Enhancing Business Productivity and Improving the Student Learning and Engagement experience by increasing AI staff capacity

PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

This initiative focuses on increasing user adoption and investing in Teams Premium to boost business productivity. Key features include improved meeting transcription, summaries, and action items, which aim to streamline workflows and enhance overall efficiency.

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Province:	Nova Scotia
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PROBLEM OF
PRACTICE

INTENT

IMPACT

GOING
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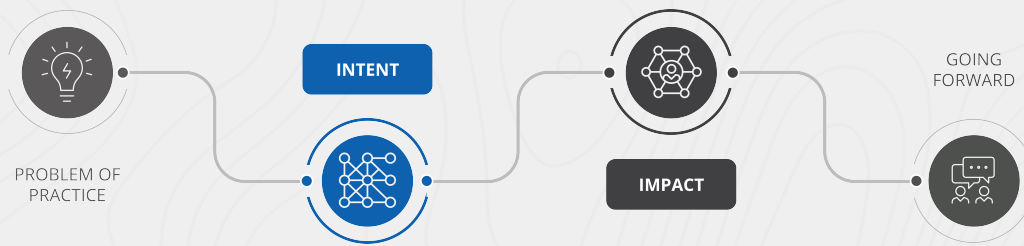
Intent

Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) provides quality education and training to students across the province, both online and in person. With over 140 programs offered at 14 campuses, NSCC serves more than ten thousand students each academic year. The college employs over 2,700 staff members who collaborate across various campuses and departments, all committed to student success.

Operating in a hybrid environment where classes and meetings are conducted both online and in person, NSCC has seen a growing demand for AI tools to enhance productivity in both administrative and educational contexts. This increased demand has also led to a rise in unauthorized use of AI tools. Recognizing this trend, and leveraging our existing Microsoft technologies, we decided to explore options within our current ecosystem to address these Shadow IT challenges and continue to support staff and faculty with their demand of leveraging AI to boost productivity.

> **The potential to better organize and personalize meetings could really support a more professional and engaging experience for both instructors and students.**
>
> —*Faculty, Technology and Environment*

This situation led us to our use case. The primary objective of our initiative was to investigate the advantages of investing in Teams Premium to enhance productivity at our college. This use case provided valuable insights for making informed decisions regarding user adoption, change management, training strategies, and evaluating potential returns on investment. The main emphasis of this endeavor was conducting an internal pilot of Teams Premium within the College, involving both administrative staff and faculty members.

AI is playing a crucial role in this initiative by significantly enhancing the functionality of Teams. Teams Premium offers key features such as improved meeting transcription, summaries, and action items all of which are powered by AI, enabling more efficient capturing and organization of information. This automation of mundane tasks helps streamline workflows and allows both faculty and administrative staff to focus on more critical activities, ultimately boosting overall productivity and efficiency.

Additionally, AI-driven tools assist in creating a more engaging and interactive learning and working environment. For instructors, AI can track participation, provide personalized feedback, and the instructor can use the recording or meeting recap to distribute to students that missed the lecture. Furthermore, AI contributes to enhanced collaboration by offering real-time language translation and transcription, breaking down language barriers and ensuring that all participants can engage meaningfully. These features not only improve communication but also promote inclusivity.

To support this Use Case, we selected a diverse group of 20 individuals, comprising both administrative staff and instructors with varying positions within the College to participate in a pilot of Teams Premium. To support the pilot, we had a dedicated team comprised of Educational Technology Analysts, a Microsoft Subject Matter Expert (SME) and support from our Professional Learning (PL) coach. We delivered a comprehensive training session to educate the pilot members on the enhanced functionalities of Teams Premium and to highlight the pilot objectives and participant expectations.

Our methodology was to utilize surveys at various points throughout the pilot to gather feedback. Before the pilot, we distributed a survey to the participants to gauge their experience and usage of the current version of Teams. This baseline data helped us understand the starting point for each participant. We then conducted a mid-point survey to gather preliminary feedback and a final survey at the end of the month to capture comprehensive user experiences with Teams Premium.

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Impact

The pilot had a significant and positive impact on administrative staff. Features like AI-generated meeting transcriptions, summaries, and action items helped streamline collaboration and productivity, reduce manual follow-up, and improve overall clarity in decision-making. Staff reported feeling more organized and efficient, with several expressing that the automation features saved time and supported better collaboration. Participants noted they no longer needed to manually document discussions, allowing them to stay more engaged during meetings.

