

G SUITE INTRODUCTORY GUIDE

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WHAT IS G SUITE?

G Suite provides productivity/office, communication, user management and cloud services.

G Suite has been developed with an emphasis on making collaborative working easier, and ensuring compatibility/interoperability with competitor software (Word, CAD programs etc). Software such as Google Sheets, Docs and Slides feel fairly intuitive for those used to the Microsoft versions. For organisations previously using Microsoft's Office365, GSuite is a similar cloud-based offering.

G Suite is an attractive package for small and medium teams, with transparent pricing (per user/per month) and personalised email options when you connect your domain (john@mycompany.com for instance). For those who have used Google software as individuals, G Suite doesn't feel too different but does add additional storage (business and enterprise plans), sharing and user management features. The email program (GMail) will feel familiar for individuals who use a personal GMail account.

G Suite has become popular in the education sector with Google discounting the service significantly for institutions. Educators use it for assessment (through the Forms software) and teaching (Google Classroom) for instance. For this reason, internet guidance on using G Suite is often oriented towards educational uses (that is not to say that it isn't useful in an organisational context!).



USING G SUITE

G Suite operates on internet browsers although, whilst compatible with Safari (Mac), Windows Internet Explorer/Edge and Firefox, it is best used in Google Chrome where functions such as Offline documents can be more reliably used.

There are varying degrees to which an organisation may adopt G Suite. Some use it to benefit from personalised domain emails (name@company.com), others may use it to share documents they've developed on their desktop (in Excel or Word for instance) using the cloud storage function of Google Drive. Other organisations may go whole-hog, and create and store documents using Google's Drive, Slides, Sheets and Docs programs.

USING GOOGLE DRIVE

Like Dropbox and OneDrive, Google's cloud storage, Drive, can be added as a folder on your computer by installing Drive File Stream. However, like many Google features, users may have to be given permission by their Administrator to use this.

Google's storage is generous (currently unlimited on business and enterprise plans) whereas Microsoft only offer 1TB per user.

Those who use more than one G Suite account may find Drive File Stream a little clunky as switching between accounts currently involves all Offline files being removed when you switch the account you're using. Some of the real time collaboration features are also not quite as developed as they could be - Mac users for instance need to play with their Mac settings to see these.

Other applications are now offering import and export options from and to Drive - for instance graphic design favourite Canva can now import your photos from Drive and export your designs to Drive.



OFFICE/PRODUCTIVITY OFFERING

Google provides its own versions of Microsoft Office products such as Excel, Word and Powerpoint. For organisations previously using Microsoft's Office365, GSuite is a similar cloud software offering.

MS Excel = Google Sheets

MS Word = Google Docs

MS PowerPoint = Google Slides

The equivalent of Microsoft's OneDrive is Google's Drive.

However, there are several functions that Google have not built into this software which instead require workarounds - add-ons. For instance, Google Docs doesn't have a mail merge function but there are add-ons that do this. Users or organisations can install add-ons through the G Suite Marketplace (although users may need to have permission from their Administrator to do this).



GOOGLE CALENDAR

G Suite's Calendar is fairly easy to use.

It's also easy to setup your Calendar to work on phones or through desktop versions of Microsoft Outlook or Mac's Calendar (most email clients allow you to select Google and simply enter your login details)(again permissions to do this by the Administrator may be required).

