CHAPTER 1

Introduction to Microsoft Teams

If you are reading this book, it is highly likely that you have heard some of the excitement surrounding Microsoft Teams. Understanding the value of the application and knowing about its components and how they interact with each other is a good way to start learning about the product. In this chapter, we explain the different methods of accessing Microsoft Teams and the different features that combine to make it work. If you're ready to begin your journey of learning Microsoft Teams, without further ado, let's begin!

In today's working world, we all struggle with being on a short schedule, trying to connect with remote workers, and getting our job tasks completed on time. Often there are many people required to work on the same information or documents to accomplish a task. People's work is spread across multiple locations, making it time-consuming and confusing to multitask. These business problems can be resolved with Microsoft Teams.

Chat, meetings, video and voice calls, document collaboration, file storage and sharing, retrieving information, notes, third-party tool integration, and more have been combined into a hub for teamwork into the Microsoft Teams platform. Microsoft Teams can be thought of as one "super application" that integrates many different apps into one program so that you don't have to open and connect to many apps separately.

Our favorite description of the product is this: "If someone put Skype for Business/Skype, Outlook's meetings and mailbox, Office 365 Groups, a persistent chat client, Word/Excel/PowerPoint, OneDrive for Business, a SharePoint site collection, and Azure Active Directory (AAD), then mixed them together and cooked them in the oven, Microsoft Teams would pop out." You can then "season to taste" by adding countless different other apps from Office 365 or outside companies to make a recipe of your own.

Examples of other Microsoft apps you can add to a team are Microsoft Planner for project management, Visual Studio Team Services for developer teams, a specific SharePoint site for storage or collaboration, Power BI for data visualization, PowerApps for semicomplex form creation, Stream for video, or Forms for simple data collection. Some examples of non-Microsoft apps that you could add include GitHub for developer's code, Jira for project management, Adobe Sign for electronic signature collection, and Hootsuite for social media monitoring.

Although Chapter 5 goes into more about real-world use cases for Microsoft Teams, Figures 1-1 and 1-2 show how to set up and use a team. First, let's start with what a new, blank team looks like.
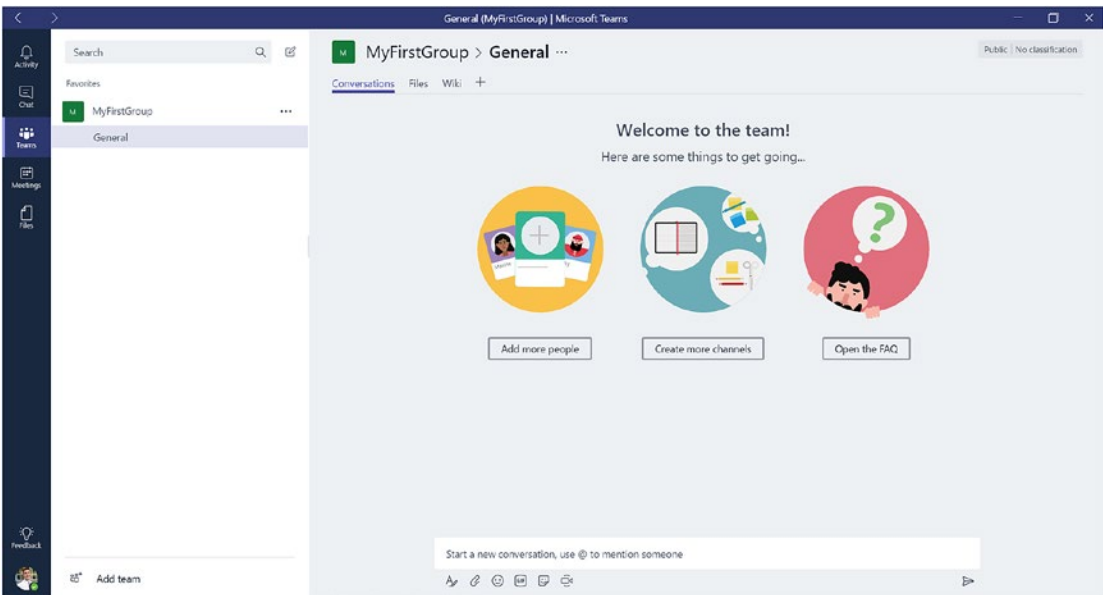
Figure 1-1. *A brand-new empty team*

As you can see in Figure 1-1, there is not too much happening in a new team. Think of it as an empty "virtual office" waiting to be filled with other co-workers or associates, discussions, files, projects, and video calls. Microsoft Teams is a part of Microsoft's *modern workplace,* a vision that allows distributed people to work together in a digital, flexible workspace.

