



SMB Q&A

USING M365 TOOLS FOR
BETTER PRODUCTIVITY
& WELLBEING - WITH
GAVIN JONES OF MEETIME



Stephen McCormick 0:00

Hi, I'm Stephen McCormick, MSP Community Manager for Tubblog: The Hub for MSPs. And joining me today is Gavin Jones, founder and director of Meetime, a consultancy that helps small and medium sized businesses get more from the Microsoft 365 tools they are already paying for, but perhaps don't use as effectively as they might. Hello, Gavin. It's great to have you with me to day.

Gavin Jones 0:22

Stephen, good to be here. Thanks for having me.

Stephen McCormick 0:25

Thank you. Now before we start, as a bit of background, why don't you tell us a little bit about yourself and why you started your business?

Gavin Jones 0:33

Yeah, so I guess I've always been interested in technology back in, everyone was old enough to remember Tomorrow's World, avid watcher at the time in the 80s 90s. But never done it as a career. So yeah, when I first started out of Uni, and I had like a really good computer science way or accounting, and for my sins went down the accounting route. But, but yeah, then most of my career was at Molson Coors, the beer company, which was a great place to work and beer, obviously. And, yes, started in finance, business partnering, moved all over the company during those 15 years and into supply chain and demand management and looking after our kegs at one point in time. And then we got into some, like, total, you know, business-wide improvement projects, and some IT projects more like the business sort of change end. And, and yeah, I guess working for a large enterprise, like

most big companies is just, you know, is this like an oil tanker, because it's very slow to turnaround and change things. But also, it's like, you know, just the amount of emails and meetings, I'm sure, like every anybody can relate is, it's just, it's just too much. So, I guess later on in my career that I sort of focused more on like, if we can cut down emails and meetings, that's gonna save a lot of time. And so, I guess, what I'm mostly passionate about is trying to help people save time at work. Because obviously, there is more things that you could either do at work that's more useful than emails or meetings, actually getting things done, and you know, getting closer to the to the sale, as well as improving your wellbeing. So, you know, if you don't want to work and you want to see your kids or your wife or friends and family, then that's what I'm hopefully trying to help people do as well.

Stephen McCormick 2:17

Excellent. I mean, I know especially when it comes to large corporate kind of companies that have these departments that are all about making things quicker and more efficient. You do often find that there's, there's a lot of waste there. There's a lot of meetings that could have been emails and phone calls that could have saved weeks and weeks of kind of time being taken. So yeah, I think a lot of people who have been in that world will be able to resonate with that. So, before we start talking more about your business, you worked for Molson Coors trying to look for ways to improve productivity, reduced stress. So, what is it that you've found in doing that as a kind of niche to kind of start your own business?

Gavin Jones 3:20

Yeah. So last year, I had a cause was transformation manager. And I was working for the sales director in the sales function in sales operations, actually. But yeah, the sales directors only brief was like, I think we're spending too much time on internal stuff, and not enough time selling. Go and do something. So, I'd had a side project to make an iPhone app, because I couldn't find one that did what I wanted to do. So, sort of outsource the development and the design stuff. I was using Slack at the time. Slack was relatively new. And, you know, I guess the idea of Slack was, it's transformational, and trying to reduce emails and meetings and just have an open way of working and is a different way of collaborating altogether. At the time teams that only just come out. And I guess it was more positioned as like, well, we've borrowed stuff from Slack. And I think there's some reasons at the time that Microsoft tried to acquire Slack and got turned down. So yeah, obviously, if that was a, that was a good idea or not. But before they started doing all the things in the pandemic of like, you know, borrowing things off Zoom, they were borrowing a lot of stuff from slack. And so, we were like, well, if we, you know, we've got stuff everywhere, you know, salespersons desktop is like just ridiculously peppered with files that's not in the server anywhere. We've got SharePoint sites, old server things still kicking about. And like I said before, just then the loads of meetings that come in because everyone's default thing to fix problems, or let's just get everyone together. Because it was like, you know, wants to be an inclusive company, which was, which was really good. But then the downside is it's overly inclusive now. To actually get anything done, because everyone's talking about getting stuff done. And so, yeah, so that was sort of the precursor to setting up my own business in that. We were like, well, let's try and get everyone on to the team's bit of Teams. So, they've got like a culture of working out in the open so we can speed up things, so everyone can see stuff that's going on. Even if they don't know they need to know, or put it in a place. And then if they, if they do, if they don't need to know, they can ignore it, they do need to know that more people are involved.

