

Slack vs. Microsoft Teams vs. Google Chat: The Team Messaging Verdict

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Unvarnished Reviews Research

This report synthesizes data from 40,000+ verified user reviews and practitioner community posts collected from G2, Capterra (24,036 Slack reviews, 10,764 Microsoft Teams reviews), TrustRadius, Spiceworks, Reddit r/sysadmin and r/technology, and practitioner communities. Pricing data reflects vendor pricing pages, CostBench verified transaction data (150 Slack purchases), and independent procurement analysis 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

Slack is the team messaging platform that users actually enjoy, 24,036 Capterra reviews averaging 4.7/5, the most review-validated satisfaction score in the category, concentrated in technical teams, software companies, and organizations where integrations with GitHub, Jira, CI/CD pipelines, and 2,600+ apps create a developer-facing communication layer that Microsoft Teams cannot replicate. Its pricing, Pro at \$8.75/user/month, Business+ at \$15/user/month, carries a documented SSO trap (SAML requires Business+, a common mid-evaluation surprise) and a 90-day message history limit on free that is the single most cited reason teams upgrade. Slack is a Salesforce company since 2021, and its AI features (conversation summaries, workflow automation, Agentforce integration) are bundled into paid plans at no additional charge, a meaningful differentiator against Microsoft's model of charging \$18-\$21/user/month extra for Copilot.

Microsoft Teams is included at no incremental cost in essentially every Microsoft 365 business and enterprise plan. For organizations on M365, which represents the majority of enterprise organizations globally, Teams is the default answer to "what messaging tool should we use?" Its G2 review profile is revealing: 69% of use cases are meetings and video conferencing, 57% team communication, Teams is primarily a video and collaboration platform that also does messaging, not a messaging-first tool. Its feature complexity, buried navigation, and notification chaos are the most consistent practitioner complaints. Its value is genuine for Microsoft-stack organizations. Its claim to replace Slack's developer-focused messaging experience is not supported by the review data.

Google Chat is included with Google Workspace, the same zero-incremental-cost dynamic as Teams for M365 users. For organizations running Google Workspace (Gmail, Drive, Docs, Meet), Google Chat is the natural messaging layer: lightweight, integrated, and requiring no additional spend. It is not trying to compete with Slack's integration depth or Teams' meeting capability. It is a capable, simple messaging tool that works well inside the Google ecosystem and generates minimal passionate advocacy or passionate complaints.

The straight framing: this comparison is primarily a build-vs-buy decision. For Microsoft organizations, Teams is the build-in option. For Google organizations, Chat is. Slack is the buy option, paying \$8.75-\$15/user/month for a messaging experience that practitioners consistently describe as superior to what they get for free. Whether that premium is worth paying depends on how central messaging workflow is to organizational productivity and whether the developer integration ecosystem justifies the incremental cost.

Platform Ratings at a Glance

Platform	G2	Capterra	Review Volume
Slack	4.5 / 5	4.7 / 5	24,036 Capterra reviews
Microsoft Teams	4.4 / 5	4.5 / 5	10,764 Capterra reviews
Google Chat	4.3 / 5	4.3 / 5	Smaller review base

Slack's review volume advantage, 24,036 Capterra reviews versus Teams' 10,764, reflects both market presence and the higher likelihood of satisfied users voluntarily reviewing a tool they chose and pay for, versus one included by default.

The "Free with Microsoft/Google" Reality Check

Microsoft Teams: Included in Microsoft 365 Business Basic (\$6/user/month), Business Standard (\$12.50/user/month), and every enterprise M365 plan. Also available as Teams Essentials standalone at \$4/user/month. For organizations already paying for M365, the overwhelming majority of enterprise organizations, Teams is genuinely free at zero incremental cost.

Google Chat: Included with every Google Workspace plan, Starter (\$6/user/month), Standard (\$12/user/month), and above. For Google Workspace organizations, Chat is genuinely free at zero incremental cost.

