from viral, small-team task management adoption to enterprisewide implementations challenging organizations to consider the following when assessing potential investment:

- › **Adaptability for a broad set of use cases.** The notion that everything ultimately is a project still holds some water for many teams, but linear task management does not fit everyone's needs. Today, most CWM vendors offer several options for organizing and tracking activities; the most innovative vendors offer end users greater flexibility to design different workspaces, workflows, and collaboration interactions. To gain enterprise adoption, vendors need to expand accelerators that automate repeatable processes such as onboarding new hires, pre-deal and deal execution merger and acquisition activities, or Scrum workflows.
- › **Depth of collaboration capabilities.** CWM serves as the work system of record for teams, especially those that contribute to the creation of digital content. Early entrants to the CWM market emphasized marketing teams that required proofing and approval capabilities. That target space is now expanding to other digital teams, such as web or mobile software developers. Collaboration extends beyond content sharing to group-based conversations, tracking comments associated either with content or with task-based activities with internal subscription users, or with external clients and partners. Integration with major team messaging vendors such as Microsoft Teams and Slack extends collaboration for teams that aren't active users of the CWM solution.

The Forrester Wave™: Collaborative Work Management Tools For The Enterprise, Q4 2018

The 10 Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

- › **Major cloud platform support and flexible integrations.** Early entrants into the CWM software-as-a-service (SaaS) market hosted their own products. Public cloud adoption and pricing is now leading most CWM providers to leverage one or more of the major cloud providers as their hosting platform. Depending on integration requirements, the most innovative vendors are providing multiplatform support for the most flexible implementations for content sharing. Potential customers shouldn't have to be locked into a single platform and should consider the vendor that works with their integration requirements.
- › **End user automation capabilities.** Because CWM capabilities enable organizations to build workspaces that plan and track progress for both repeatable process-driven activities and artifact-driven workstreams, teams should be able to tailor planning and collaboration capabilities that work for them. Potential customers should consider vendors that allow end users to design simple workflows to drive process. Innovative vendors enable moderate-level workflow design capabilities that business users can develop without administrative oversight.
- › **Machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI) to optimize productivity.** The buzz around ML and AI capabilities is more marketing than reality — filtering is not ML. But with broader use cases and consumer-grade usability, potential customers should consider vendors that are actively investing in this technology. Greater adoption leads to greater visibility. Leveraging AI capabilities such as chatbots and voice-driven commands helps teams to drive greater adoption; this builds data that can support process automation optimization that can inform new use cases.
- › **Dynamic reporting and dashboards.** As these solutions evolve from viral team adoption to enterprise implementation, demand for robust reporting will expand. CWM reporting today is driven by simple and usable filtering to build straightforward dashboards for teams to monitor progress. Integration with business intelligence (BI) tools such as Tableau and Qlik enables users to bring in external data to build visual reports, however, as use cases expand, end user ability to create robust reports will be a determining factor for investment.
- › **Flexible marketplace solutions.** The viral nature of CWM and API-centered architecture has created strong end user and developer communities that routinely share templates and related content. This community is now expanding to technology partners that build extensions, bots, applications, and other content to optimize productivity. AD&D pros should consider marketplaces as a method to build customized customer experiences without having to build it themselves.

Collaborative Work Management Evaluation Overview

To assess the state of the collaborative work management market and see how the vendors stack up against each other, Forrester evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of top collaborative work management vendors. After examining past research, user need assessments, and vendor and expert interviews, we developed a comprehensive set of evaluation criteria. We evaluated vendors against 34 criteria, which we grouped into three high-level buckets:

The Forrester Wave™: Collaborative Work Management Tools For The Enterprise, Q4 2018

The 10 Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

- › **Current offering.** Each vendor's position on the vertical axis of the Forrester Wave™ graphic indicates the strength of its current offering. Key criteria for these solutions include content collaboration, converting conversations to work, team capacity management, machine learning and AI, security, public and private cloud, mobile, and integration.
- › **Strategy.** Placement on the horizontal axis indicates the strength of the vendors' strategies. We evaluated pace of innovation, research and development, partner ecosystems, marketplace and community, reselling partners, and customer satisfaction.
- › **Market presence.** Represented by the size of the markers on the graphic, our market presence scores reflect each vendor's new customers, subscription renewal, enterprise adoption rate, globalization, revenue growth, and rate of subscription.

Evaluated Vendors And Inclusion Criteria

Forrester included 10 vendors in the assessment: Airtable, Asana, Clarizen, Microsoft, monday.com, Planview, ServiceNow, Smartsheet, Workfront, and Wrike. Each of these vendors has (see Figure 1):

- › **Annual collaborative work management tool revenue of at least \$30 million.** Participating vendors should have at least \$30 million in annual recurring revenue subscriptions.
- › **Five or more implementation and integration partners.** While viral implementation is still the primary use case for CWM to enter an organization, building strong partner relationships demonstrates the ability to support enterprise clients. We required a combination of implementation, integration, and technology partners to further demonstrate enterprise viability.
- › **Global presence.** Each vendor has data centers in two separate regions and sales and support in three or more countries. The vendors' CWM offering should demonstrate the ability to support a global client base with sufficient technical and customer support capabilities. Enterprise clients require dedicated customer success and account support.