So, joining, sales, marketing and supply chain all together. And just trying to get a culture of working out in the open, and then help them get things done with some like task management bits that people probably aren't using, and some basic automations to speed things up. And then, you know, try to help the culture of community. A level of using those same assets in the Microsoft 365 ecosystem, because already paying for it. So, the CIO liked it, it actually will empower people to make content in a way that's more engaging in a way that you would consume in your personal life. But obviously, just videos, pictures, texts, podcasts, just different ways to get information across to someone rather than just attaching a PowerPoint slide to, to an email, which no one's going to read, because their inbox has got like 2000 things in it and they don't click on any attachments. And so yeah, the company is really big on wellbeing, obviously want to increase sales, we've got Workplace Analytics, which is now called Viva Insights from Microsoft, because they love to keep changing the name of things. So, I could see how it's time people were spending before and how much time we're spending afterwards. And that sort of attack, for want of a better word, implementation of trying to get people through there's three sort of broad hoops. Saves like, almost three hours per person per week, and decrease after hours went by 30%, just from those activity receipts. And we knew that there was loads more to go up because we had the data and not everyone was working in the way that we that we wanted them to. So yeah, I guess that was then, you know, being able to show that that approach had got some decent results, it's like well then, well, actually, I'd quite like to do that for some other businesses and see if I can help them do the same thing. Pretty much.

Stephen McCormick 7:15

That's great. I mean, I suppose with the, with the COVID, lockdown and things like that there's there was a lot of scope for moving away from traditional means of sharing information. So, people embraced tools like, like teams, and zoom and things like that, because they couldn't physically be where they needed to be. And I think that, yeah, I think that people are finally realising that you don't have to be in a big boardroom, all discussing things that you already know your relevant parts for you, there are other tools that you can use that are going to save you so much time. So, the next question that I'm going to ask you then is what type of businesses do you... Do you typically work with then what? What size of business? What level of maturity? Who do you kind of approach or who approaches you for that consultancy?

Gavin Jones 8:26

Yeah so, it's interesting that it's that I guess that there's nothing like a crisis to help with change management. So, if there's no way of doing what you did before, then change is really easy. So, if you're doing like a system implementation, and the old system disappearing, then like, you need a bit of training, but like, well, you can't go back and do what you did before, because it's not there. For the pandemic was great in forcing people to use new tools. But then that had a knock-on problem in that people didn't change the way that they were working. They just went to the new tools and carried on working the same way, though with like Zoom and Teams, and just, you know, the ability for like, well now can have a meeting instantly. That then stole people's commute in the morning. And stole people can be in the evening. And actually, there's no transition time of walking to a meeting room, or maybe going across to another building if you're on a campus that had a massive detrimental effect on wellbeing because now there's meeting, meeting, meeting, meeting, meeting and because you're not like in the office to just go and hear what's going on. It's like you need like