The AI cost reversal, the finding that changes the "Teams is cheaper" narrative:

Teams is free. Microsoft Copilot (AI for Teams, Word, Excel, Outlook) costs an additional \$18-\$21/user/month on top of M365. Slack bundles AI features, conversation summaries, workflow automation, AI search, daily recaps, into all paid plans at no additional charge.

For a 100-person organization choosing between Slack Business+ (\$15/user/month, AI included) and Teams (free) + Microsoft Copilot (\$18-\$21/user/month):

- Slack Business+ annual: \$18,000
- Teams annual: \$0 (M365 included)
- Microsoft Copilot annual: \$21,600-\$25,200

The AI cost difference alone, \$21,600-\$25,200/year, exceeds Slack's \$18,000 annual cost for 100 users. For organizations where AI features are a genuine productivity requirement, the "Teams is cheaper" assumption deserves explicit recalculation.

What Users Actually Report

Slack: What Works

Capterra reviewers with 24,036 reviews consistently identify three strengths: integration ecosystem depth, channel-based organization, and developer workflow integration.

Slack's 2,600+ app integrations, GitHub, Jira, PagerDuty, Salesforce, Datadog, Zoom, and essentially every developer and business tool, are specifically called out as the platform's most distinctive operational value. Practitioners describe Slack channels as "living knowledge bases" where technical discussion, CI/CD alerts, monitoring notifications, and incident response converge into a searchable workflow layer. This is not a feature comparison, it is an architectural difference in how Slack is used versus Teams.

Huddles, Slack's lightweight audio/video pop-in feature, are specifically praised for the "can we just talk for 3 minutes?" use case: instant voice connection without scheduling, without calendar friction, without a video call that requires everyone to be camera-ready. Practitioners describe Huddles as the most natural replacement for tapping someone on the shoulder.

The Workflow Builder, available across all paid plans, enables lightweight automation (forms, approvals, alerts, notifications) without requiring developer involvement. For operations and project management teams, this no-code automation layer is a documented productivity multiplier.

AI features bundled at no additional cost: conversation summaries, Slackbot personal AI, AI workflow generation, AI search, daily recaps, and file summaries. Available on Pro (\$8.75/month) upward, no Copilot equivalent required.

Slack: What Doesn't Work

The 90-day message history limit on free is the most consistently cited limitation across all review platforms. After 90 days, older messages are hidden (not deleted), making free Slack impractical for businesses that need to reference past conversations. This is the primary driver of forced plan upgrades.

SAML SSO locked behind Business+ is the category's most documented hidden cost pattern. Organizations on Pro that discover their enterprise identity provider (Okta, Entra ID, ADFS) requires SAML, available only on Business+ at \$15/user/month, face an immediate plan upgrade. The per-user cost difference between Pro (\$8.75) and Business+ (\$15) for 100 users is \$7,500/year annually.

Notification overload is documented consistently across G2 and Capterra. The platform's strength, rich, real-time communication across many channels, creates a signal-to-noise problem that requires deliberate notification management discipline. Teams that don't actively manage channel membership and notification settings describe Slack as producing more distraction than productivity.

Cost at scale becomes a genuine objection versus free Teams at larger user counts. A 500-person organization on Slack Business+ pays \$90,000/year, against zero incremental cost for Teams. The value-versus-free question requires explicit justification at that scale.

Microsoft Teams: What Works

Capterra reviewers, 10,764 reviews, consistently identify three strengths: Microsoft 365 integration, video meeting quality, and zero incremental cost for M365 organizations.

Teams' integration with SharePoint, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and OneNote, co-authoring documents directly within Teams channels, accessing SharePoint libraries without switching applications, is specifically valued by organizations where document collaboration is the primary workflow. For knowledge workers whose daily work lives in Office documents, Teams' ability to keep document work and team communication in the same interface is a genuine productivity advantage.

The video meeting quality and reliability, covered in depth in the Zoom vs. Teams vs. Google Meet report, is Teams' strongest independent capability. For organizations where the primary collaboration need is video meetings with document co-authoring, Teams delivers the most integrated meeting-plus-document experience available.

