

# How to manage large teams in MS Teams

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BEST PRACTICES



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# INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years, MS Teams has seen large growth and adoption in many companies. With MS Teams adoption, people are also creating larger and larger teams.

Microsoft has constantly increased the maximum number of team members in a team from the initial 999 limit to 25000. This eBook will discuss how to best deal with large teams in your organization. Most of the teams you will create will tend to be limited to a few people working on a common project, but there are cases when you might need much larger teams. We will discuss when creating large teams is a good idea and how to manage them best.

# WHEN SHOULD YOU USE LARGE TEAMS?

Before discussing how to create a large team, let's stop and think if you should even be creating it. MS Teams is ideal for people working together, where they can chat, share files, have meetings, etc. Here are a few use cases where creating teams is a good idea:

- **Large teams for departments, business divisions, or even the entire company.** For instance, the marketing team should share all communications with everyone in the department and engage in a conversation.

- **Large teams for people with mutual interests.** These are usually public, so people can freely join depending on their interests. Those can be from sports, to decorating your home, to basically anything you can think of.

- **Collaboration with a large group of external users.** You might have large groups of customers in your community programs, offering them early access to provide feedback.

You might have many more unique cases where large teams make sense, but you can get a clear picture when they make sense. You expect the team's constructive and productive conversation to occur in all cases.

Here are some cases where you might be better off using a tool other than Teams:

- **You are already using Yammer.** Then stick to using a familiar tool for organizing communities based on employee interest. It can be self-organizing and great for internal support and sharing knowledge.

- **You want to share important company/department news.** Writing important news might be better in SharePoint and sharing the news posts via Outlook, and it will ensure a bigger reach and easier searchability down the line. People might be sick or on vacation and miss things in teams and searching history in teams is not an enjoyable experience to find some older news posts.

- **You are not expecting productive discussions on a topic.** Sticking to other channels like email might be better. To avoid nonconstructive discussion, which serves as a distraction in people's day-to-day work.

Some of the disadvantages we mentioned can be overcome by following some best practices, but more on that later.

## HOW DO YOU CREATE LARGE TEAMS?

Suppose you weighed your options and decided that a large team is right for you. The next challenge is how to create it. You will not likely use the Teams standard UI and add thousands of users one by one. Luckily there are more friendly options available, and the right one for you might depend on what you already have and your team's security (private vs. public). Learn more about that in our blog [A User Guide: How to Choose Between Public vs. Private Microsoft Teams](#). Another key factor in your decision might be what kind of licenses you own and how you will manage the memberships over time (dynamic team vs. fixed membership).

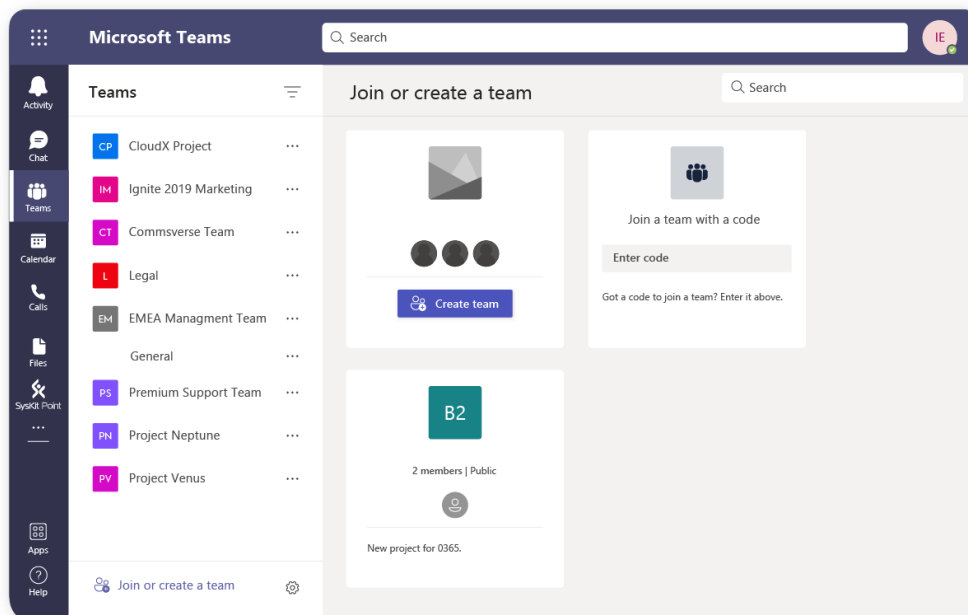
If you need to create a team for everyone in the organization, you are in luck and can use the [organization-wide team](#). Still, in scenarios where only a subset of all organization users need to be in a team, you will need to use one of the following options.