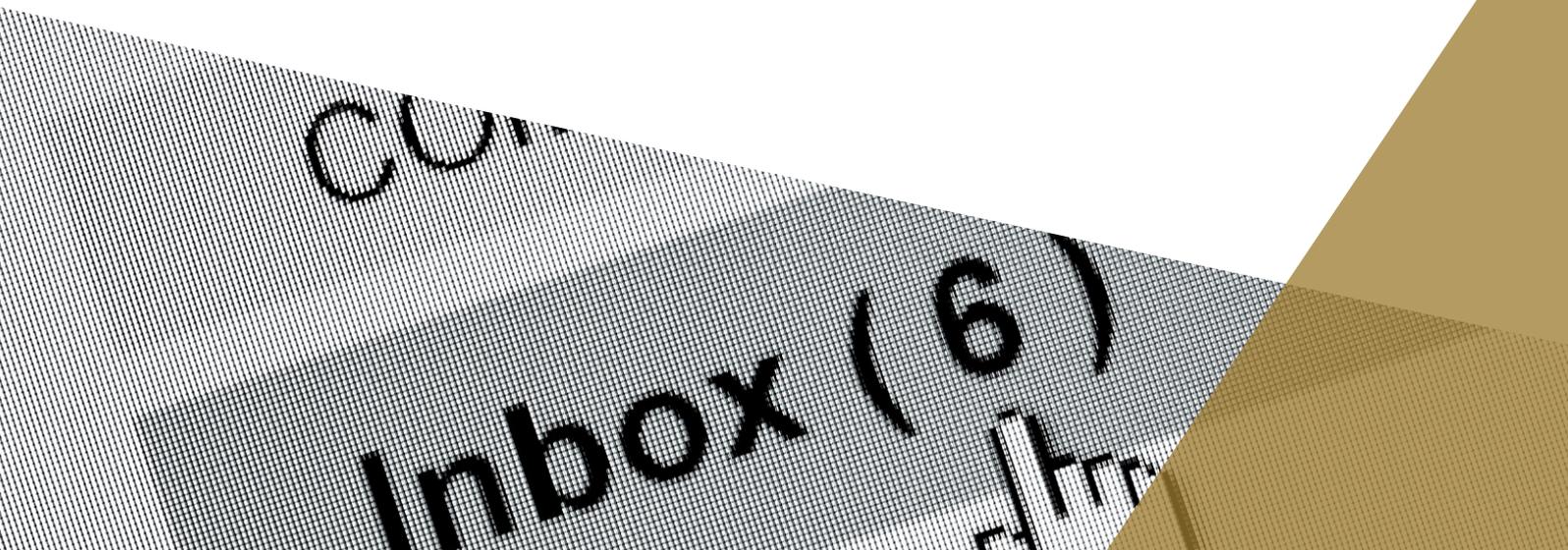
Useful add-ons include popular video-conferencing providers such as Zoom and GoToMeeting allowing you to link to these through the calendar appointment/invite (although Google Meet or Hangouts are Google's own video conferencing functions).

G MAIL

GMail is almost identical to the personal version. As you might expect from Google, the search tool is quite powerful (a strength against Microsoft if you've tried searching in Outlook lately!).

For those who like to stay organised, there are some useful add-ons such as Capsule and Levitate (CRM software) which allow reminders and customer notes to be recorded. There are add-ons to integrate with popular productivity tools such as Evernote and Slack. Docusign adds signatures to email attachments. Google signatures are pretty uninspiring but again there are add-ons to enhance these if desired. Some add-ons do require paid subscriptions to the developer.

If users are likely to have internet connection problems then Offline mode may need to be switched on to allow the last 30-90 days of email to be viewed.



DOCS

Docs is a word processor which might feel quite similar to Word. Page numbers, headers and footers and tables are possible in this web-based application, although add-ons are required for Mail merges.

Frustratingly, since all of Google's software is web-based an internet connection is needed to work properly within them (docs, sheets, slides etc). Last year, Google introduced Offline mode but users may need to use Chrome and have their Administrators setup these Offline permissions. If a user loses access without having offline mode activated they'll find their work has autosaved but will find they can't add anything else to it until they restore their connection. Chromebook users may experience a better service.

SHEETS

Sheets feel similar to Excel and with the focus that Google has given to interoperability Excel files can be saved into Drive and opened in Sheets. In recent years, Google have refined Sheets so that it better competes with Excel - introducing Macros and better charts for instance.

Like Docs, offline working needs to be enabled if internet connections are going to be imperfect. Add-ons also need to be enabled particularly those that support MailMerge's (Autocrat tends to work well). Forms (Googles Form creator) and Sheets work well together with form submissions collated in a spreadsheet which can then be mail merged into a document.

SLIDES

Google's version of Powerpoint. As before - add-ons are your friend if you're looking for advanced functions (in the case of slides Surveys within the presentation for instance).



