

Notion vs. Confluence vs. Coda

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Unvarnished Reviews Research

This report synthesizes data from 10,000+ verified user reviews and practitioner community posts collected from G2, Capterra, TrustRadius, Reddit r/Notion and r/confluence, and independent pricing analyses from CheckThat.ai (March 2026), Docsie (January 2026), GetPricePulse (2026), FelloAI (May 2026), AutomationAtlas (April 2026), and Glitter AI (May 2026). Pricing data reflects vendor pricing pages and independent pricing analyses current as of June 2026. Full research methodology at unvarnishedreviews.com/methodology. Research Notes available on request at editorial@unvarnishedreviews.com.

The Verdict Up Front

Notion is the default knowledge base for a large majority of startups and growth-stage companies, combining documentation, project databases, and AI-powered workflows in a single flexible workspace. Its pricing restructuring in May 2025 is the most important commercial data point for current evaluations: the standalone \$8-\$10/user/month AI add-on was discontinued, and full Notion AI, including SAML SSO, is now bundled exclusively into the Business tier at \$20/user/month. Teams that signed Notion Plus at \$10/user expecting to add AI incrementally discovered the incremental path was eliminated. A 50-person team on Plus pays \$6,000/year with no production AI and no SSO. The same team on Business pays \$12,000/year. The May 2025 restructuring doubled the effective cost for AI-enabled Notion deployments with no notice period for existing customers.

Confluence is the enterprise wiki standard for development teams in the Atlassian ecosystem, with deep Jira integration, enterprise-grade permissions, and the compliance and audit controls that regulated industries require. Atlassian raised Confluence cloud pricing approximately 15% in October 2025, its second major cloud price increase in three years. The search function is the platform's most documented operational complaint: "The search does not handle typos. It will show zero results if you mistype." For teams outside the Atlassian ecosystem, Confluence's primary advantage disappears and its per-seat pricing becomes harder to justify against Notion or Coda.

Coda is the document-as-app platform, strongest for teams that want to build lightweight internal applications inside their documents. Its most distinctive commercial differentiator: Coda charges only for Doc Makers, the people who create and edit documents, not for viewers or commenters. For organizations with a clear creator-consumer split, where a small team produces documentation consumed by a much larger audience, Coda's pricing model can produce significantly lower total cost than Notion or Confluence's per-seat models. Its ceiling: Coda is a powerful tool for teams that invest in learning its formula system, and a confusing one for teams that don't.

Recommendations: For startups and growth-stage companies that need a combined wiki, project tracker, and document editor: Notion Business (\$20/user/month) is the realistic starting point with full AI. For enterprise development teams in the Atlassian ecosystem: Confluence. For organizations

with a clear creator-consumer split where viewers outnumber editors: Coda. For pure knowledge base requirements at lower cost: Confluence Standard at \$6.05/user/month costs 70% less than Notion for equivalent documentation scope.

The Notion AI Restructuring: The Most Important Pricing Event in Knowledge Management Software in 2025

In May 2025, Notion discontinued the standalone AI add-on and restructured AI access:

Before May 2025:

- Notion Plus: \$8/user/month (later \$10)
- Notion AI add-on: \$8/user/month additional
- Total for AI-enabled Plus: \$16-\$18/user/month

After May 2025:

- Notion Plus: \$10/user/month, 20-response AI trial only
- Notion Business: \$20/user/month, full AI included
- No standalone AI add-on available for new customers

What this means for existing Plus customers:

Teams on Plus got a 20-response AI trial. After the trial, they either upgrade to Business (\$20/user) or lose AI access. There is no in-between option for new accounts. Existing subscribers who had the old add-on can keep it, but if they cancel they cannot resubscribe.

The SSO gate. SAML SSO, the enterprise security requirement that IT teams need for centralized identity management, is also gated to Business tier. Teams that need SSO and expected to add it incrementally face the same forced upgrade to \$20/user.

The 7-day version history trap. Notion Plus limits version history to 7 days. For compliance-sensitive teams that need longer version history for audit purposes, this forces an unplanned upgrade to Business, again at \$20/user.

