

# Governance throughout the Microsoft Teams lifecycle

This eBook is a comprehensive guide on the Microsoft Teams lifecycle from **team creation through expiration**.

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## About the Author



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In his free time, Chris enjoys flying drones, going for walks with his two dogs, reading, and spending time with family.

# Introduction

Microsoft Teams has seen tremendous growth since 2020. In April 2020, it **started with 75 million daily active users and grew to 145 million in April 2021**. There is little doubt that the pandemic played a role in this growth. As more people started working from home, the number of Teams users dramatically increased.

As Microsoft Teams has grown, it has become evident that it is also possible for it to grow out of control. If this happens, some common issues include:

- You could end up with teams and channels for which **no one has any idea why they exist**.
- You have former employees who have moved on to a competitor and still have access to your files.
- No one ever takes the time to re-evaluate whether a team is inactive. Maybe the project finished a year ago, and **no one got around to deleting it**.
- Teams are being created faster than you can create a governance policy, causing **Teams to sprawl out of control**.
- People are creating duplicate teams rather than using the existing ones, **leading to content duplication and a lot of confusion**.

These are all problems addressed with Microsoft Teams lifecycle management.

# The lifecycle of a team

Just like projects, teams have a lifecycle. This lifecycle includes team creation, channel set up, monitoring workspaces, and eventually abandonment and then deletion of those teams. However, it goes much deeper than that. While you should do all of these steps, there are ways of improving teams by looking at the entire lifecycle of Microsoft Teams from creation to deletion.

Fundamentally, this lifecycle comes in these stages:

## Beginning: Creating the team

In the beginning, your goal is to create a team. Before you sit down and start typing, you probably **want to start with clearly defining the purpose** of this new team. This decision may include considering the business processes, organizational structure, and more. Understanding the group's goal will also help you decide on the correct people to invite.

There are a variety of ways that you can create teams. They might start from scratch, where you add each of the people manually to the team. Or, you may make one from an existing team. If you create teams often, it would be **great to have a standardized process** that would be an example of proper creation and speed things up without having to manually set everything. This is a great reason to use a current team as a template for creation.

As part of the process, you need to set up appropriate permissions and create channels within a team. It would **help if you considered the goal for each channel** as you set them up. They might include discussing specific topics or common areas of interest, or a channel for each particular project.

The channel owner can upload relevant documents and create a welcome message inviting the members to check out the new channel. Please note, check if there's already an existing channel so there's no duplication, **as we often see is the case**.

## Middle: The active team

In the middle of the life cycle, the membership will evolve. During this phase, **users will get more comfortable with Microsoft Teams and start experimenting**. They may favor specific channels or use mentions. It's **essential during this time to monitor the usage of your teams**.

You want to allow your teams to grow as they continue to collaborate. As time progresses, different groups will even **start to develop personalities**. For example, some may be more likely to move to private chats, while others may enjoy using extra features like GIFs and stickers.

Even though your users are busy in Microsoft Teams, there are certain things you should be doing. You should:

- Monitor inactive users' access to file shares outside the organization.
- **Periodically validate who are the members and owners of a team**; as people change positions inside the company their access needs to be updated.
- **Remove external sharing with guest users once the collaboration is over.**

## End: All good things...

As part of the life cycle, teams will come to an end. The team will have to run its course. Maybe the project is over, and there is no longer a need. At this point, **it's essential to let the team members know that it's time to close teams** to keep people from accessing outdated information.

At some point, you may want to archive or delete a team. When a team is archived, **it stops all activity for the team**, private channels within the team, and its associated site collections. An admin is still able to add or remove members. They can also update roles and view team activity.

When a team is deleted, all team activity, associated site collections, chats, and files are also deleted. You can **reactivate an archived team**, but you **cannot directly restore a deleted team**. Instead of deleting a team, **consider archiving it instead** until you are certain you no longer need it.

You can delete the teams with a soft delete which **allows you to undelete them within 30 days**. When you delete these teams, it doesn't affect the content within them. A channel also has the **soft delete feature built-in**, which will allow you to undelete within 21 days.

You can **set up retention and expiration policies** to reduce your company's exposure from inactive teams or employees.

# Some common Teams lifecycle management issues

If left without lifecycle management, several common challenges can occur with Microsoft Teams:

## Stolen data

Your valuable data is subject to exfiltration. While Microsoft Teams does a great job of sharing knowledge and collaborating, **Teams' users must follow the proper security mindset.**

One way to do this is to **request regular access reviews.** These reviews allow you to audit sensitive content. Having this process automated will **reduce the burden on your IT team** and delegate this job to employees with the best operational knowledge.