The Forrester Wave™: Collaborative Work Management Tools For The Enterprise, Q4 2018
The 10 Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

FIGURE 1 Evaluated Vendors And Product Information

Vendor	Product evaluated	Version release date
Airtable	Airtable	August 2018
Asana	Asana	August 2018
Clarizen	Clarizen	August 2018
Microsoft	Microsoft Planner and Microsoft Teams	August 2018
monday.com	monday.com	August 2018
Planview	Planview Projectplace	July 2018
ServiceNow	ServiceNow London Release	August 2018
Smartsheet	Smartsheet	August 2018
Workfront	Workfront	August 2018
Wrike	Wrike	August 2018

Vendor Profiles

This evaluation of the collaborative work management market is intended to be a starting point only. We encourage clients to view detailed product evaluations and adapt criteria weightings to fit their individual needs through the Forrester Wave Excel-based vendor comparison tool (see Figure 2 and see Figure 3). Click the link at the beginning of this report on Forrester.com to download the tool.

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The 10 Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

FIGURE 2 Forrester Wave™: Collaborative Work Management Tools For The Enterprise, Q4 2018

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FIGURE 3 Forrester Wave™: Collaborative Work Management Tools For The Enterprise Scorecard, Q4 2018

	Forrester's weighting	Airtable	Asana	Clarizen	Microsoft	monday.com	Planview	ServiceNow	Smartsheet	Workfront	Wrike
Current offering	50%	2.00	3.15	3.50	3.30	2.25	3.00	3.20	3.55	4.30	3.75
Collaboration	25%	3.00	4.00	3.20	2.80	3.60	2.80	2.80	4.00	5.00	5.00
Work management	50%	1.60	3.00	3.50	3.60	1.80	3.30	3.30	3.40	4.60	3.50
Technology capabilities	25%	1.80	2.60	3.80	3.20	1.80	2.60	3.40	3.40	3.00	3.00
Strategy	50%	2.18	4.31	3.35	3.27	4.35	2.54	3.09	4.15	1.84	3.44
Go-to-market strategy	45%	1.95	4.90	3.00	2.05	5.00	2.30	1.20	3.10	1.20	4.20
Partnership/channels	25%	0.80	2.40	3.60	5.00	2.40	1.60	5.00	5.00	2.40	2.60
Cost	10%	1.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	3.00	5.00	1.00	3.00
Customer satisfaction	20%	5.00	5.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	3.00	5.00	5.00	3.00	3.00
Market presence	0%	3.60	3.55	1.60	2.05	3.60	2.25	2.25	4.00	2.25	2.60
Installed base	50%	3.20	4.10	3.20	3.10	3.20	3.50	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.20
Revenue	50%	4.00	3.00	0.00	1.00	4.00	1.00	0.50	4.00	1.00	2.00

All scores are based on a scale of 0 (weak) to 5 (strong).

Leaders Offer The Most Optimized Collaborative Work Management Experiences

- › **Smartsheet leads the pack with a balance of features and future strategy.** Smartsheet enables organizations to design customized workspaces to fit a broad number of use cases for business and technology professionals. Flexible collaboration capabilities allow people to work together on various types of content, regardless of whether they are internal colleagues or external partners or customers. A robust library of templates, reports, and dashboards further supports transparent communication.

Data management, artificial intelligence, and business-oriented workflow design are Smartsheet's most important differentiators. These capabilities enable teams to design tools that support project and process management that fits their needs with little formal technology support. Integrations and partnerships with vendors such as Google and Microsoft position the vendor well to address collaborative work management at the enterprise level.

The Forrester Wave™: Collaborative Work Management Tools For The Enterprise, Q4 2018

The 10 Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

- › **Asana stands out with its intuitive workspace to drive productive collaboration.** Asana provides an organization with a work graph that allows users to include external partners, such as clients or contractors, and share specific, permissioned information. Workspaces designated as teams or projects allow people to collaborate on either ad hoc conversations or build projects. Conversations can easily be converted to trackable work. Asana enables users the ability to identify conditions to assign work and measure performance. Dependencies management is highly visual, with both activity and team views.

Asana seeks to optimize worker productivity by delivering capabilities that employ machine learning and the graph workspace to enable searches, filters, and algorithms to optimize prioritization of project and personal tasks. Mobile capabilities support seamless experience transition from online to device. Asana's expanding partnerships and marketplace make it a good choice for organizations that want to marry data transparency with empowering their teams to find the best way to collaborate.