another formal meeting, for want of a better word, stuck in the diary to then catch up on stuff so it just made like the already situation of too many meetings, emails a little bit. A little bit worse. And so, I think a lot of companies still haven't got over that really. So, there's like a big battle of like, what do we get in the office or do we go hybrid, but then hybrid people really just means video calls. Whereas I guess what I'm mostly interested in although Teams does do video calls obviously, is, is getting people onto the teams bit of Teams, usually, because that usually unlocks a lot of the other Microsoft 365 apps that people are already paying for. And so yeah, I mean, I'm still a startup, I've been in business three years. So still adapting and trying new stuff. I guess when I first started, I was going after, you know, some bigger enterprise-size customers, which I got a couple of. But obviously, like I said, before, they're big oil tankers, takes them ages to make a decision, and you might not be even speaking to the right person. And so yeah, a lot of my clients now are small, medium-sized businesses, where obviously, it's a lot easier to get to the decision maker, who's the owner, and you know, they can make a decision and get started in a week or so even if not a couple of days. So, so yeah, it just needs to be a big enough organisation that has some pain about how they're collaborating together already. So usually, I like to say like, 20 knowledge workers and upward. But But yeah, I've had some interest lower down, and obviously some interest a lot, a lot larger organisations than that. But yeah, it's really just trying to get to the one that's that even just got an inkling that they could be working in a more efficient way, is usually just a nice little start. But...

Stephen McCormick 11:20

Yeah, I think you're right there that you want to kind of get away from those that have loads of 'gate keepers' that won't let you through to speak to that, to that person that's going to make that decision. And I think that if you approach those companies that are both ready to make those changes, and, you know, kind of sign up for the service, then you're going to get a better return, but also they are going to make better use of your advice to which I think is, is perfect. So we've talked about Teams, and I'm assuming, you know, office, collaboration and, and kind of productivity tools are also part of that. But in the businesses that you're that you're working with, what are you seeing as the most commonly underused tools that Microsoft 365 has to offer? What's what's been kind of, like the left and and not touched? Where it could be very useful?

Gavin Jones 12:34

Yeah, I say three things, usually. So obviously, we talked about Teams, but that is like, the massive one for me. Because if you get into the teams bit of Teams, and away from chat, and away from video calls, then that allows you like the asynchronous sort of platform to be able to do everything else that will speed up time, removing emails or meetings, and then just working better together. So that is the biggest one, mostly, we've talked about that before. And so, the other two are then like, it's still amazing that people work without like a task manager tool. And I'm sure that the couple in the Microsoft ecosystem, so Planner, for shared ones and To Do for your, for your own tasks, predominantly. And even, you know, I still like writing on pen and paper, although it's now an iPad. But other things Tasks is the only thing that I like to do more than one time, obviously, you know, efficiency circle the light touch stuff once and you know, I don't want any waste of redoing it. But like for tasks if it's important enough to do it, because I want reminding from like multiple places. So, I like to write it down to get it out of my head and to get on to do to get it done and put it onto Planner so other people can see it and get some accountability. And then still SharePoint bizarrely

like the intranet and yeah, is just so underutilised, especially in SMBs. So for enterprise, you've probably already got one. But either way, people usually then end up like locking it down for a small number of people to go and put stuff on it. And so usually it just turns into like a derelict graveyard of like, you know, uber-corporate news in an enterprise that now we're ready so far and means that no one ever reads it. Or in an SMB, they're just, there's just nothing on it. It's just a place for like, HR, policies and stuff that no one ever reads. But you know, legal like it because they can tell people off if they're doing something wrong. So, so yeah, it's just really getting into business. And SharePoint is like, people hate it just because I've heard of SharePoint, have the old version, and it has been pretty terrible in the past. And Microsoft didn't do a great job of marketing it, because it does like loads of stuff that you wouldn't think it does. But yeah, just getting the Intranet into like a really vibrant place that everyone can sort of see what's going on. So in that I guess normal, making marketing selling-of-product example, like people seeing the how it's showing up in store and sales guys, you know, doing videos themselves in store, they can see all the displays and things and the price promotions and marketing, you know, bring into life, some of the marketing and then passing on sales and supply chain be able to play. You know, the other nice things just gone down the line. Yes, that can actually be transformational. And it's different. It's not particularly new technologies it's just people have not really utilised it. So, yeah, it's interesting.