You want complete control over user access with full transparency into who has access to which resources. With [SysKit Point](#), you're able to get a **wide variety of security reports** for Office 365. You're able to **track admin and user activity** across your tenant. You can control external file sharing. You'll be able to find Office 365 guest users that are sharing external content. You can detect all permissions and memberships that each user has within Office 365.

## Unidentified external sharing

It is more secure and efficient for people to collaborate on documents using Teams rather than sending various versions over emails. When your users want to share documents with people that are outside of your organization, it **makes perfect sense to enable external sharing within Microsoft Teams.**

With SysKit Point, you're able to check the details of sharing links. You're able to find all shared content from one centralized report. You can remove and stop sharing any of these links using one click.

Make sure you **turn off access when it is no longer needed or appropriate.** Especially when dealing with external sharing, it's **essential to audit any suspicious activity.** With SysKit Point, you're able to **detect actions like file sharing, folder sharing, or shared and anonymous links** within your company. Using this information, you'll be able to monitor your external filesharing.

It is recommended that you remove all external user access when your collaboration is finished. Leaving those links active **exposes you to security risks**, as you do not know if those guest users no longer work for the company you are collaborating with, or even if their account gets compromised.

## Hidden guest access

One of the most powerful features of collaborating within Microsoft Teams is being able to invite guest users to collaborate. It allows your users to work with external people on specific documents and projects. However, this type of **guest access can be challenging to track**.

With SysKit Point, **you're able to monitor access**. Using an external sharing report, you can track Microsoft 365 sites, groups, and Teams' guest access. You can list any external users within the tenant and then find out what they have access to. This information will also **give you visibility into the content that may be vulnerable to data exfiltration**.

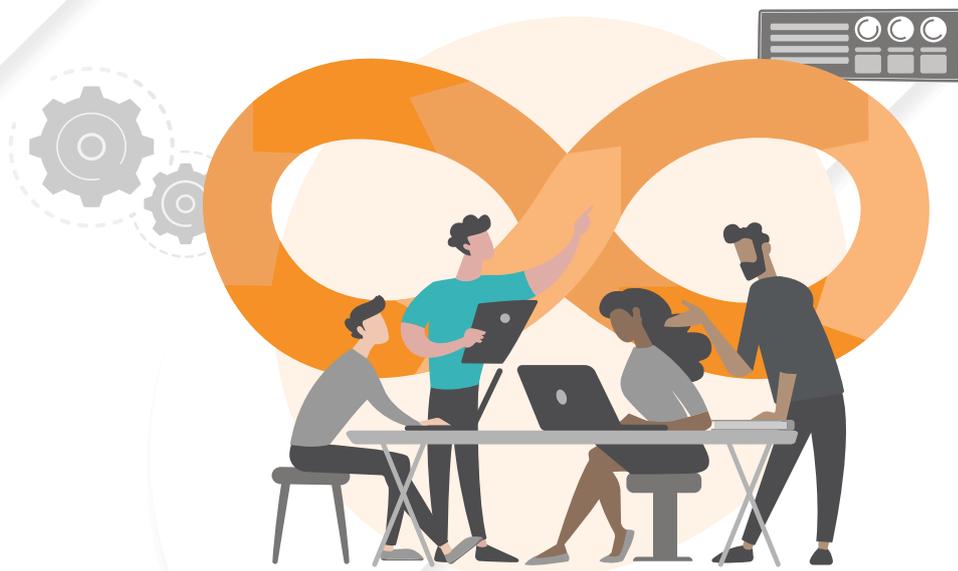
## Users don't follow a standard naming convention

While it's easy to create teams and channels and give them names within Microsoft Teams, it's essential to consider naming conventions. Admins can **enforce these naming conventions to ensure the entire organization uses a standard naming convention**.

With SysKit Point, using the naming convention can help **counteract the common problem of Teams sprawl**. It allows everyone to **understand the purpose of that team**. This name can also be associated with that SharePoint site collection, so it's easy to understand which site is related to the team.

It's important to note that **Microsoft Teams will not alert the admin when a team name exists**. This lack of alert makes it **possible to create two teams that have the same name** inadvertently. However, using a naming policy can help you avoid creating duplicate names.

According to best practices for Microsoft Teams governance, using a prefix is an excellent way to help users understand the team's purpose. The naming policy should typically be short and should appear at the beginning of the name so that it won't be a problem with character limits. Having an effective naming policy will also help users know where to store relevant information.



With SysKit Point, using the naming convention can help counteract the common problem of Teams sprawl. It allows everyone to understand the purpose of that team.

### Inactive members remain in a team

It's common for employees to come and go throughout the project. These transitions are why it's essential to **get full transparency into all users who have access to specific teams**.