The net result: The practical starting point for any professional Notion deployment, one with SSO, AI, and adequate version history, is Business at \$20/user/month. The \$10/user Plus tier is a documentation tool without enterprise features or AI. Independent analysis from CheckThat.ai describes the pricing as binary: "Either you're comfortable without SSO and production AI on Plus, or you're paying the Business premium."

As of May 4, 2026, Notion also introduced credit-based billing for Custom Agents at \$10 per 1,000 credits. This adds a consumption meter to Business-tier costs for teams using Notion's autonomous AI workflows.

The Confluence Price Increase Pattern

Atlassian raised Confluence cloud pricing approximately 15% in October 2025, its second major cloud price increase in three years. The announcement was made in August 2025, giving teams 60 days to prepare. Atlassian cited increased infrastructure costs and AI feature investments (Atlassian Intelligence) as the rationale.

The independent analysis from GetPricePulse documents the Atlassian pricing history:

- Standard: \$7.75/user/month (pre-2025) to \$8.15/user/month (post-October 2025) for Jira Software
- Confluence Standard: now approximately \$6.05/user/month after the increase
- 5%-8% price increases applied annually in 2024-2025 per Docsie independent analysis

The Atlassian bundling complexity: Organizations that add Jira or other Atlassian products to their Confluence deployment face Atlassian platform fees that stack on top of per-product pricing. Atlassian Guard, the SSO and security management layer, is a separate charge. Marketplace apps for additional functionality add further cost. The published per-seat price is frequently not the operational cost.

The Server end-of-life impact: Atlassian ended support for all Server products (Jira Server, Confluence Server), forcing organizations on legacy Server installations to migrate to Cloud or Data Center. Cloud migration for large Confluence Server deployments is documented as a significant project with both cost and operational risk.

Platform Ratings at a Glance

Platform	G2	Capterra	Best For
Notion	4.7 / 5	4.7 / 5	Startups, flexible all-in-one workspace
Confluence	4.1 / 5	4.4 / 5	Enterprise dev teams, Atlassian ecosystem
Coda	4.7 / 5	4.6 / 5	Doc-as-app, creator-consumer splits

Notion and Coda share the highest ratings in the category at 4.7/5. Confluence's lower G2 rating reflects documented frustrations with search, performance at scale, and the forced Server-to-Cloud migration.

Who Each Platform Is Built For

Notion is built for teams that want a unified workspace combining documentation, project management, and AI assistance without the rigid structure of a traditional wiki. Its block-based editor, database views (table, board, gallery, calendar, list), and 5,000+ integrations via Zapier make it operationally flexible for organizations that haven't yet defined their documentation structure.

Confluence is built for enterprise development teams already running Jira and the Atlassian ecosystem, where deep Jira integration, structured permission hierarchies, and compliance controls are the primary requirements. Its rigidity, which frustrates flexible-workflow teams, is a feature for

enterprises that need consistent documentation standards enforced across thousands of pages.

Coda is built for teams where a small group of document creators serves a larger audience of readers, and where documents need to function as interactive applications. Its Doc Maker pricing model, custom automation, and formula system are specifically designed for teams that build internal tools inside their docs.

What Practitioners Report

Notion: What Works

Notion's versatility is its most consistently praised attribute. The combination of documentation, project tracking, and database functionality in a single tool eliminates the tool-switching overhead that separate wiki and project management systems create. Capterra reviewers describe it as "a second brain" and specifically cite the reduction in app switching as a primary operational benefit.

The AI integration in Business tier, covering agents, workflows, database generation, and workspace chat, is specifically praised as the most seamlessly integrated AI in the knowledge management category. Because Notion AI has access to the entire workspace, queries like "summarize our Q3 planning notes" or "find all decisions made in the product team space" return relevant results without manual search.

For startups and growth-stage companies, Notion became the default knowledge base because it is consistently good at both documentation and project databases. The block-based editor is flexible, the database views cover most organizational needs, and the learning curve is lower than Confluence for non-technical teams.