As an example of what a team can look like in production, Figure 1-2 is a quick screen shot of a team used for a new product launch. The team has added channels, tabs, applications such as Adobe Sign and Power BI, files, meetings, chats, and many of the other things that a team uses while working on a project. But don't be overwhelmed! There is a lot to learn as you make your journey through this book. Showing you what is possible helps you get excited in learning it! Figure 1-2 shows what an active team with lots of activity looks like.
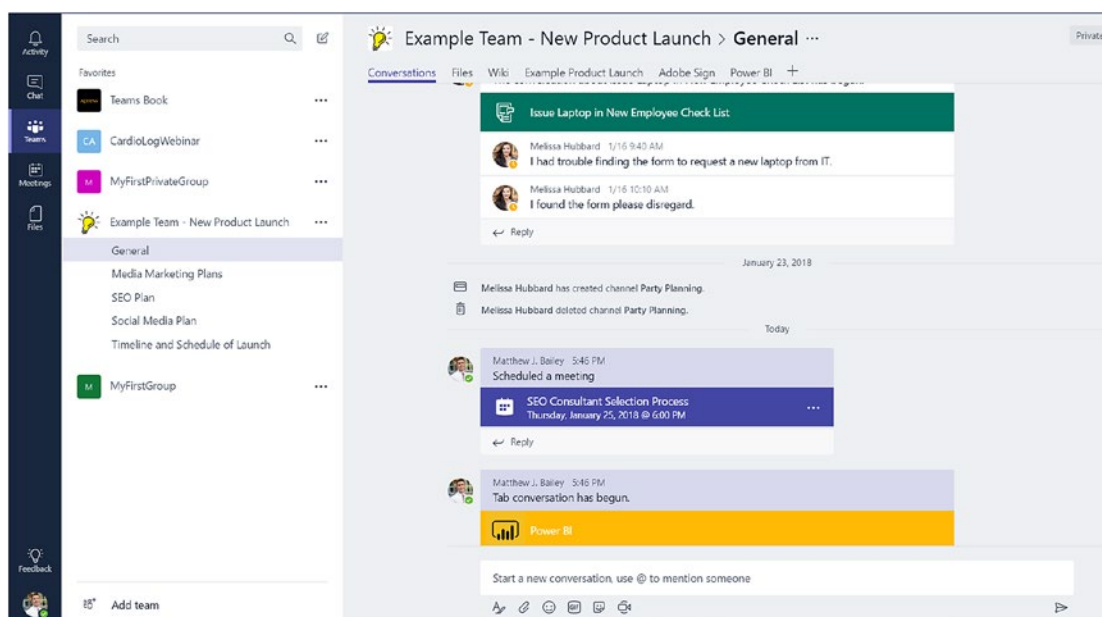
*Figure 1-2. An example team for a new product launch with lots of activity and interaction*

Microsoft Teams is very fluid and can be used for many different purposes. A team working on a new product launch, a group of people working to develop and launch a small software product, or even authors collaborating to write a book are just a few of examples of why people might use Microsoft Teams.

Having a goal of how you like to work, what you want to work on, and who you want to work with should be a part of every team's setup process. We review these topics in more depth in upcoming chapters.

How to Use and Access Teams

As you see in Figure 1-3, Teams is accessible via three different methods. Each format that you access a team in places slightly different parameters around what you can do with it. As an example, you currently have the option to access a team through the following ways:

- Your Internet browser by accessing your Office 365 tenant

- The Teams client application installed on a Windows-based computer

- The app installed on either an iOS-based (Apple) or an Android-based smartphone
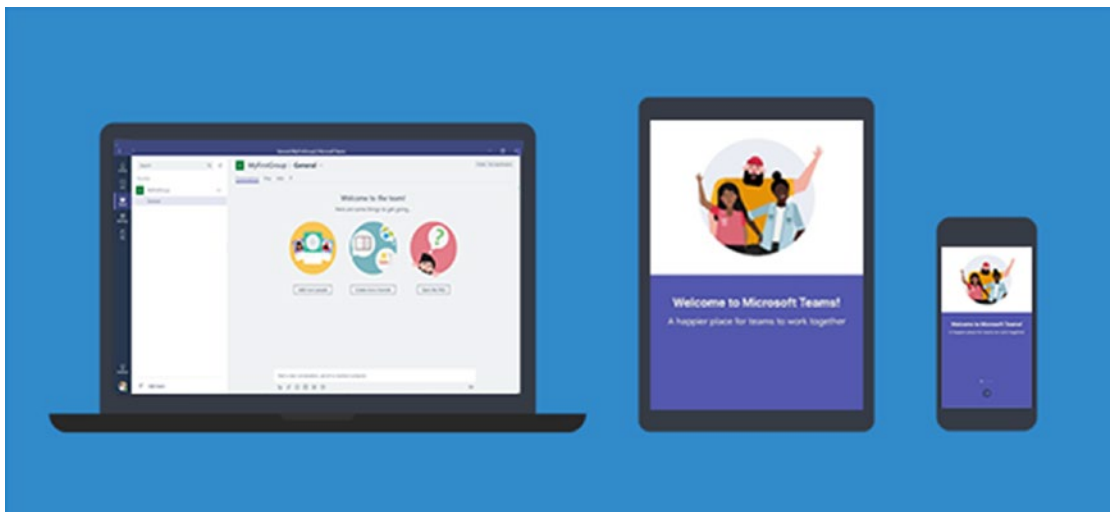
Figure 1-3. *Teams is available as an installed client for Windows or Mac computers, as an app for iPhones, Android phones, or Windows phones, and via some web browsers.*

What you will probably notice first is that based on which type of client you are accessing, you have different features available to you. In the case of the Internet site or Windows client vs. the smartphone app, this is pretty much an industry standard. Most phone apps are not quite able to provide as much functionality as the other ways an application might be created. For the most part, enough features exist on all platforms to use the product successfully. Just be aware that the product has variances, and because it is new to the market, will continue to have many features being added, changed, or updated on its different clients.

Background: The Journey from Skype

Teams was built by the Skype for Business product group at Microsoft. Skype for Business will eventually become Microsoft Teams, however, it is important to note that this is a longer-term vision and not something that will happen immediately. At the moment, there is still a Skype for Business 2019 version planned to rollout that will be supported for many years. At the moment, Microsoft Teams is *only* available in the cloud; it is not available to be installed on local servers. Although Teams works with an on-premises installation of Microsoft Exchange (one of the pieces of Teams), it is important to note that currently some of the features, such as eDiscovery for Teams, will not work in that scenario.

As a quick point of reference, to utilize all the functionality that Teams has available and the new features continually being added, you need to be fully in the cloud on the Office 365 suite and all the related applications (SharePoint, Exchange, Skype for Business, and OneDrive for Business).

It is also important to note that although Microsoft Teams is built in part from Skype for Business, not all the features from Skype for Business are available in Teams at the moment. According to the Microsoft roadmap, however, they are in progress and should be delivered in the near future (or have already been delivered, depending upon when you are reading this book).

What Is Included When Creating a Team

Microsoft Teams is a combination of different applications rolled into one. However, there are some key ingredients that allow Teams to function. Each time you create a new team, the following items are created in the background on Microsoft's servers outside of Teams:

- Office 365 Groups (Modern Groups)—unless you choose an existing group when you add a team

- SharePoint site collection (with a document library)

- Exchange Online group mailbox

When you are using Microsoft Teams, it might not be immediately apparent that you are using these other pieces of software because they are "masked" behind the Microsoft Teams interface. One example of this is the Files tab in your team. In Figure 1-4, you can see that your documents all appear to be in Teams. However, they are really stored in SharePoint behind the scenes. We have elaborated this in Figure 1-4, which is similar to