Using SysKit Point, **you can unclutter your tenant**. SysKit Point allows you to run reports, see if you have any inactive users, and then remove them accordingly. It's crucial to **periodically set up audits to check and see if inactive employees still have access to the team**.

### Teams and channels are left open long after they fall out of use

With the defaults in Microsoft Teams, **any user in an organization is allowed to create teams**. Without supervision around team creation, **it's possible to end up with hundreds of different teams**. Then, when the teams are no longer in use, they fall out of service but still exist within your tenant.

There are a few ways to stop sprawl within Teams; you can:

- **Educate your users** about the differences between teams and channels, as well as channel versus chat conversations.
- **Limit the creation of teams**. However, this can add a cost of self-service and additional load that the IT team must handle. If you decide to allow anyone to create teams and groups, it becomes more important than ever to have governance in place.

With SysKit Point, you can enforce compliance throughout your Teams' lifecycle. It allows you to apply governance policies throughout the lifecycle. You can establish different governance rules based upon the team's purpose. You also can create customized approaches to reduce the amount of manual effort. Having sensitivity labels can allow you to **restrict access and sharing**. Using ongoing access reviews and guest user recertification can help you stay compliant.

# Planning the lifecycle management process

When you plan a lifecycle management process, you need to consider the beginning, middle, and end of the lifecycle.

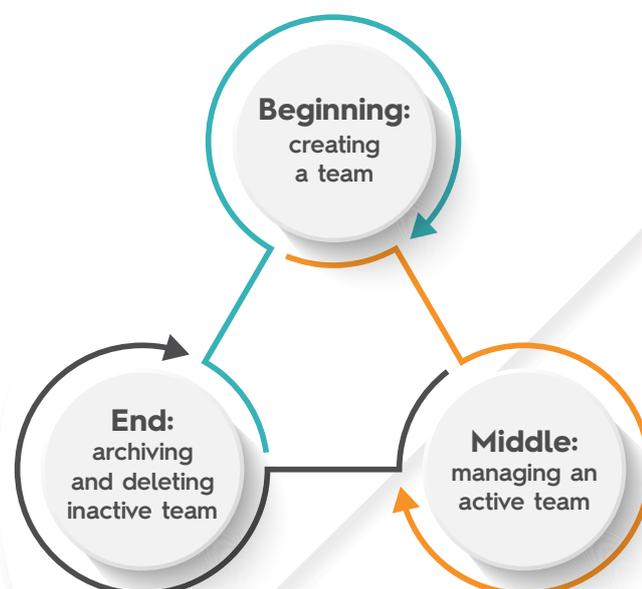
In the beginning, it's essential to make sure you have proper naming conventions in place for teams. You should also **make sure that people pick names that others will understand**.

Once the team exists, you need to have a **policy in place for permissions**. You can have each team start with a general channel and then add additional channels. However, if you're going to have a limited conversation with select people, you want to make the channel private. You can set policies for **who is allowed to create private channels**. You can take this action at an organization or team level. Within the Settings tab, team owners can turn this functionality on or off.

As your Microsoft Teams grows and evolves, you **want to do routine maintenance to ensure everything runs well**. For example, you want to decide when larger teams should be smaller ones. It would help if you **determined how frequently you should remove inactive users**.

After a team is no longer in use, you will need to decide **how long it should be until it is archived or possibly deleted**. It's essential to set up checkpoints to allow for ongoing management.

This type of planning for lifecycle management is critical. It allows you to create a plan and manage your teams properly.



# Defining the team creation process

Having a lifecycle management plan allows you to dictate a creation process for both teams and channels. It allows you to:

- Determine in advance who can name teams.
- [Decide who can create those teams and channels](#) (teams creation is controlled through self-service settings, channel creation can be done by team owners or members, depending on the team settings).
- Decide which teams should be public versus private.
- Determine what types of business activities need to happen for the creation of a new team or channel.
- Determine who will be allowed to add and then approve any new users to a team. For example, only owner adds versus allowing owner/members to add.

With SysKit Point, you're able to **track groups and guest access within Microsoft Teams** using an external sharing report. You can **list all of the external users within a tenant** and get detailed reports showing all their membership and access information.

SysKit Point will allow you to **see externally shared content for both files and private channels** in Microsoft Teams. It will also work for Microsoft 365 group sites and OneDrive.