GROUPS

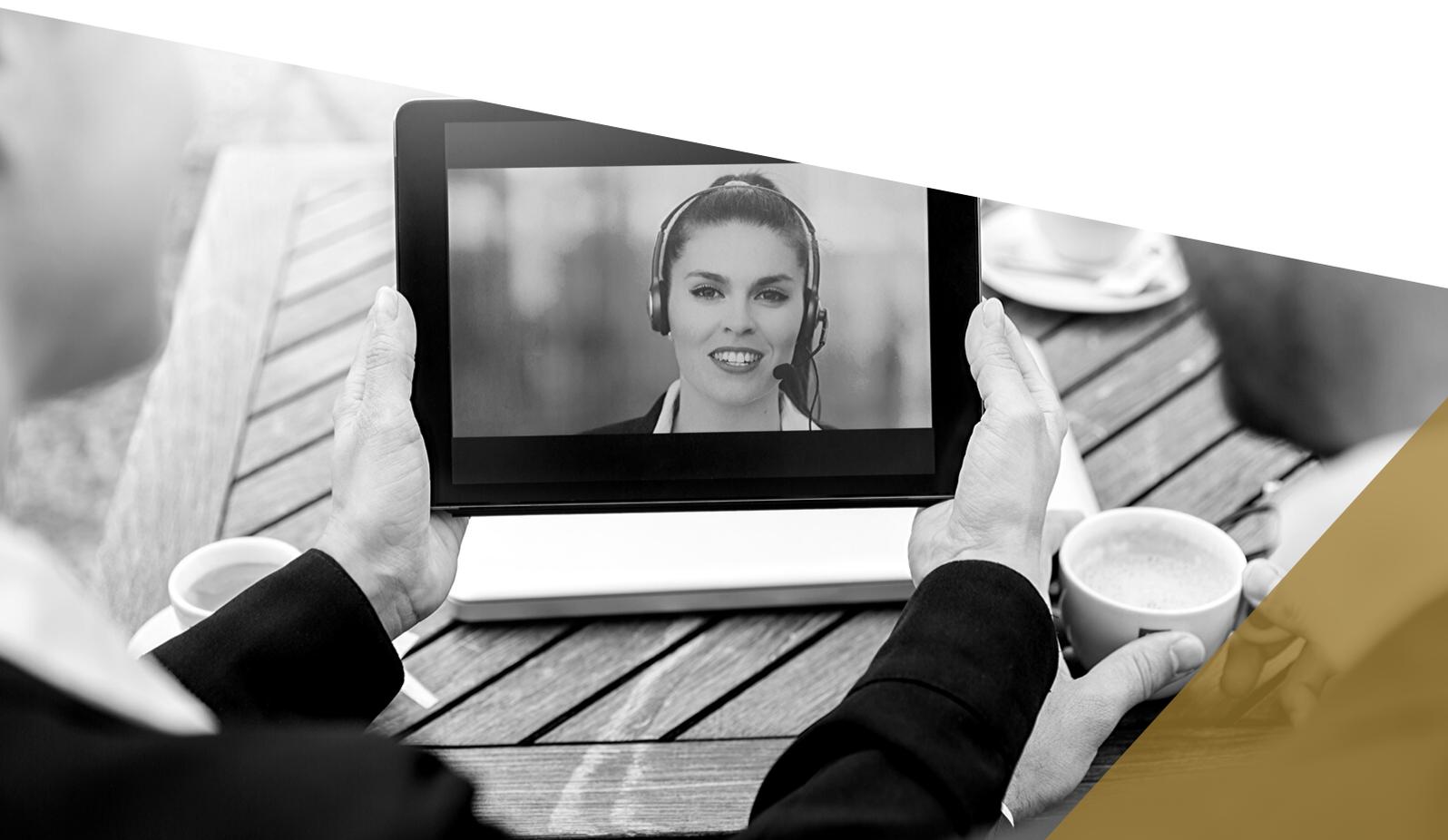
Google's Groups is an interesting and underused tool. It allows users to set up groups specific to topics or projects. Users can create a group for a project and engage in discussion, opening topics and assigning tasks.

CLASSROOM

Classroom may need to be added to enterprise packages but makes an interesting training tool with some tweaking. When this is added, courses with topics, materials and assessments can be provided to those on the same domain as well as those outside (with a little adjustment to permissions).

HANGOUTS/MEET

Meet is Google's equivalent of Skype. It allows upto 30 users to hold a call. Google also offer a less formal version, Hangouts, (which we find more reliable than Meet), although it appears this may be phased out very soon.



G SUITE FOR NON-PROFITS

Google offer G Suite for no-cost to charity organisations. Countries offer various means to access this but you'll generally need a validation token from TechSoup.

With Google for Non-Profits you'll be able to connect your domain, setup email accounts for your committee/volunteers, create training on Google classroom and use all of the other G Suite features outlined in this guide.

We've worked with several non-profits to setup their G Suite allowing them to have professional emails for instance, bookings@communitycentre.com and develop a repository for all of their documents - reducing the amount of paper they use and store.

Speak to us today about setting up a Google for Non-Profits account and getting started bringing your ways of working into modern times:

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