

WHITE PAPER

Why Slack Isn't the Right Tool for Frontline Teams

And What to Use Instead.



Slack

vs.



Speakap



It's hard to believe how Slack has taken the workplace by storm. In its short lifespan, it's gone from being solely an internal communications tool for companies with remote teams to an extremely popular communication tool that is used by a variety of business types.

Now, we're not here to debate whether Slack is good or bad for the average employee in an office environment.

But in this white paper, we're going to focus on why Slack isn't the right tool for frontline teams.



Understanding the different needs of desk-based vs frontline workers

Office-based teams often have dedicated workspaces with access to computers and desks throughout the day. Their communication needs typically involve:

- **Real-time messaging:** Tools like instant messaging and chat platforms facilitate quick and efficient communication with colleagues.
- **Video conferencing:** Virtual meetings allow for face-to-face interaction regardless of location.
- **Collaboration tools:** Shared documents and project management platforms streamline teamwork and information sharing.

Frontline teams, on the other hand, typically spend most of their time away from desks, often in dynamic and fast-paced environments. Their communication needs differ significantly:

- **Mobile-friendly experience:** Tools need to be accessible and usable on smartphones and tablets, allowing for on-the-go communication.
- **Personalized experience:** Information needs to be relevant and tailored to specific roles or locations.
- **Short-form content:** Bite-sized information like news updates, safety reminders, or task instructions are more readily consumed in short bursts.
- **Operational work:** Tools should enable functionalities like scheduling, task management, and reporting directly within the communication platform.
- **Location-based communication:** Features like geofencing or location-specific announcements can be crucial for geographically dispersed teams.



4 Reasons Why Slack Isn't the Right Tool for Frontline Teams

#1

Slack is not built for frontline teams

Using Slack for frontline teams is like trying to fit a square peg in a round hole. It just doesn't work.

Slack was built for desk workers, not frontline teams. Teams stationed at computers have very different needs from hospitality, retail, gym, salon and mobile services teams. They need far more than simple communication; they need to be organized, collaborate and share in real-time.

Slack wasn't designed to support teams that may be offline at different times, nor does it offer the ability to schedule work or shift coverage. Instead, it's a tool that works best when everyone is online at the same time (like when you're developing software, or working in any M-F, 9-5). It's also missing a bulletin section so you can share information with all your team members in one place (like when you're working on a project together). Pins are great, but hard to find after the fact.



#2

Slack does not give you the ability to assign and manage tasks

Slack does not give you the ability to assign and manage tasks. Slack is a communication platform, not a task management tool. The only way for teams to keep track of tasks is to create their own workflows and naming conventions, which inevitably leads to more disorganization and confusion.

Without the ability to assign and manage tasks, Slack asks frontline managers to do the impossible—coordinate activities without visibility into what their employees are doing, or who is actually on site that day. It's no wonder that managers who use Slack often feel they have little way to hold the team accountable or have control over their team's performance.



#3

Thread form communication is challenging for staff that don't work at the same time

Threaded communication (like a chat thread) is definitely helpful for reducing email clutter and keeping track of the conversation. But, for frontline teams that work across at different times or different days entirely, thread-form communication becomes incredibly challenging. Messages get missed, and too much falls through the cracks.

When a message goes out on Monday, the group that comes in on Thursday or even Tuesday afternoon aren't lying to you when they say "nobody told me" – they didn't get the message! Different kinds of communication requires different tools – for example, actionable items may be better placed as a Ticket, and searchable documents in a Resource Section. There's a time and place for "chatter" but it can't be the only thing your team has to talk about.



#4

Slack does not let you see a full and accurate view of what your staff are doing at any given time in one place

In a frontline team, you're asking people to do a lot of different things at the same time: clearly communicate with customers, find important information quickly, set goals and manage themselves towards them and yet people are unreliable. They forget. They get distracted by other things that matter. It's understandable and it happens! Slack is not built to support the needs of frontline teams in this way.