## Option 1: Import members from an existing Distribution list

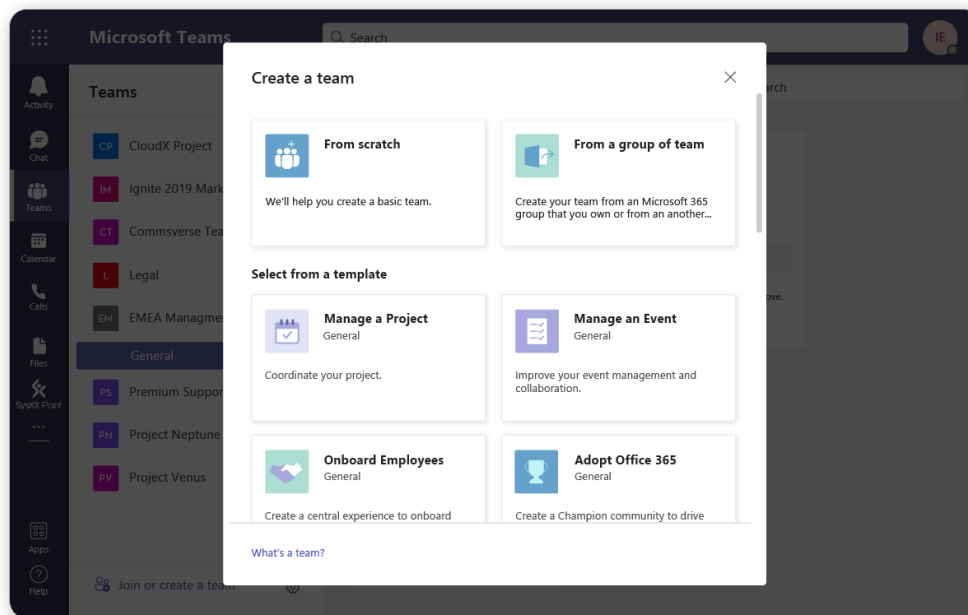
If you already have a distribution list (or security group) with the members you want to add to your team, you can use that as your starting point.

Here is how to do it:

1. Open the MS Teams client
2. Click **Join or create a team**
3. Click **Create a team**



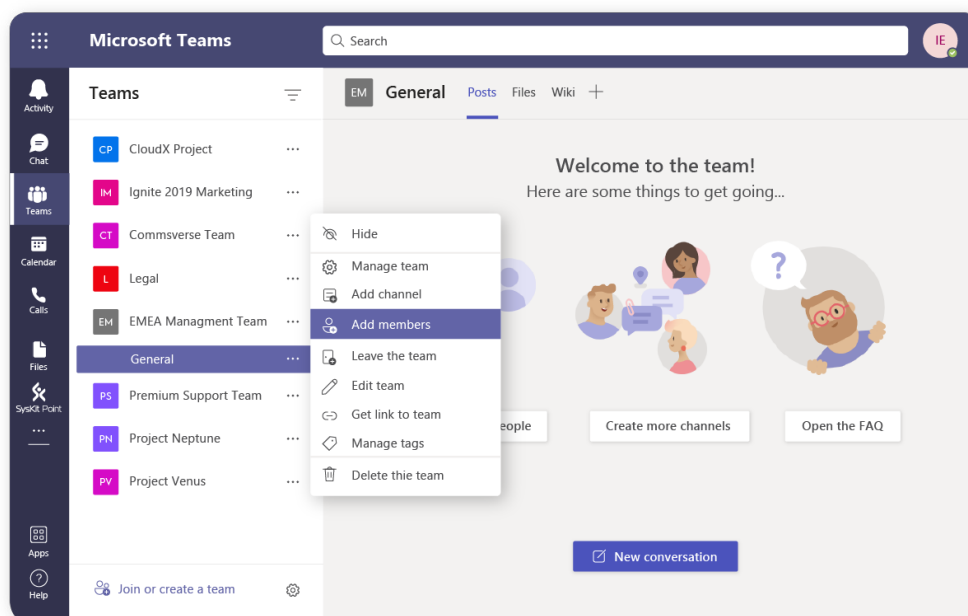
4. Select **From scratch** (there is an option here **From a group or team**, but this supports only MS 365 Groups, not distribution lists)