the meetings that are stored in Outlook. As a regular user, this isn't extremely important to know; however, if you are the administrator of a Microsoft Teams environment, these are key notes you want to be aware of because some of the maintenance and repairs that you perform might be done directly in that software, and not via Microsoft Teams.
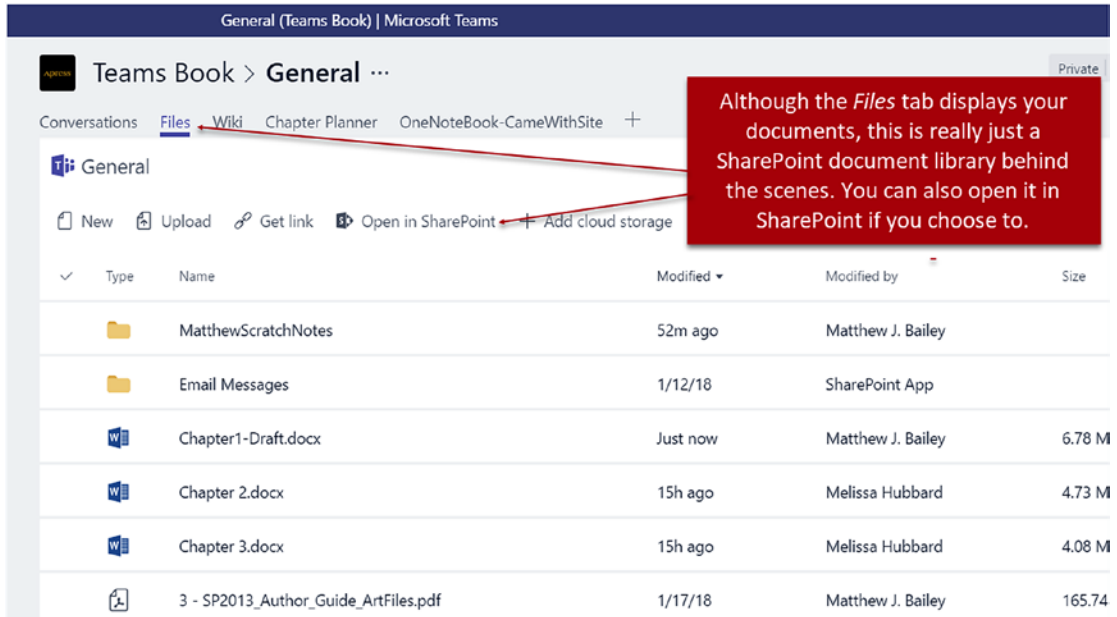
Figure 1-4. *An example of how the Microsoft Teams interface surfaces data from other applications so that it "appears" as though it is all in one place*
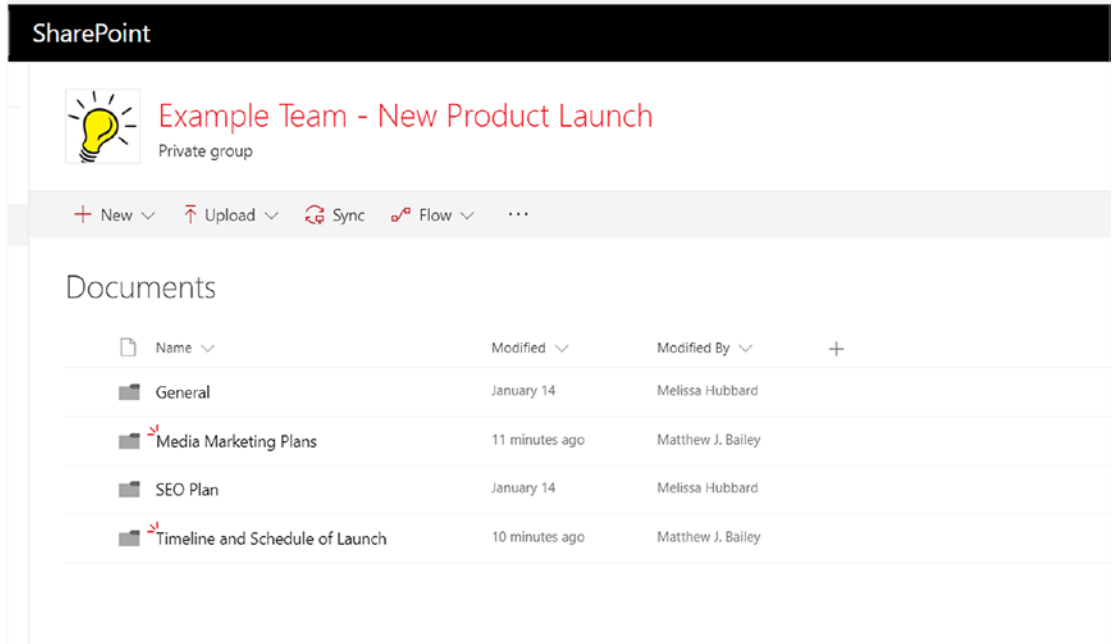
SharePoint and Teams