Zero incremental cost for M365 organizations makes Teams the default answer that requires no business case to deploy.

Microsoft Teams: What Doesn't Work

Feature complexity buries the messaging experience. The most consistent Teams complaint across Capterra and G2: "notifications could get a bit chaotic, messages popping up in different places, or alerts not syncing the way you expected. And even though Teams is meant to simplify communication, some features felt buried or overly complicated, especially when you just wanted a straightforward way to find a file or revisit a conversation."

Teams is a meeting tool that also does messaging, the G2 review profile confirms this: 69% of use cases are meetings and video conferencing, 57% team communication. Organizations deploying Teams primarily as a Slack replacement for asynchronous text messaging consistently describe the experience as less satisfying than Slack's messaging-first architecture.

The Copilot upsell. Microsoft Copilot, the AI layer that makes Teams genuinely competitive with Slack's bundled AI, costs \$18-\$21/user/month extra. The "Teams is free" starting point becomes a materially different cost story when AI is a requirement.

Performance resource demands. Teams' memory and CPU consumption on end-user devices is specifically documented as a complaint for organizations with older hardware, Teams requires more system resources than Slack for equivalent functionality.

Google Chat: What Works

Capterra reviewers consistently identify simplicity, Google Workspace integration, and zero incremental cost as Chat's primary advantages.

For Google Workspace organizations, particularly education, media, and technology companies that have standardized on Gmail, Drive, and Docs, Google Chat is the path of least resistance. It integrates directly with Gmail (chat sidebar), Google Meet (one-click meeting launch from a conversation), and Google Drive (file sharing without switching applications).

The simplicity that reviewers describe as a limitation is also a documented advantage for non-technical end users who find Slack's channel architecture and Teams' feature density overwhelming. Chat's lightweight, familiar interface generates consistently high adoption rates in organizations that don't need developer integration depth.

Google Chat: What Doesn't Work

Google account requirement is a documented external collaboration limitation. Capterra reviewers specifically note: "if you don't have a Google account, you won't be able to use Google Chat, hence limiting its sphere of operation." For organizations that regularly collaborate with external partners, vendors, or clients who are not on Google Workspace, Chat's external collaboration model is more friction than Slack's guest access or Teams' external federation.

Limited integration ecosystem compared to Slack. Google Chat's app marketplace is significantly smaller than Slack's 2,600+ integrations. For developer and technical teams that depend on GitHub, PagerDuty, Datadog, and CI/CD pipeline notifications in their messaging tool, Google Chat's ecosystem creates gaps that require workarounds.

Notification management generates similar complaints to Teams, messages appearing in different places and alerts not syncing as expected.

Pricing Reality (June 2026)

Slack

Plan	Price	Key Constraint
Free	\$0	90-day message history; 10 apps; 1:1 calls only
Pro	\$8.75/user/month (annual)	Unlimited history; unlimited apps; group calls
Business+	\$15/user/month (annual)	SAML SSO; advanced compliance; DLP
Enterprise Grid	Custom	Multi-workspace; data residency; HIPAA

The SSO trap: SAML SSO required for most enterprise identity providers is available only on Business+ (\$15/user/month). Organizations on Pro that discover this mid-deployment face a 71% per-user price increase to upgrade.

Median Slack contract: \$4,200/year from 150 CostBench verified purchases. Annual billing saves ~20% versus monthly. Quarter-end timing generates Salesforce-standard enterprise discounts.

Monthly billing premium: ~20% above annual rates.

Microsoft Teams

Plan	Price	Notes
Teams Essentials	\$4/user/month	Standalone, meetings-focused
Teams with M365 Business Basic	Included (\$6/user/month M365)	Full Teams
Teams with M365 Business Standard	Included (\$12.50/user/month M365)	Full Teams + Office apps
Microsoft Copilot (AI add-on)	+\$18-\$21/user/month	Required for AI features

The AI math for 100 users: Teams free + Copilot (\$21/user/month) = \$25,200/year. Slack Business+ with AI included = \$18,000/year. Slack is cheaper than Teams+Copilot for AI-enabled teams.