5. Select Privacy and enter your **desired name**

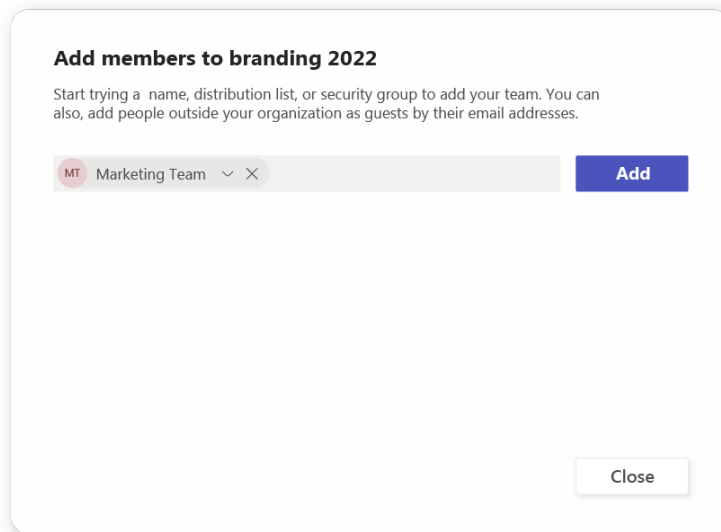
6. Create the team

7. Click the **ellipsis** next to the team name and click **Add member**





8. Type the name of the distribution list and click **Add**



**PROs:**

- Quick and easy
- No additional licenses required

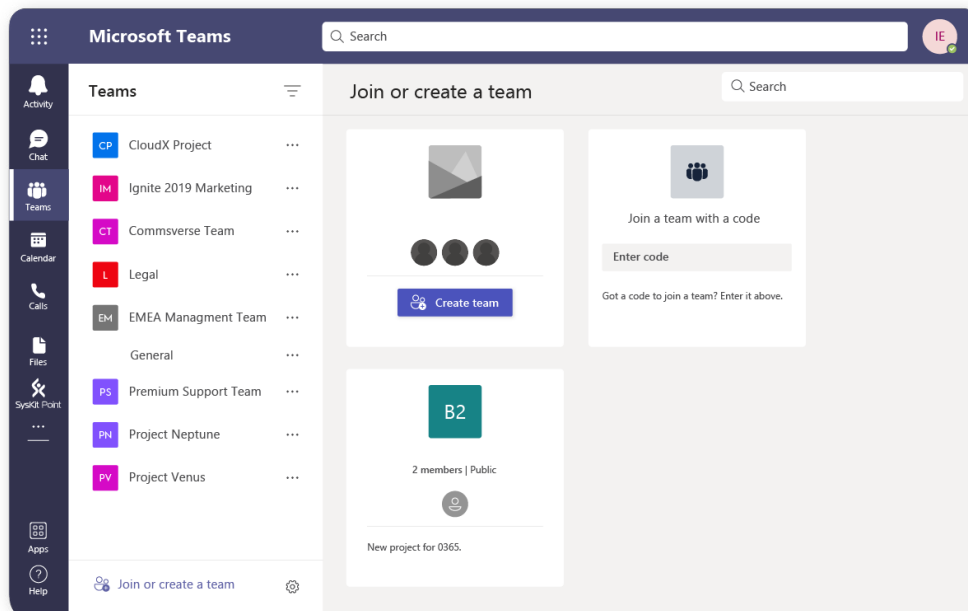
**CONs:**

- Managing membership changes in the future, now you have two large resources to manage