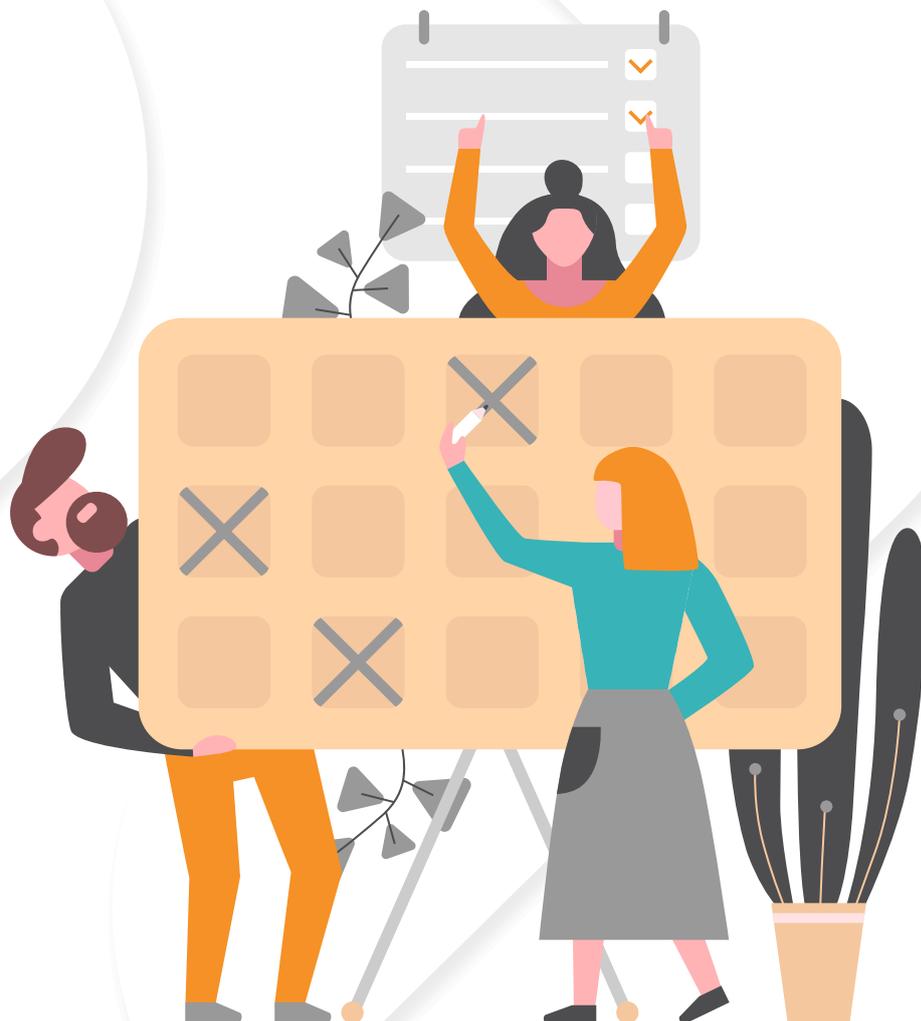
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# Set up checkpoints for ongoing management

You can think of a team as a living organism. You have to maintain it so that it won't start to sprawl.

This sprawl is why it's crucial to audit both teams and groups and have a good understanding of their activities within your tenant. You need to **be able to know when a user creates or deletes the team**. You need to be able to **identify those teams and groups as their membership changes**. You also need to be able to detect both members and teams as they become inactive.

Using [SysKit Point](#), you can **determine the usage and optimization of Teams**. It can show you if the team is operating at its optimum and **help your employees work better together**. This reporting helps team managers ensure they are allowing progress instead of prohibiting it.



When you delete a team, you have up to 30 days to reverse the decision before it becomes permanent.

## Create a Teams end-of-life plan

What happens when a team is no longer needed? In cases where there is no lifecycle plan, it may exist indefinitely. It could **allow potential data loss as people can access it** from inside and outside an organization without their knowledge.

Without the proper plan, teams may not be archived or deleted after they are no longer in use regularly. When you archive a team, it is inactive and invisible. However, you're able to retain all the messages and information. When you delete a team, **you have up to 30 days to reverse the decision before it becomes permanent.**

For this reason, you should decide in advance your plan for:

- Who will have the ability to delete or archive the teamwork channel.
- How long the team should remain inactive before it is archived or deleted.
- In what cases can a team be reinstated.
- When a team or channel should be deleted or archived.
- The amount of time to retain information after deactivating a team.

This feature will give team members enough time to save any files or information they need for future work.

# Take advantage of automated Teams lifecycle processes with SysKit Point

With SysKit Point, you can automate your Microsoft Teams lifecycle management. You will be able to avoid many of the hidden challenges organizations face and have a tool in place to help you properly manage Microsoft Teams through its lifecycle automatically.

To learn more about how SysKit Point can help, [schedule a demo today](#).

## **SysKit**

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