Faculty, on the other hand, encountered inconsistent technical performance, particularly with the AI generated recap summary feature of Teams Premium. This impacted a large majority of the faculty in the pilot and these issues negatively impacted their experience and ultimately led to a lack of trust in the functionality. This feedback highlights the critical role that tool reliability and user trust play in successful technology adoption.

Organizationally, this is where the use case had the greatest impact. The pilot helped our team better understand user experiences with Teams Premium across diverse roles. These insights will directly inform decisions on adopting the tool at NSCC, how we approach future user adoption strategies, change management processes, and professional learning programs. We now have a clearer picture of where Teams Premium adds immediate value, where it requires additional support, and that will drive our recommendations.

How AI Impacted Our Use Case

The implementation of AI through Teams Premium significantly influenced our use case by improving collaboration, optimizing communication, and increasing productivity. Although the results varied among different user groups, the AI-driven features offered crucial insights into the impact of such technologies on both productivity and learning within a professional environment.

For administrative users, AI tools such as meeting transcriptions, intelligent recaps, and action item extraction significantly improved how they processed and retained information. Instead of manually taking notes during meetings, participants could focus on the discussion, knowing that they could reference an AI-generated reliable summary and transcript. This shift allowed for greater engagement in meetings and improved follow-up accountability. The features also enhanced knowledge sharing by creating searchable records of discussions that could be accessed later, supporting ongoing learning and collaboration within teams.

Moreover, AI tools promoted inclusive participation. Transcripts allowed individuals who were absent, had scheduling conflicts, or needed more processing time to catch up and stay engaged with team goals and discussions.

In contrast, a large majority of our faculty users experienced challenges with the reliability of AI features. The intelligent recap was not always generated after recorded class, which limited faculty's ability to trust the tool for documenting lecture recap, discussions or student interactions. This gap in performance reduced the perceived value of the AI features and ultimately affected adoption among faculty. As a result, the potential for AI to support instructional collaboration and reflective teaching practices remained largely unrealized during this phase of the pilot.

While faculty experienced less benefit due to technical challenges, they remained optimistic with the AI features they could use and sparked interest in how such tools might support the student experience.

When the AI-generated recap functioned effectively, faculty reported that they could upload the notes to our Learning Management System, allowing students to review the lecture materials. This facilitated accountability for action items discussed during classes. Primarily, they see the potential benefit of how AI can contribute to equity in participation. AI features like live transcription may help those who are neurodiverse, ESL speakers, or those who miss meetings due to time conflicts to stay informed and engaged.

Impact

Of the users that used live translated captions in the pilot, 100% reported that the captions were accurate. 75% of faculty said that Teams Premium can improve accessibility for their students with disabilities, whereas the other 25% were not sure.

Despite these setbacks, the pilot served as a critical learning opportunity for our organization. The AI tools provided tangible benefits where they functioned as expected, while also surfacing areas that require technical improvement and user-specific support. For example, the AI driven intelligent recap, 33% of our pilot members said it was very accurate where 40% said it was somewhat accurate. This emphasizes that the AI recap notes are a "first draft" and all users should review the notes to ensure accuracy.

Importantly, the experience offered our team a deeper understanding of how different user roles engage with AI in Teams Premium, and how their needs and expectations vary.

Key Metrics: Administrative Staff

- Before Pilot: 100% of users said they struggle to collaborate effectively in meetings while taking notes and noting action items.
- After Pilot: 100% of users said they could better collaborate knowing Teams Premium would generate an intelligent recap
- 100% of our users said the classic Teams experience does not meet their needs now that they have used the AI driven features of Teams Premium.
- 88% of users said Teams Premium was easy to navigate
- 100% said it enhanced their experience, saved time in their daily work and improved overall productivity.
- 88% of users were extremely satisfied with their experience
- 100% would recommend that NSCC adopt Teams Premium

Key Metrics: Faculty

- 75% of our faculty said the AI driven features of Teams Premium enhanced their teaching experience and believe it can enhance the overall student experience.

Faculty use of AI driven features:

- 75% used the intelligent recap notes and all agreed the recap notes were useful for their work
- 50% used the meeting transcription and video break down into Speakers, Topics, Chapters and all agreed were useful for their work
- 50% of faculty said it improved productivity at work
- 88% of faculty ran into technical issues or challenges when using Teams Premium, however 63% still recommend adopting Teams Premium at the College.