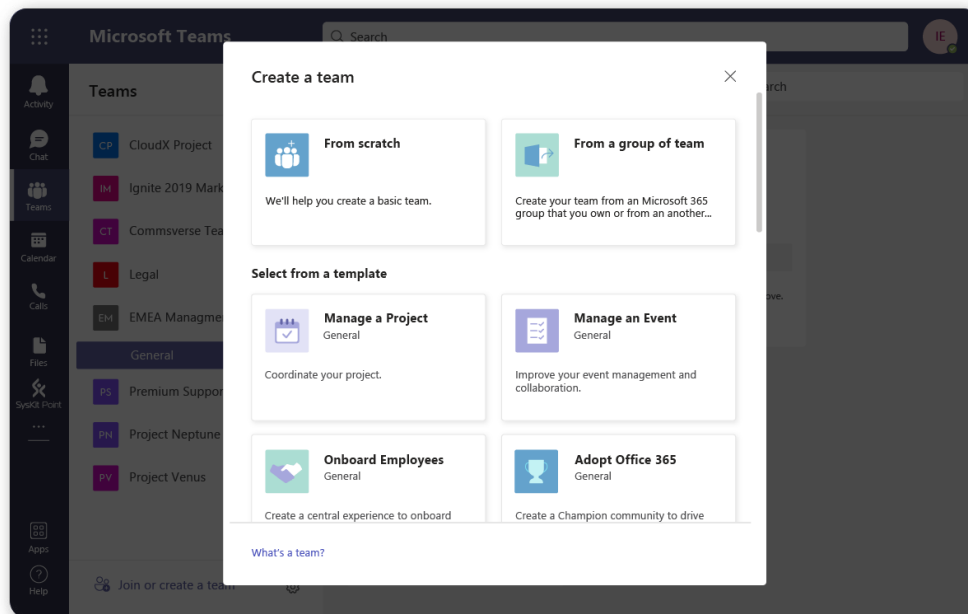
# Option 2: Create a team from an existing Microsoft 365 group

If you already have a Microsoft 365 group with the members you want to add to your team, you can use that as your starting point. Please remember that this is not an import operation; you are converting your existing group to an MS team. In the future, you can change members in the MS Teams client or directly on the Office 365 group, which will automatically sync.

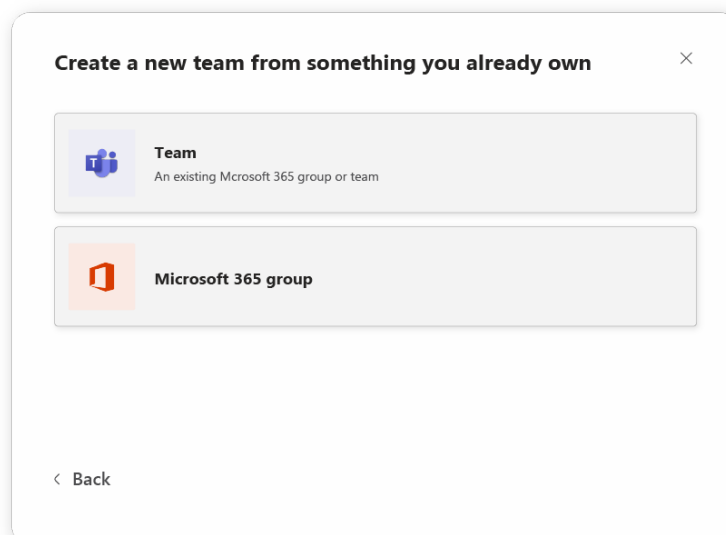
1. Open the MS Teams client
2. Click **Join or create a team**
3. Click **Create a team**