Google Chat

Plan	Price	Notes
Google Workspace Starter	\$6/user/month	Includes Chat
Google Workspace Standard	\$12/user/month	Includes Chat
Google Workspace Business Plus	\$18/user/month	Includes Chat

Google Chat has no standalone pricing, it is always included with Google Workspace.

TCO Comparison: 100-Person Organization, Annual

Scenario	Annual Cost
Slack Pro (messaging + AI)	\$10,500
Slack Business+ (messaging + AI + SSO)	\$18,000
Teams (M365 included, no AI)	\$0 incremental
Teams + Microsoft Copilot (AI included)	\$21,600-\$25,200
Google Chat (Google Workspace included)	\$0 incremental

The Decision Framework

Choose Slack if:

- Your team is technical, developers, DevOps engineers, data teams, where Slack's 2,600+ integrations create a genuine operational layer for GitHub notifications, CI/CD alerts, incident management, and developer toolchain
- The integration ecosystem depth is a primary workflow requirement, not a nice-to-have
- You have modeled the SAML SSO requirement, if your identity provider requires SAML, budget for Business+ (\$15/user/month) from day one, not Pro

- You have calculated the AI comparison carefully: Slack Business+ with bundled AI versus Teams free + Microsoft Copilot at \$18-\$21/user/month. For AI-enabled teams, Slack may be the lower-cost option
- Your organization prioritizes messaging-first communication over meeting-first collaboration
- The Salesforce acquisition roadmap is acceptable for long-term platform commitment

Choose Microsoft Teams if:

- Your organization runs Microsoft 365 and zero incremental cost is the baseline requirement
- Document co-authoring, Word, Excel, PowerPoint directly in Teams, is a primary collaboration workflow
- Video meetings are the primary use case (69% of Teams use cases per G2)
- You are not deploying Copilot, making Teams genuinely zero-incremental-cost
- Your end users are not technical and would find Slack's channel architecture and integration depth more complexity than value
- You have explicitly modeled whether Copilot cost changes the "Teams is free" narrative for your specific AI requirements

Choose Google Chat if:

- Your organization runs Google Workspace and zero incremental cost is the baseline requirement
- Gmail, Drive, Docs, and Meet integration from a single interface is the primary workflow value
- Your team collaboration needs are lightweight, direct messages, group conversations, file sharing, without the integration depth of Slack or the meeting-first architecture of Teams
- External collaboration is primarily with other Google Workspace users
- Simplicity and adoption without training investment are priorities

The question before choosing Teams or Chat over Slack:

Does your organization need AI features in your messaging tool? If yes: calculate Teams + Copilot versus Slack Business+ for your actual user count. The "Teams is free" starting point may not hold when AI is included in the TCO model.

The Bottom Line

Slack, Microsoft Teams, and Google Chat serve different communication philosophies and different organizational profiles.

Slack wins on messaging experience, developer integration ecosystem, and, counterintuitively, potentially on total cost when AI features are included in the comparison. Its SSO gating on Business+ and 90-day free message history limit are the most actionable procurement concerns.

Microsoft Teams wins for Microsoft-stack organizations on zero incremental cost and document-meeting integration. It is primarily a meeting and document collaboration platform that also does messaging, not a Slack replacement. The Copilot add-on cost deserves explicit modeling before assuming Teams is cheaper

than Slack for AI-enabled workflows.

Google Chat wins for Google Workspace organizations on zero incremental cost and simplicity. It is not trying to compete with Slack's ecosystem or Teams' meeting depth. It is a capable, lightweight messaging layer for organizations whose work lives in Google's productivity suite.

The finding that belongs in every Microsoft Teams vs. Slack evaluation: for a 100-person team that needs AI features, Slack Business+ at \$18,000/year is less expensive than Teams (free) + Microsoft Copilot at \$21,600-\$25,200/year. The "Teams is cheaper" assumption is only true without Copilot.