- › **Wrike delivers a competent solution but should accelerate its promising strategy.** With a clean, well-designed UI, Wrike's solution targets creative teams and does a solid job with work intake capabilities that allow users to design the capture of new ideas, conversations, and/or work tickets. The product supports flexible project planning and team capacity management. Its digital asset management (DAM) capabilities enable users to collaborate, proof, and deliver digital content on both desktop and mobile apps. Workflow is robust but lacks self-service capabilities to trigger situational processes.

Customer feedback indicates that Wrike works well in Agile management in creative projects but could improve its dependency management with traditional projects. The feedback also indicates that the cost of the product is reasonable and has strong customer support. Strategically, Wrike has demonstrated an innovative road map that, if executed, will provide future differentiation.

Strong Performers Provide Solid Core Features And Options For A Variety Of Needs

- › **Clarizen provides adequate support for teams needing structured work management.** Clarizen sits strongly on the project-oriented side of collaborative work management. Highly usable, the product provides specific support for content-oriented teams that need to collaborate with customers and partners. Clarizen provides robust team and resource management planning suited to project-oriented teams. Slack integration supports ad hoc work, but project support for both Agile and linear planning is where the product works best.

Inbox capabilities that allow users to stay out of email, robust review and approval capabilities, flexible content access, and slide publishing capabilities enable creative teams to work together more efficiently. Clarizen bot offers natural language query (NLQ) capabilities within Slack and helps teams to improve data capture, however, customers would like to see stronger reporting capabilities.

The Forrester Wave™: Collaborative Work Management Tools For The Enterprise, Q4 2018

The 10 Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

- › **monday.com offers consumer-based usability in an evolving solution.** The vendor's approach puts the user at the center of the experience. Organizations can create pre-developed templates or select community templates; the product also makes it very easy for end users to create their own boards. Digital assets can be associated with any board for projects, processes, and workspaces. monday.com excels at work management, delivering highly flexible planning and tracking capabilities that enable users to create and link activities through nesting and tagging. The vendor offers excellent customer support and user community.

As a product, monday.com is still evolving. Proofing, machine learning and AI capabilities, and review and approval all need to mature. Its partner network and marketplace are similarly immature. Customer feedback indicates that the vendor actively partners with its customers to develop its road map, and the vendor's strategic road map of new, planned features demonstrates that continuous usability and product optimization is a priority. monday.com is well suited to cross-functional product teams that have to support different approaches yet require robust collaboration.

- › **Microsoft employs the power of its platform to deliver a competent solution.** Microsoft Teams, Planner, and SharePoint form the foundation of the vendor's collaborative work management solutions. Teams create the core of the solution where users have conversations or kick off work activities. Integration with Planner and Office supports the creation of Kanban boards to organize collaboration task-based cards for team access.

Microsoft's marketplace enables organizations to create custom experiences. Teams' integration expands beyond Office products to include solutions such as PowerBI, Tableau, and Atlassian Jira, to further extend organizational collaboration with purpose. The vendor has embedded some AI capabilities such as bots to boost productivity, but it still needs to evolve Planner's capabilities. Customers are requesting extended integration with other products such as Project to be a complete enterprise offering.

- › **ServiceNow's platform approach supports cross-functional use for project teams.** Because delivery work often starts with an ask or a conversation, ServiceNow employs collaborative features within its triage virtual task boards, Agile sprint boards, and discussion threads that support links to file sharing to share content and track activities. Ad hoc activities are managed in a personal @ Work workspace. For additional collaboration, ServiceNow provides messaging capabilities but also integrates with Slack. The product offers Flow Designer to design workflow, but users can perform passive workflow via identifying event states for notification.

While external users can enter information via a request portal, most collaboration is for internal users. ServiceNow's team planning leans more toward formal resource management. Mobile access is similar to the desktop. ServiceNow's CWM solution is best suited for organizations that want to leverage their existing platform and build on accessible data. Customers indicate that the vendor is good at developing new capabilities, but they would like more consistent account management relationships.

The Forrester Wave™: Collaborative Work Management Tools For The Enterprise, Q4 2018

The 10 Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

- › **Workfront offers the strongest feature set but needs to accelerate the pace of change.** This vendor offers project planning and collaboration capabilities for organizations that require an enterprise approach. Workfront's strength is in its collaboration capabilities, especially for those that require robust content collaboration and review and approval with both internal and external stakeholders. The product also provides a flexible and highly usable mobile experience. Integration is strong, with a flexible integration platform that comes with a large number of prebuilt connectors that allow customers to perform integration without coding.