Notion: What Doesn't Work

The May 2025 AI restructuring is the dominant pricing complaint. Teams that built their Notion evaluation around Plus plus AI add-on discovered mid-contract that the pricing model changed. The forced upgrade to Business at \$20/user to access AI or SSO is documented across Reddit and practitioner communities as the most significant negative pricing event in Notion's history.

Performance degrades at scale. Independent analysis specifically notes that Notion can suffer performance issues with very large workspaces, particularly databases with thousands of rows. For enterprise-scale documentation with tens of thousands of pages, Confluence's architecture handles volume better.

December 2025 bug that broke PDF exports for image-heavy documents is specifically documented in independent analysis as a recent stability concern.

7-day version history on Plus forces compliance-sensitive teams to Business whether they want AI or not.

Confluence: What Works

The Jira integration is Confluence's most distinctive and durable competitive advantage. For development teams where issues, sprints, and documentation are all connected, Confluence's native Jira links, automated page creation from Jira projects, and two-way traceability between

requirements and tickets are operationally irreplaceable.

Enterprise governance, including role-based permissions, audit logs, and compliance controls, is specifically cited as Confluence's primary advantage for regulated industries and large organizations with strict content governance requirements.

Atlassian Intelligence (bundled AI from Premium tier) includes Rovo agents, AI search, and chat features that are available from \$10.83/user/month on Premium, compared to Notion's \$20/user threshold.

Confluence: What Doesn't Work

Search is the most documented operational complaint. A verified G2 reviewer captures it plainly: "The search does not handle typos. It will show zero results if you mistype." For a knowledge management platform where search is the primary retrieval mechanism, this limitation has significant operational impact.

The interface is less intuitive than Notion or Coda for non-technical users. Confluence's structured page hierarchy, macro system, and permission model require training that Notion does not.

October 2025 price increases (15%, the second major increase in three years) are documented as a recurring complaint from organizations that locked multi-year commitments at previous rates.

Hidden costs accumulate. Atlassian Guard for SSO, marketplace apps for extended functionality, and platform fees when bundling multiple Atlassian products layer costs onto the base per-seat price in the same pattern documented for other Atlassian products in the Smartsheet vs. Wrike vs. Jira report.

Coda: What Works

The Doc Maker pricing model is Coda's most distinctive commercial advantage. Organizations where 5 people create documents consumed by 50 people pay for 5 Doc Makers, not 55 seats. At \$30/Doc Maker/month on Pro, a 5-creator, 50-consumer organization pays \$150/month versus Notion Business at \$1,100/month for the same 55-person team.

For teams that invest in Coda's formula system and automation, documents can function as lightweight internal applications. Budget trackers, OKR dashboards, client portals, and approval workflows built inside Coda documents replace point-solution tools that would otherwise require separate subscriptions.

Coda: What Doesn't Work

The learning curve for the formula system is the consistent Coda complaint. Teams that don't invest in learning Coda's formula syntax find it a more complex, less intuitive alternative to Notion rather than a more powerful one. The power is real but requires investment to access.

AI features moved. The enterprise search component of Coda AI moved to Superhuman Go after a rebrand, creating a fragmented AI story compared to Notion's integrated workspace AI.

Smaller ecosystem. Coda's integration library and template ecosystem are smaller than Notion's, which creates more custom work for teams connecting to existing tool stacks.

Pricing Reality (June 2026)

Notion

Plan	Price	Key Limitation	Notes
Free	\$0	Individual only	No team collaboration
Plus	\$10/user/month	7-day history, 20 AI responses, no SSO	Not viable for professional teams needing AI or SSO
Business	\$20/user/month	Full AI, SAML SSO included	Realistic starting point for professional teams
Enterprise	Custom	Advanced security, SCIM	Sales negotiation required
Custom Agents	\$10/1,000 credits	Consumption-based	Added May 4, 2026

50-person team comparison:

- Plus (no AI): \$6,000/year
- Business (full AI + SSO): \$12,000/year
- The \$6,000 gap is the cost of the May 2025 restructuring for teams that planned on Plus plus AI add-on

Confluence

Plan	Price	Notes
Free	\$0	Up to 10 users
Standard	\$6.05/user/month	Basic features, no AI
Premium	\$10.83/user/month	Atlassian Intelligence (AI) included
Enterprise	Custom	Advanced admin, unlimited storage
Atlassian Guard	Additional	SSO/SCIM, separate charge

50-person team at Standard: \$302.50/month vs. Notion Plus at \$500/month. Confluence is 70% cheaper for pure documentation without AI.