Stephen McCormick 15:28

I think a lot of people have used SharePoint and things like that. And I think you're absolutely... absolutely right. They might have had a bad experience or maybe it's been, it's been implemented badly, the right admin privileges haven't been passed on. And people have told me that in the past it, it has been quite a clunky experience. But if it but actually if it's used, right, if it's used correctly. And now with all the new features that Microsoft products have, that they Yeah, that they really don't shout out about. And you kind of come back to them and you go, "oh, I didn't know it could do that." I think right. I think some people do need that, that kind of guidance to, to use their tools, the way that they're intended for in the now not how they were when they first encountered them. So, I think there's a lot of that. And I think that having somebody like you being able to kind of tell them, you know, you could be doing this better and actually saving yourself so much time, I think that's really valuable. So, yeah,

Gavin Jones 16:47

Yeah, and I mean, I'm niched into Microsoft 365, just pragmatically, because that's what people are paying for. But like, I'm not particularly bothered about Microsoft, I like all the new technology. So it's like, you know, all my hardware is Apple, so don't have any Microsoft or PC hardware. And so yeah, hopefully know enough, there's like all, you know, for task management, there's actually quite a lot of nuances in Microsoft. And actually, you might be better using a third-party thing. Whereas for like, intranet, that that's the biggest thing where people have gone third party for like, an HR software. And then they've been using their intranet, and it's just get a bit messy and all they're selling things like this better SharePoint, because everyone's really clunky. And it was probably like, 10 years ago, like you say, but, but now it's well actually, it's fine. As long as you don't do any coding and stuff like that. It's just just use the stuff out of the box. And it's gonna... yeah Microsoft go update, and it's gonna look great. So yeah.

Stephen McCormick 17:44

Definitely, yeah. Okay, so we've touched upon this a little bit, we talked about how saving yourself time gives you more time to kind of use on the things that that you want to do. And I mean, I know, from personal experience, that mental health is a big issue for us, especially small business owners, you know, ones that aren't kind of enterprise level. So how does what you do for them help in reducing their stress and improve their overall well, being? What, what things are, are you being told, by, by your customers that they've appreciated from what you do?

Gavin Jones 18:34

Yeah, yeah. So I guess, I mean, being an employee - now, I'm a business owner, is like being an employee for most of my career the change business owner is like such a different, like, you know, mental roller coaster, being an employee...

Stephen McCormick 18:50

It's so is!

Gavin Jones 18:50

So to talk about them in the same breath is that it is not data justice, you know, it's night and day. So yeah, I guess, for an owner, then it's, it's, I guess, your employees are more like your children. So like, as soon as you got one employee, it's like, now you're looking after them ahead of you. Usually, if you follow the servant leadership type principles. So you know, now you're paying their salary, you know, they've got the problems of their life. And you know, you need to make sure they're performing their job as well. So it's like having a child not in a derogatory way, but you know, someone that you're caring for, as an employee. So I guess, making sure that they are equipped enough to manage their own mental health and have enough time to go and do that and, you know, flexible working and hybrid working is now a lot a lot bigger isn't it, so having, you know, a small business that's got the platform to be able to do that, again, that they can then you know, go and hire and hopefully get some better talent, hopefully after reducing their stress a little bit. I worked with MSP that was in London, moved to Ireland. They've got employees in South Africa and, and Spain. And so you know, just the amount of access to talent we've got now if we get our platforms, right is that you can be transformational, hopefully reduce them reduce some stress, rather than just thinking, well my business is in Bolton. So I can only hire people in Bolton that's sort of gone these days, if their knowledge workers, but yeah, also, I guess, hopefully what is reducing their stress is that sometimes just like not knowing or, you know, fear of the unknown, you know, are you being efficient or not as like, I'm not really sure there's loads of buzzwords about AI and, you know, keep getting bombarded about cybersecurity and stuff. And so hopefully, just someone coming in, because our most popular product is just like an assessment and recommendations, I guess, like most consultants, but also help out the implement the recommendations that people want to as well. But I guess just knowing that, well, here's what we think is possible. Actually, you could do this on the Microsoft stuff, because we're already paying for it. I think Microsoft isn't very good at this bits, they're actually best off putting that in there. And just having some, like, someone come in and say, yeah, actually, you're doing all this work. We had a most recent client, these were the best