It's your job as their manager or supervisor to help them get back on track, but how can you do this if you don't know what they are doing? If they have forgotten something or need help finding information? Or even if they just need some encouragement because hearing "good job!" is important for any worker?

Frontline teams need specific features for different needs. They need tools like bulletin boards to alert the entire business of important news, or facilities and ticketing for management of operational issues. What about team directories or a resource library? Slack doesn't include these tools because Slack is not designed for you as the manager, or the members of your frontline team.

The bottom line: **you need to find the right tool to keep your frontline teams organized; it should be easy to use, affordable, and keep everyone in sync.**

You can point out the problem of communications with frontline teams all day long, but you need to find the right tool that actually works for them. How do we define the “right tool?” We mean a tool that is easy to use, affordable, and keeps everyone in sync.

Unfortunately, Slack doesn’t fit the bill. Slack’s channel-based messaging relies on users being able to keep track of multiple channels and threads at once, which usually isn’t possible when you’re working on a shop floor or running a gym. It also requires all the teams to be plugged in simultaneously to be a reliable communication solution for many frontline teams.

Finally, Slack pricing is inflexible and expensive; it starts at \$6.67 per user per month which can be over budget for teams looking for a more robust communications and workplace operations platform. Yes, there is a free plan, but there are some serious restrictions for teams that are growing. Then you realize that you only get “chat” and will still need to buy a system that provides you with scheduling, 4-wall management, learning and more.



Consequences of choosing a comms tool, like Slack, for the frontline workers

While tools like Slack offer excellent communication solutions for desk-based workers, they fall short when it comes to catering to the needs of frontline teams. Implementing these office-centric tools for frontline workers can lead to several detrimental outcomes:

- 1 Low user adoption and training challenges:** These platforms are often designed with features and functionalities optimized for office workflows. Such complexity can overwhelm frontline workers, hindering their ability to grasp the platform and use it effectively.
- 2 Low perceived value:** Frontline workers might not see the value proposition of a complex platform that doesn't directly address their daily communication needs, leading to a lack of motivation to learn and use it.
- 3 Ineffective communication:** The features and functionalities of these platforms are not well-suited for the fast-paced, dynamic communication needs of frontline workers. This can lead to delays in information sharing, misunderstandings, and confusion, ultimately impacting their individual and team output.
- 4 Disrupted workflows:** Switching between different platforms and navigating complex interfaces can disrupt the flow of work for frontline workers who often have to juggle multiple tasks and responsibilities simultaneously.



- 5 **Lack of task management features:** These platforms might not offer features specifically designed for frontline work, such as scheduling, task management, or shift coverage, forcing them to rely on additional tools, further increasing complexity and hindering efficiency.
- 6 **Feeling disconnected:** Frontline workers who struggle to use or find the platform irrelevant to their daily needs might feel isolated from their peers and management, leading to a sense of disconnection and disengagement.
- 7 **Information silos:** Complex platforms can create information silos, where crucial information gets trapped within specific channels or teams, hindering smooth information flow and collaboration across the organization.
- 8 **Lack of visibility:** Managers and supervisors might lack real-time visibility into team communication and progress, hindering their ability to provide timely support and address issues effectively.
- 9 **Missed opportunities:** Ineffective communication can lead to missed deadlines, delayed responses to customer inquiries, and ultimately, missed opportunities to optimize operations and improve the customer experience.



What to use instead of Slack?