Professional Learning insights

Our PL coach was instrumental in the success of the use case. Being paired with a PL coach that had hands on experience using the tool and was an advocate for user adoption of Teams Premium, was pivotal in our success. He contributed to the brainstorming process for the pilot, highlighting key functionality to focus feedback on, and suggesting ideas to further test the limits of the AI functionality. His technical support and experience were invaluable, particularly when faculty encountered issues and aided with troubleshooting.

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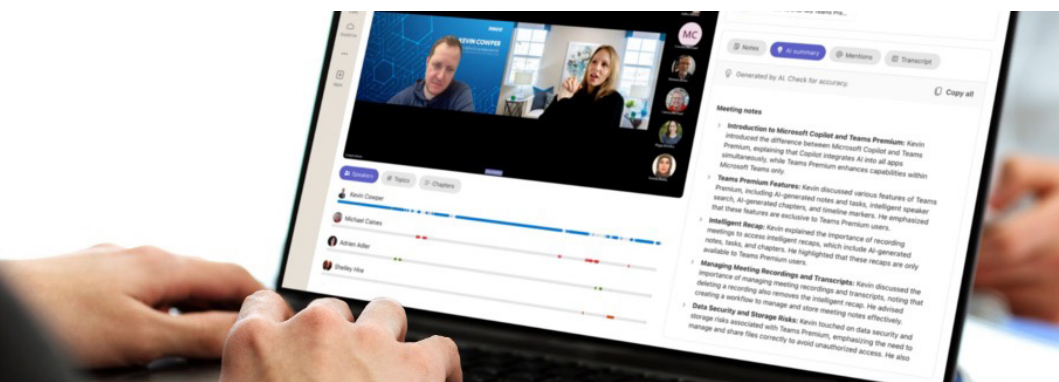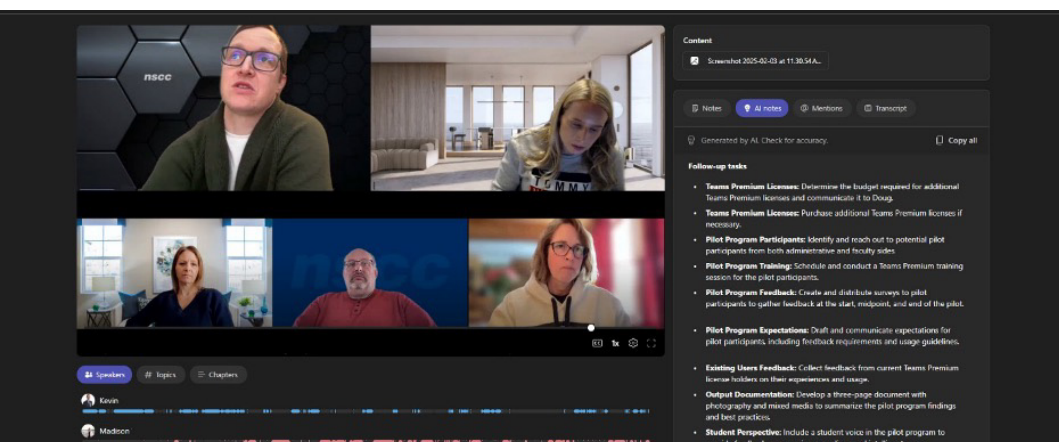
Going Forward

Building on the insights gained from our Teams Premium pilot, our next steps will focus on strategically advancing AI integration in a way that is inclusive, effective, and aligned with the needs of NSCC.

Priorities Going Forward:

• Explore adopting Teams Premium for administrative staff only

• Student Participation and Feedback

• Explore Alternative Ad-Hoc Lecture Capture and Collaboration Tools

• Examine issues of bias, privacy, security, ethics and data storage

This case demonstrated the need for NSCC to foster a more equitable and inclusive learning environment. This pilot allowed faculty to utilize the translated live caption feature, which received positive feedback and indicated it should be a standard feature rather than an additional cost. By providing real-time translation of spoken content, these captions help address language barriers for multilingual students, allowing them to engage more effectively with course material and classroom discussions. This AI-driven feature can impact educational practices by enhancing comprehension, supporting diverse learning needs, and ensuring all students have equal access to information and opportunities to succeed academically. This may improve students' learning experiences and achievement.

In summary, our next phase focuses on strategic adoption, inclusive feedback, expanded exploration, and ethical diligence - all aimed at creating a thoughtful, sustainable path for AI integration at NSCC. Through this multifaceted approach, we hope to harness the transformative potential of AI while ensuring it serves all members of our college community effectively.

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