When creating a team, one of the components it creates is a Modern SharePoint Online site with a document library. SharePoint Online is must be active in your tenant to work with Microsoft Teams, because SharePoint On-Premises is not supported. The Shared Documents library is created inside this team for you; however, there are ways to use an existing document library from another SharePoint site if you currently have all of your documents somewhere else.

> **Note**   Although each channel in Microsoft Teams has a corresponding folder in SharePoint Online for the files that you work with, the folder is not created until there is actually a file uploaded.

Some of the files that users upload are stored "behind the scenes" in this SharePoint document library. Figure 1-5 shows a SharePoint document library holding these documents. We go into where each file is stored later in this book.

Figure 1-5. *A document library created in SharePoint Online from a team*

Using the SharePoint Site Collection Outside of Teams

Whether or not we should encourage people to use the SharePoint site collection for other reasons (workflows, lists, etc.) is a good question that depends on your own reasoning. At the moment, the only portion of the SharePoint site collection that automatically appears in Microsoft Teams is the Shared Documents folder. You can use other parts of SharePoint, but you have to add them as a link from a tab or by adding cloud storage.

One potential upside of using the SharePoint site collection outside of the Teams interface is that SharePoint has much greater granular security, and this is one way to overcome the current limitation of no channel-based security in Teams. The downside of this, however, is that you are opening both Microsoft Teams and SharePoint to manage different artifacts.

Caution   Although you can put other things into a SharePoint site collection to add to the channel tab for easy access, changing the channels' folder structure does **not** update the channels in Teams. It is important that you only create them from the Teams interface.

Groups and Teams

Office 365 Groups (or Modern Groups) places users into meaningful groupings that allow you to set notifications or security across many applications. Technically, an Office 365 group is an object in Azure Active Directory. It can have one or many members and be used across most Office 365 applications. For example, you may have a marketing department with salespeople working with them. You might create a group called Marketing, add all of the employees from that area to this group, and then add the group to the application(s) you are using. This is much easier to manage than repeatedly adding each user individually to each application for security and notifications.

The reason that Office 365 Groups matter in conjunction with Microsoft Teams is because an Office 365 group is the parent of a team. Whenever you create a new team, it creates an Office 365 group (unless you select to create a team from an existing Office 365 group). You also choose whether the team is private or public (the group is of this same type). But in either case, behind the scenes, there is a group at a higher level that controls your team's security and other features. The relationship between Office 365 Groups and Teams becomes far more important later in the book as we dive into Teams administration. For now, just understand that an Office 365 group is one of the many pieces working to make your team function properly.

Exchange/Outlook and Teams

Like other Office 365 applications that Microsoft Teams interacts with, Exchange only enables all of its benefits when it is fully online in the Office 365 suite. Although you can use Exchange On-Premises or Exchange dedicated (legacy) with Microsoft Teams, some functionality works and some does not. As a note, users hosted on Exchange Online or Exchange Dedicated vNext have access to all the features in Microsoft Teams.

The key takeaway is that Microsoft Teams uses Exchange to create a group mailbox that stores the team's information, such as meetings (messages are stored in a SharePoint folder). To see which functionalities are enabled or disabled (this depends on your version of Exchange), please visit the Microsoft website at `https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoftteams/exchange-teams-interact`.

Note   For the full Microsoft Teams experience, every user should be enabled for Exchange Online, SharePoint Online, and Office 365 Groups creation.

OneDrive for Business and Teams

OneDrive for Business is used a bit within Microsoft Teams. Mostly, it is where files that are shared from a team chat are stored (not a channel conversation). Permissions to the files are restricted automatically so that only the intended user can access them.

Summary

This chapter explained Microsoft Teams and the history of the platform, and reviewed its core functionality. In the next chapter, we take a look at the components and how we get work done within a team.