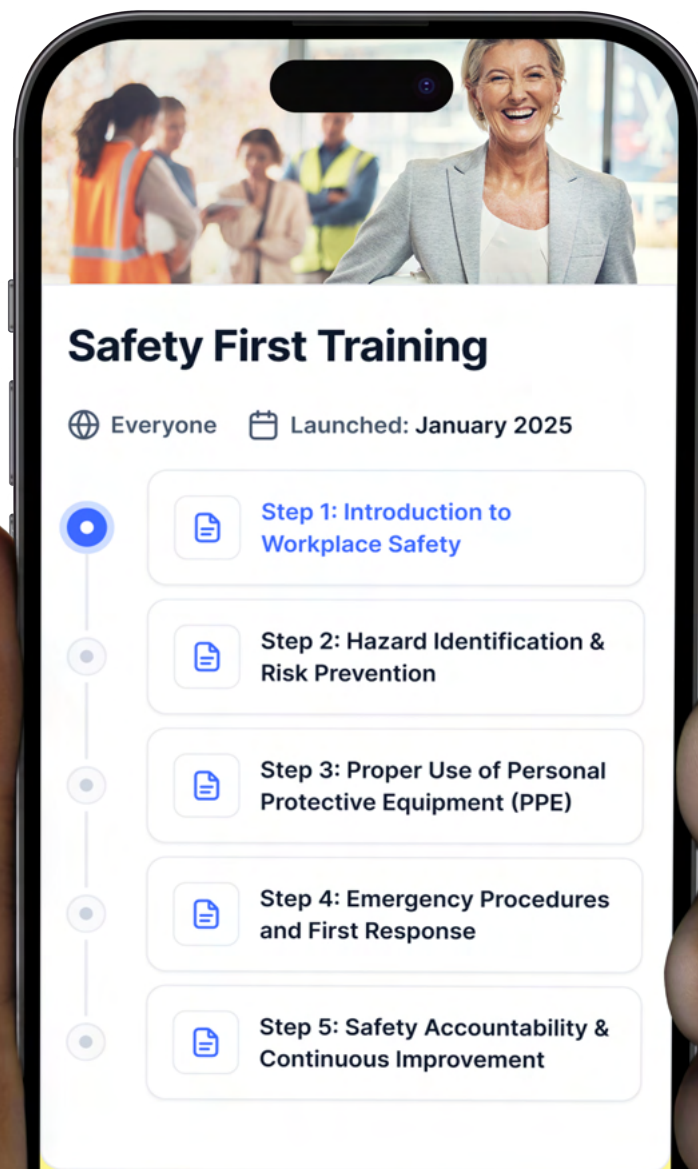
Ultimately, Slack is not designed for the daily workflows of frontline teams. It isn't cost-effective, as it doesn't provide you with enough functionality to handle all of your frontline management needs from within one application. At the end of the day, you're left with a cluttered inbox that's even more difficult to navigate than email.

Speakap, on the other hand, is built specifically to address the needs of frontline teams. With Speakap, you can improve communication, streamline operations, and boost employee engagement. Here's how Speakap can help:

- **Task management:** Unlike Slack, Speakap allows you to assign and manage tasks. This gives frontline managers the ability to coordinate activities and track employee progress.
- **Real-time communication:** Speakap goes beyond threaded communication, offering options like polls, videos, and images to keep everyone informed and engaged, even if they work different shifts.
- **Improved visibility:** Speakap provides managers with a full and accurate view of what their staff is doing. This allows for better support and coaching.
- **All-in-one platform:** Speakap consolidates communication, scheduling, and task management into one easy-to-use platform. This eliminates the need for multiple tools and cluttered inboxes.
- **Cost efficiency:** a single tool can reduce subscription costs, IT infrastructure complexity, and maintenance overhead.