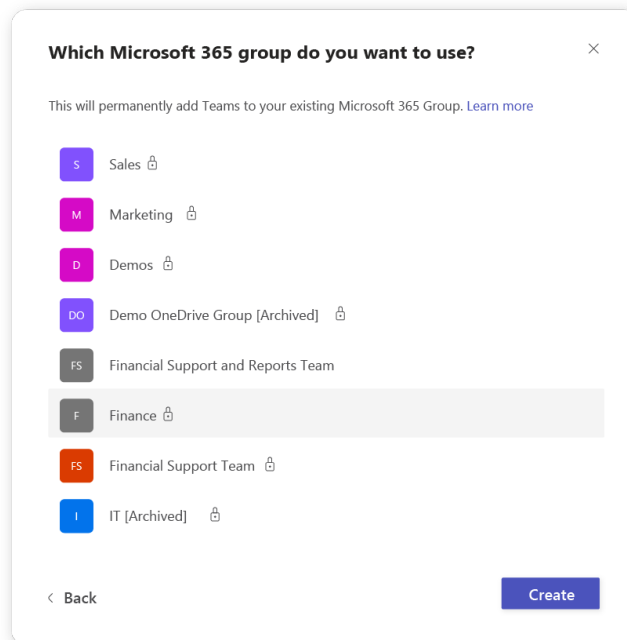
#### 4. Select **From a group or team**



#### 5. Select **Microsoft 365 group**



## 6. Pick your existing M365 Group and click **Create**



### **PROs:**

- Quick and easy
- No additional licenses required

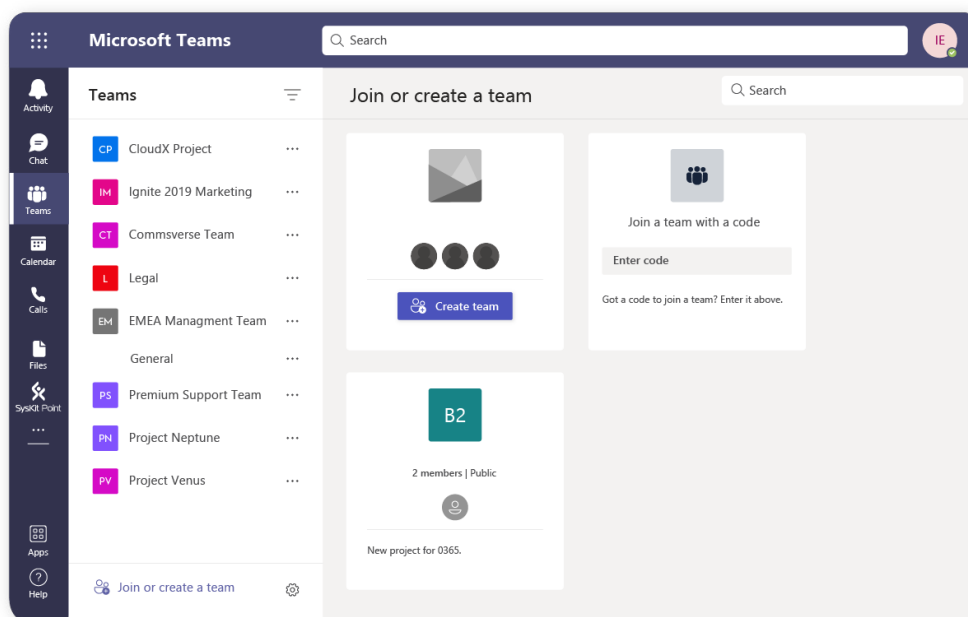
### **CONs:**

- This action is permanent; you cannot delete MS Teams from this M365 group, be sure you want this
- If you add or remove team members outside of the Teams client (by using the Microsoft 365 admin center, Azure AD, or Exchange Online PowerShell), it can take up to 24 hours for changes to be reflected in Teams.

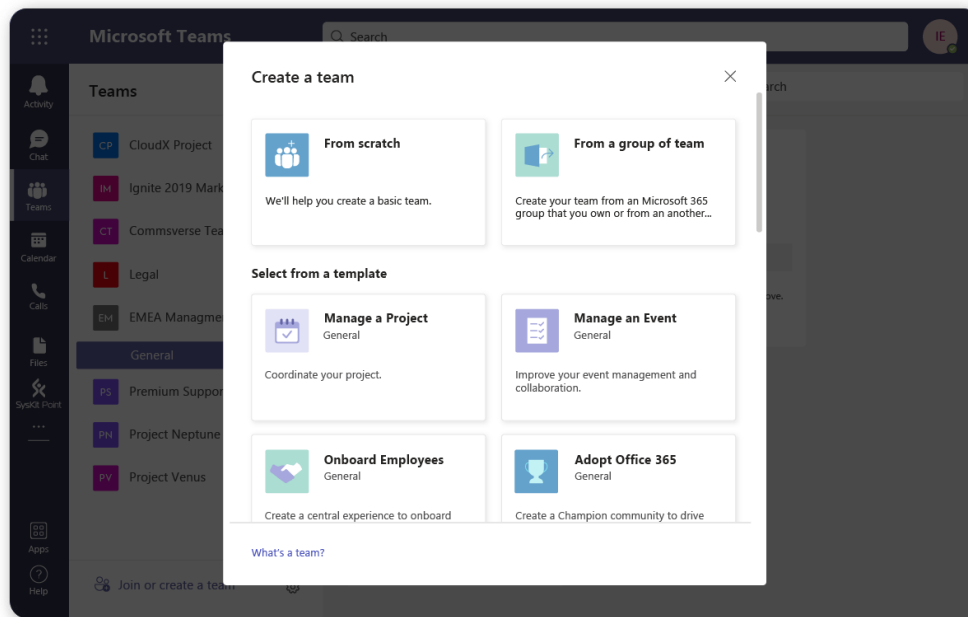
# Option 3: Import members from a CSV file

When you don't have existing distribution lists or M365 groups, the easiest way to create a large team is to use the [bulk import group members](#) functionality inside Azure Active Directory. As we mentioned, the linked team will automatically update if you change members in an M365 group.