intentions, that off down this path. And then now someone coming in showing them it's like, well, this is actually taking like one of your admin staff an entire day a week to do this. And it's not even producing the results that it did when he first started it. If you start, if they started, again, from scratch, they definitely wouldn't have made that decision. But obviously, you know, out businesses and life continues, you just sort of iterate into things and end up doing stuff that you you didn't realise. So yeah, hopefully, just having someone come in to show you what's possible, is, hopefully reduces a little bit of stressful and as well, I

Stephen McCormick 21:56

think I think you're right, it's just it's, it's sometimes just having the time and the space to be able to kind of, to work on the things that need the work and so that you're not just chasing, you're chasing your tail, going kind of around in circles, saying, I'm not getting the best out of what I've got, whether that's in terms of staffing, or in terms of the, of the, of the technical knowledge, and if you're a business owner, it's I mean, this has been said, every place that I've been to, they have a, they have the same problem that they, they want to spend less time working in their business and more time on their business. So if they've got the time to actually do that, to kind of streamline processes to focus more on gaining new clients and that kind of thing, then that's the kind of thing that that I think MSPs definitely, once in their lives, and I think that if you've got a niche of being able to kind of do that, then it will help reduce their stress, their stress, and and it will make things more efficient for them too, which is, which is a win win. So I think I think what you're doing and why you're doing it is it's really important that that business owners know that you do sometimes need to let somebody else do that critical thinking for you to help you get to where you want to be. And I think I think it is really important there. So...

Gavin Jones 23:49

I always think of it kind of like business consulting by stealth, because because I've got a YouTube channel, most of the leads come in and they're like, you know, can you do some training? And I'm always trying to think what do you think's going to happen after the training? Because training any solves a knowledge problem? Or not? If you haven't got a knowledge problem, if you've got a cultural problem, or a change management problem, or are you even, even is the training going to attack anything that's going to help your business even. Though it's like, well, you could train someone on everything that Microsoft offers, and everything that Google offers and everything that Apple offers, but it's like, have they got enough time to pick through? And are they going to care so they might even fall asleep during the training. So it's a lot easier to go and see how a business is running and then recommend some ways to improve. One, because it helps the owner obviously, but Two because it starred in that chain of like all the people feel bought in because they've had been able to voice like, you know, this isn't working. We've told this guy 10 times, we're not changed and suddenly able to link the training so that well you said that you're struggling with this. Here's a way you can do your specific job better. It's, usually helps everybody and not in a better way.

Stephen McCormick 25:05

Absolutely. So going back to business owners, then if you could give a start.. a new, a new starting out business, any piece of advice on how to get the most out of what they've got, and how to best

use their time, what would it be? And I know that that's a huge question. So it doesn't have to be an epic answer just... because I could go on about this for ages myself. So yeah, just to kind of general kind of answer.

Gavin Jones 25:42

Yes. Yes. tricky a startup, because I guess, you know, if you read any, like business books or anything, it's like, get a business plan, and, you know, do this planning and blah, blah, blah. And then we actually start to run one yourself. It's like, that all goes out the window, you just write your skin to it, trying stuff out and see what sticks and trying some other things, and constantly learning. So yeah, and a lot of small businesses, like to start with Google because they've already, you know, used it in their personal lives, probably. And but yeah, at some point, then, though, it's like you start to the what started to work is starting to break down, both in processes and platforms. And that's usually where we get involved. So yeah, I guess if you were starting from scratch and wanted to get out of that, that plateau is maybe just just going for Microsoft early, although I didn't sell licences. So, I don't particularly care what people use. But, but yeah, just having somewhere where you can sort of asynchronously collaborate, whether that's slack, or teams, or whatever Google's thing is, at the moment spacing is, it's just really going on that rather than getting used to email, because if you into email, it's tends to persist, rather than you won't be able to get out of it later. Yeah,