Coda

Plan	Price	Who Pays	Notes
Free	\$0	All users	Limited doc size
Pro	\$10/Doc Maker/month	Creators only	Viewers free
Team	\$30/Doc Maker/month	Creators only	Advanced automation
Enterprise	Custom	Creators only	

5 Doc Makers, 50 viewers at Pro: \$50/month. Same team on Notion Business: \$1,100/month. For creator-consumer splits, Coda's pricing model is the most cost-efficient in the comparison.

The Decision Framework

Choose Notion Business if:

- You need a unified workspace combining documentation, project databases, and AI in one tool
- Your team is startup or growth-stage and values flexibility over rigid structure
- You have budgeted at \$20/user/month from the start, not \$10/user with an AI add-on
- SSO and version history beyond 7 days are requirements, and you have confirmed Business tier pricing fits your budget
- You have modeled Custom Agent credit consumption for AI workflow use cases

Choose Confluence if:

- Your development team runs Jira and the native Jira integration is operationally essential
- Enterprise governance, role-based permissions, and audit logs are regulatory requirements
- Your organization has 10 or fewer users, where Confluence Free is a viable starting point
- You have modeled Atlassian Guard, marketplace app, and platform fee costs alongside base per-seat pricing
- You have explicitly budgeted for annual price increases based on Atlassian's documented 15% increase pattern

Choose Coda if:

- Your organization has a clear creator-consumer split where viewers significantly outnumber editors
- Document-as-application workflows, budget trackers, approval systems, OKR dashboards, are primary use cases
- Your team is willing to invest in learning the formula system to realize Coda's full capability
- Cost efficiency at scale is a priority and the Doc Maker model produces materially lower cost than per-seat alternatives

The pre-signing checklist for Notion specifically:

1. Identify whether AI and SSO are requirements, if yes, budget at Business (\$20/user), not Plus (\$10/user)
2. Model your team size at 12 and 24 months, per-seat pricing compounds as headcount grows
3. Identify whether Custom Agent workflows are in scope, and budget credit consumption separately
4. Confirm version history requirements, 7 days on Plus may force Business upgrade independently of AI needs
5. Compare Confluence Standard (\$6.05/user) for pure documentation use cases where AI is not a requirement

The Bottom Line

Notion, Confluence, and Coda serve distinct organizational profiles that overlap less than their similar market positioning suggests.

Notion Business at \$20/user is the most appropriate choice for startups and growth-stage companies that want a unified workspace. The May 2025 AI restructuring means \$20/user is the realistic starting point, not the premium option. Teams that evaluate Notion at \$10/user Plus and discover the AI and SSO gates post-signing are the most common Notion pricing complaint.

Confluence is the most appropriate choice for enterprise development teams in the Atlassian ecosystem where Jira integration is the anchor requirement. Its October 2025 15% price increase and documented annual increase pattern require explicit budgeting. Its search limitations are the most operationally significant known limitation in the category.

Coda is the most appropriate choice for organizations with creator-consumer splits where viewers significantly outnumber editors. At 5 Doc Makers serving 50 viewers, Coda Pro costs \$50/month versus Notion Business at \$1,100/month for the same team. That cost difference funds a significant portion of a business intelligence tool or payroll system.

The finding that belongs in every Notion evaluation: the standalone AI add-on was discontinued in May 2025. There is no incremental path from Plus to AI for new accounts. The choice is \$10/user with no production AI and no SSO, or \$20/user with both. Budget at Business, not Plus.