1. Open the MS Teams client
2. Click **Join or create a team**
3. Click **Create a team**



#### 4. Select **From scratch**



#### 5. Select **Privacy and enter your desired name**

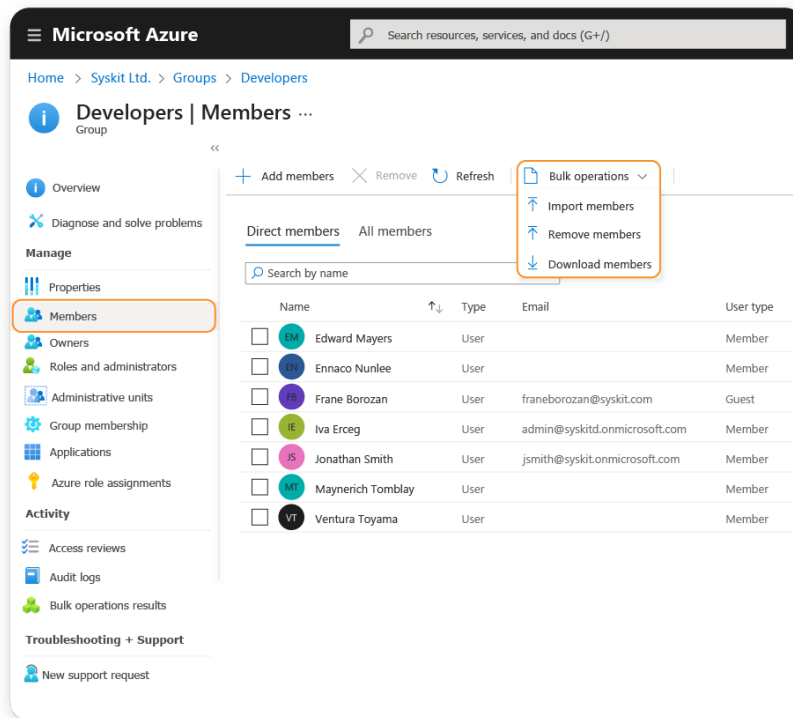
6. Create the team

7. Sign in to **Azure AD**

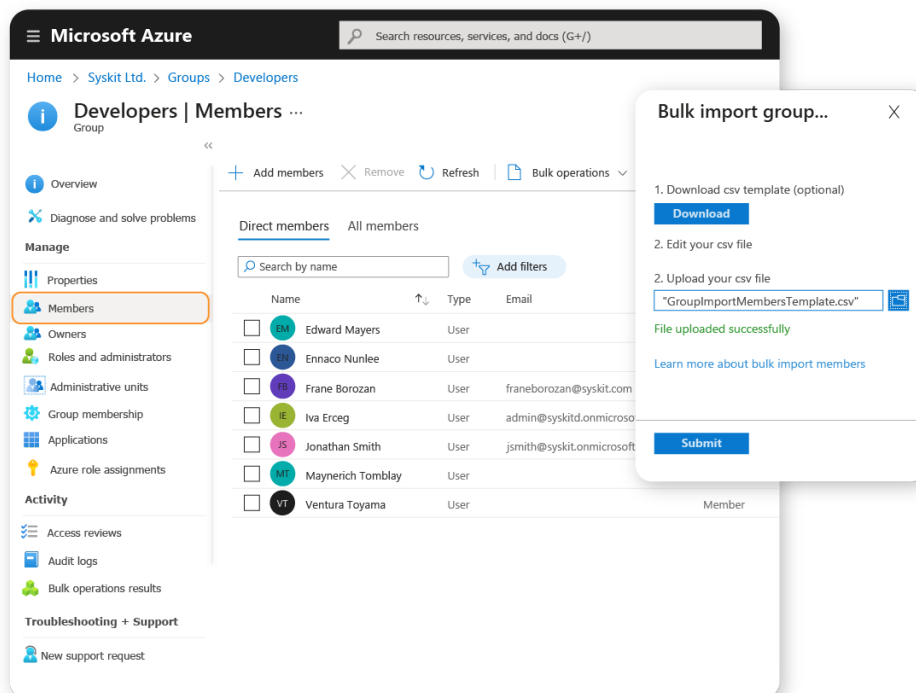
8. Select **Groups > All groups**

9. Open the team you just created and select the **Members page**

10. Select **Bulk operations > Import members'** action



## 11. Upload your CSV file and click Submit



## PROs:

- You don't need to have an existing distribution list of M365 groups to create your team
- No additional licenses required