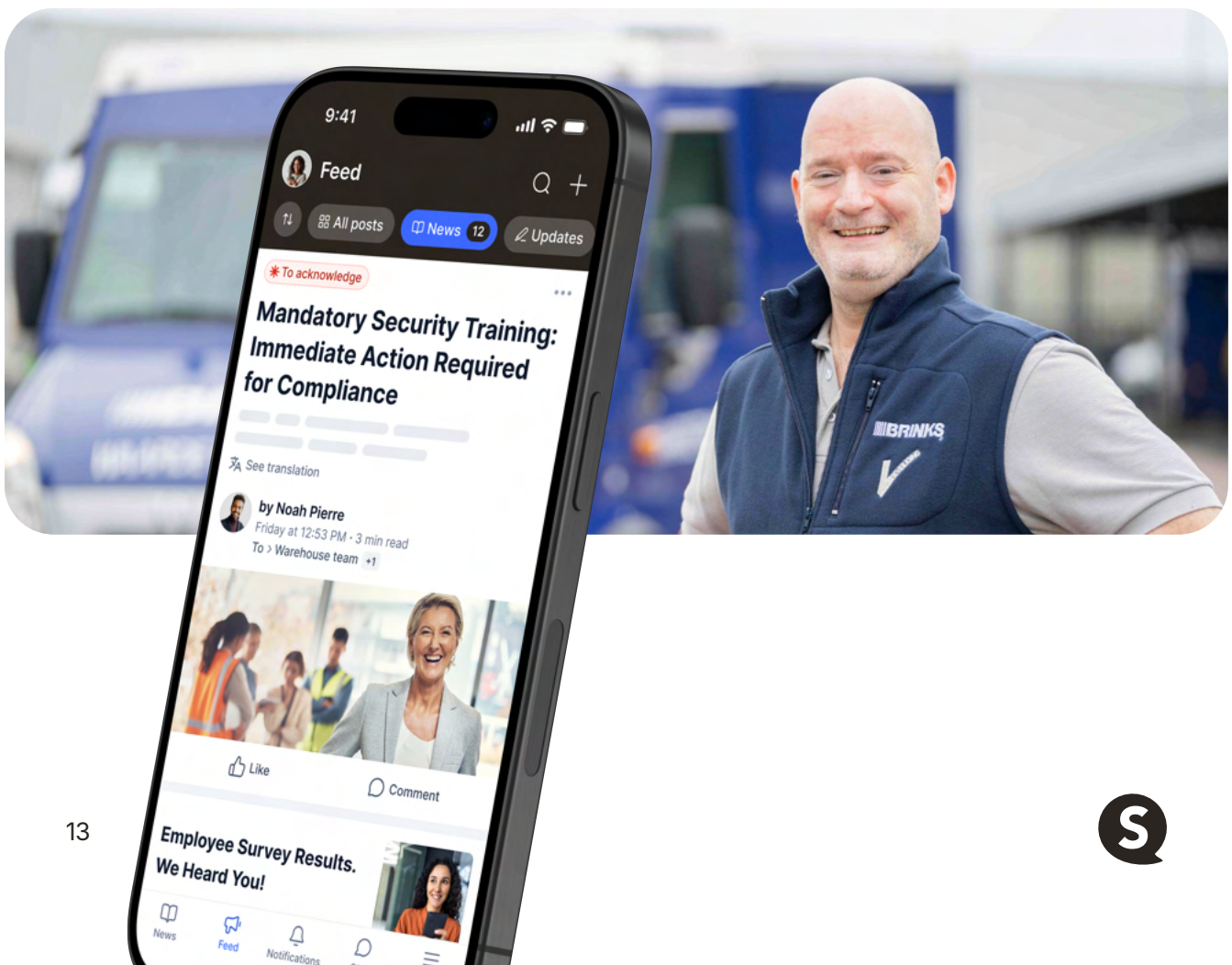
- **Unified workforce analytics:** understand the different behaviors and needs of employees, and enable communicators and HR to tailor their strategies and comms, while simultaneously gathering insights about each part of the workforce. Desk-based and frontline.
- **Streamlined employee journeys:** whether it be onboarding, training, learning and development - it all can take place within one tool. Making it more simple for you, and your employees regardless of their working location.



Real life success stories from retail & logistics

Nexeye, a leading European optical retailer with over 4,000 employees, uses an employee experience platform to bridge the gap between its desk-based and frontline staff across five countries. The platform fosters a more connected and agile workforce by enabling employees to share news, stories, and feedback.

Brink's, a global security company, implemented an employee experience platform to improve communication between its desk staff and security officers in the field. The platform facilitates quick, secure, and two-way communication, leading to increased information sharing accuracy, a more engaged workforce, and improved operational efficiency.





Learn more about Speakap

If you're interested in learning more about how Speakap can help your frontline team, book a demo with us here.

www.speakap.com