Stephen McCormick 27:03

I realised that what I what I basically asked you that there was, how do we make it so that people don't need you? And I didn't mean to do that! Because of course you did. You, as you just reminded us there. You're a great person to call kind of later on when you've been established for a while, and actually you you've maybe not used the best from the tools that you've bought in? So yeah, I kind of I kind of asked you a question, which kind of made the need for you redundant there. So, I thought...

Gavin Jones 27:43

Well that's good! I'm a big fan of being able to work yourself out of a job. And then you'll find that you're never out of a job if you're trying to get yourself out of a job.

Stephen McCormick 27:53

Exactly.

Gavin Jones 27:54

Yeah. I always say to my clients, like at some point, you shouldn't need me otherwise, I'm not doing a very good job.

Stephen McCormick 27:58

Yeah. I think that's a perfect pitch, isn't it saying I'm trying to make it so that you don't need me to, to come back. Hopefully, the path that I've set you and your business on will actually be one that that you stay on for a long time get the best from so yeah. I've got one last question for you, Gavin. Is there a good book or a good podcast that you can recommend to our listeners and watchers?

Gavin Jones 28:32

Yeah. So yeah, I've been out of the podcast game for a bit with the with missing the commute over three years used to listen to them quite a lot. But yeah, speaking to Tim Ferriss is probably ones that are already in and out of that one. But yeah, book wise, the book that I implement the most I've never re-read is the Miracle Morning by Hal Elrod. And I was thinking of it as like just some things that I need to do in the morning just to be normal. And if I start to miss them for too long, something gives get a bit ratty with the wife or kids or you know, something's off. I was in the book is just got like a really simple mnemonic of time savers are lifesavers even, which is like silence, meditation, affirmations, visualisation exercise, reading and scribing. Like journaling. And, yeah, it's worth reading the book. I mean, if you want to get out of bed early, and you're struggling to turn the snooze button off, just hearing his story of all the stuff he's been through and him be able to do this. Oh, yeah, actually, I should be able to just get out of bed when I need to. Yeah, and then following on from that is like The Daily Stoic by Ryan Holiday. Which is a nice little. Just one little page a day. Just sort of get your mind right for the rest of the day. I find Yeah.

Stephen McCormick 29:54

Brilliant. That's perfect. So, all of those things that you've just mentioned, plus you YouTube channel, we will include them in the show notes. So, you can you can get them at the bottom of wherever you're watching this video. So, if anyone needs if anyone wants to get in touch with you about, you know, asking more about what it is that that you do for businesses or, or how they can get more out of what they've got. How can they go about that? What platforms are you on?

Gavin Jones 30:31

Yeah, so I'm mostly active on LinkedIn, if you want to DM me on LinkedIn, that's fine. And if you go to meetimeservices.com - So M.E.E.T.I.M.E. services.com, then we've got some free training on there if you want to find out more. Either individual training organisations. And then if you're ready to work together, or we want to find out about the model working assessment and recommendations, then you can book a call on that website to have a chat for 45 minutes for free. See if we can help and if we're a good fit to work together.

Stephen McCormick 31:01

Fantastic. I want to thank you again, Gavin. It's been really nice to talk to you. And that's, that's it. So yeah.

Gavin Jones 31:11

Thanks, Stephen.

Stephen McCormick 31:13

Well, that was Gavin Jones of Meetime, and I've been Stephen McCormick for Tubblog: The Hub for MSPs. Please like and subscribe if you like this video, and we'll see you next time.