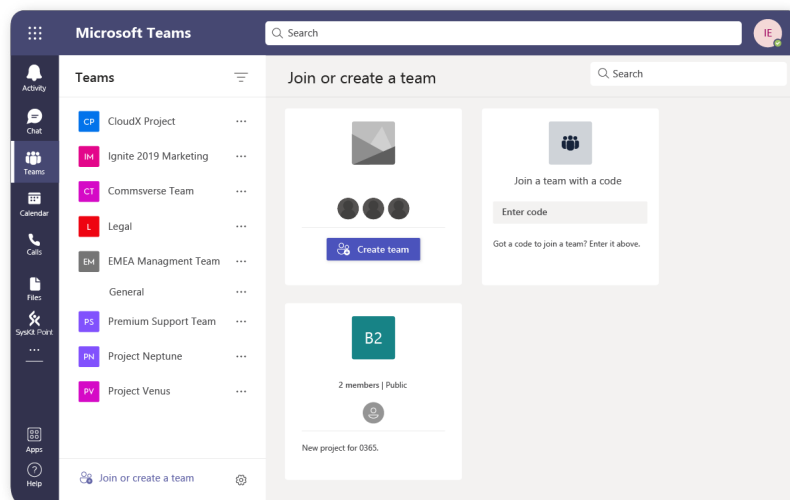
## CONs:

- More complex compared to other options
- It can take up to 24 hours for changes to be reflected in Teams

# Option 4: Use a joining code

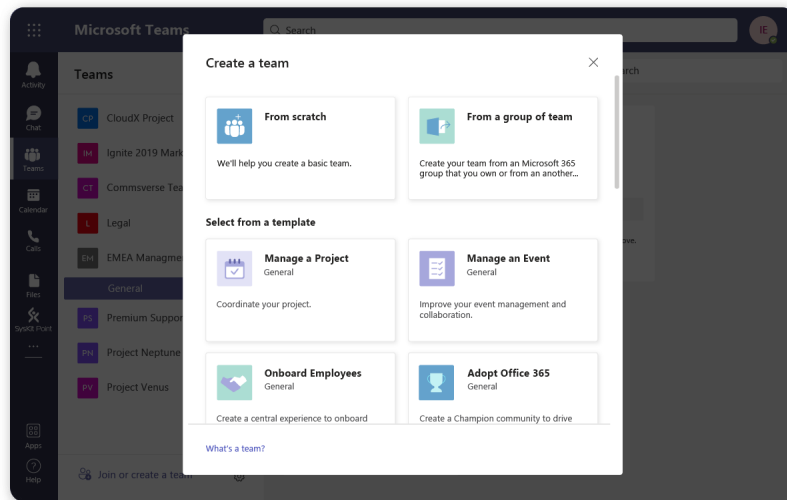
MS teams have a convenient functionality where users can join a team using the correct code. Team owners can [create a link or a code for joining a team](#), and your users can [use that link or code to join a team](#). This removes all effort from the administrators to manage memberships for this team.