Workfront is best suited for the enterprise that requires the discipline of project management but also needs to afford team members flexibility of managing ad hoc work. The vendor has made significant improvements in customer success. Its current offering provides the most complete functionality, and its product strategy is strongly focused on building optimization and transparency into organizational operating systems of record. However, it does not innovate as rapidly as the leaders in the CWM market.

- › **Planview offers lightweight work planning but lacks differentiated features.** Planview's Projectplace is a highly usable solution for teams that need flexible working experiences. The product supports timeline, calendar, and card-based views that support both business and development teams. The product offers various process templates out of the box. Card-based views are particularly flexible, showing checklists and visualizations. A simple click shows conversations and history on the card. Team-based management is highly flexible, with pivot views of time and story points. Team members can inform managers about the comfort level of their workload — a differentiating feature. The product supports machine learning via a Projectplace assistant that understands NLQ in order to query status.

Customers report positive customer support and like the product's usability for casual project managers. Projectplace is available as a standalone product, and companies should consider it as a potential entry point. But the optimal use case is for organizations that use Planview's enterprise product and want to extend transparency beyond portfolios and large initiatives. As a standalone, it's a solid product, but lacks the self-service capabilities that leading vendors provide.

The Contender Provides Core Competencies But Needs More Accessibility

- › **Airtable provides a user-friendly, data-driven user experience but needs to mature.** Airtable provides a table-driven product that enables users to build adaptable workspaces that support a variety of views including grids, calendars, Kanban, gallery, and forms. Airtable offers blocks, a variety of apps to customize workspaces. These blocks include maps, charts, page design, and 3D modelers delivered via APIs. Collaboration includes chat and integration with file share and sync. External users can view cards or content via email. Mobile access provides good user experience that mirrors most desktop experiences.

Airtable's flexible UI and data structures allow teams to design and create a workspace that works for them. Work-tracking capabilities are solid, but capacity management and approvals require further development to work in organizations that need to balance project and process work.

The Forrester Wave™: Collaborative Work Management Tools For The Enterprise, Q4 2018

The 10 Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

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Supplemental Material

Online Resource

The online version of Figure 2 is an Excel-based vendor comparison tool that provides detailed product evaluations and customizable rankings. Click the link at the beginning of this report on Forrester.com to download the tool.

Data Sources Used In This Forrester Wave

Forrester used a combination of three data sources to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each solution. We evaluated the vendors participating in this Forrester Wave, in part, using materials that they provided to us by October 4, 2018.

- › **Vendor surveys.** Forrester surveyed vendors on their capabilities as they relate to the evaluation criteria. Once we analyzed the completed vendor surveys, we conducted vendor calls where necessary to gather details of vendor qualifications.

The Forrester Wave™: Collaborative Work Management Tools For The Enterprise, Q4 2018

The 10 Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

- › **Product demos.** We asked vendors to conduct demonstrations of their products' functionality. We used findings from these product demos to validate details of each vendor's product capabilities.
- › **Customer reference calls.** To validate product and vendor qualifications, Forrester also conducted reference calls with up to three of each vendor's current customers.

The Forrester Wave Methodology

We conduct primary research to develop a list of vendors that meet our criteria for evaluation in this market. From that initial pool of vendors, we narrow our final list. We choose these vendors based on: 1) product fit; 2) customer success; and 3) Forrester client demand. We eliminate vendors that have limited customer references and products that don't fit the scope of our evaluation. Vendors marked as incomplete participants met our defined inclusion criteria but declined to participate or contributed only partially to the evaluation.

After examining past research, user need assessments, and vendor and expert interviews, we develop the initial evaluation criteria. To evaluate the vendors and their products against our set of criteria, we gather details of product qualifications through a combination of lab evaluations, questionnaires, demos, and/or discussions with client references. We send evaluations to the vendors for their review, and we adjust the evaluations to provide the most accurate view of vendor offerings and strategies.

We set default weightings to reflect our analysis of the needs of large user companies — and/or other scenarios as outlined in the Forrester Wave evaluation — and then score the vendors based on a clearly defined scale. We intend these default weightings to serve only as a starting point and encourage readers to adapt the weightings to fit their individual needs through the Excel-based tool. The final scores generate the graphical depiction of the market based on current offering, strategy, and market presence. Forrester intends to update vendor evaluations regularly as product capabilities and vendor strategies evolve. For more information on the methodology that every Forrester Wave follows, please visit [The Forrester Wave™ Methodology Guide](#) on our website.

Integrity Policy

We conduct all our research, including Forrester Wave evaluations, in accordance with the [Integrity Policy](#) posted on our website.

Endnotes

¹ A portfolio ecosystem enables intelligent, data-driven business decisions at the appropriate pace for capitalizing on customer or market opportunities. See the Forrester report "[Portfolio Ecosystem: The Central Nervous System For Delivering Business Strategy.](#)"

² Source: Forrester Analytics Global Business Technographics Workforce Benchmark Survey, 2017.

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