1. Open the MS Teams client
2. Click **Join or create a team**
3. Click **Create a team**





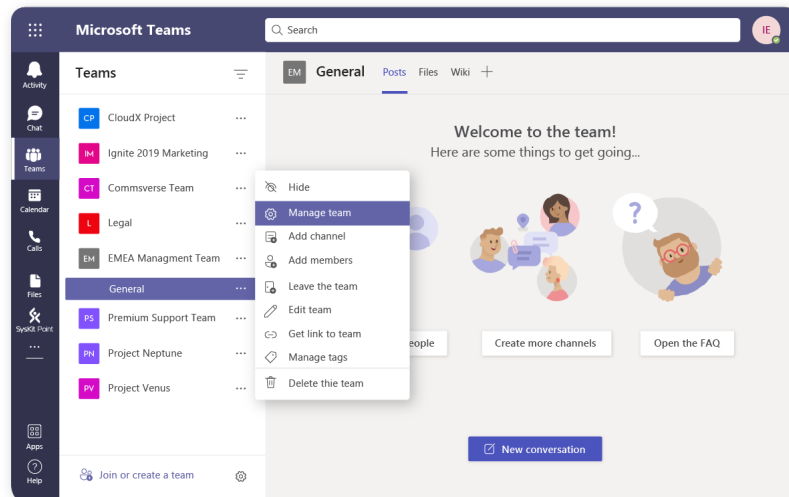
#### 4. Select **From scratch**



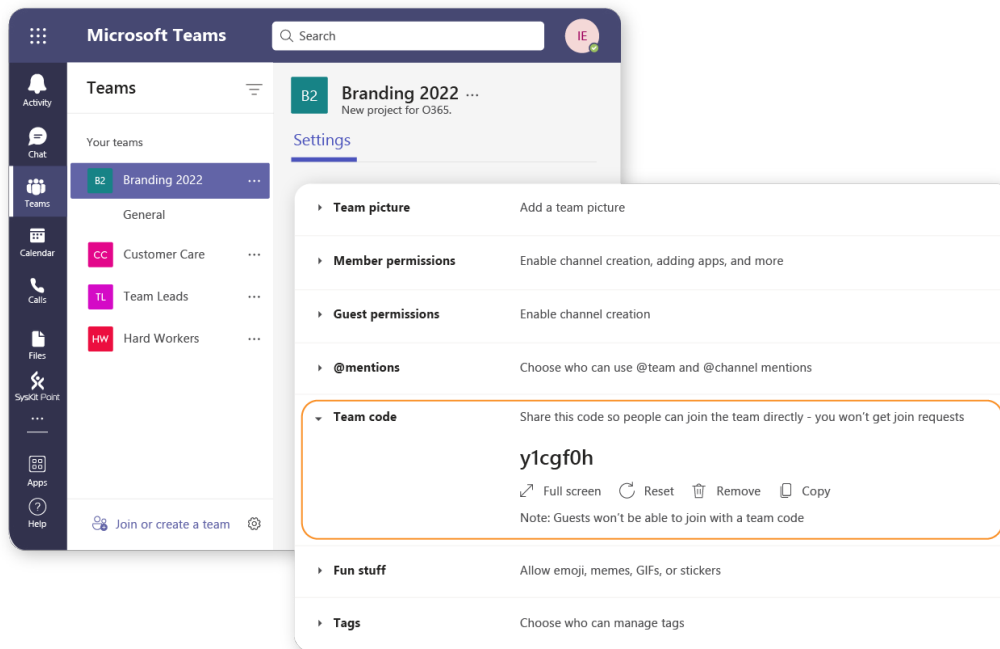
5. Select **Privacy** and enter your desired name

6. Create the team

7. Click the **ellipsis** next to the team name and click **Manage team**



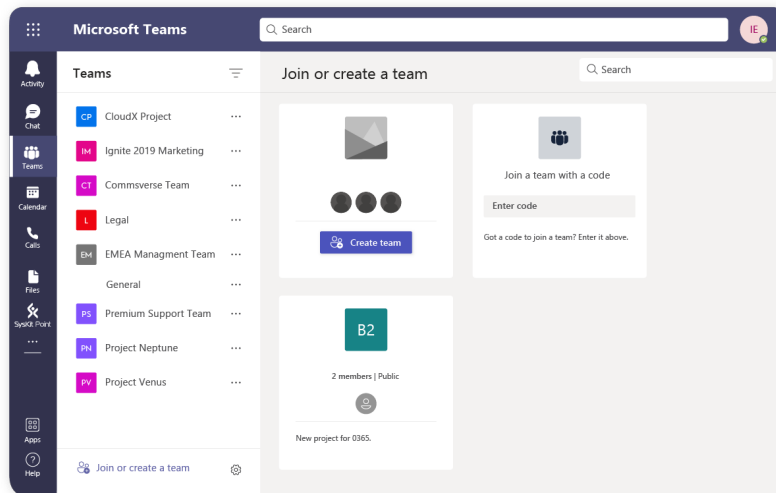
8. Select the **Settings** tab, and then **Team code** > **Generate**



9. Distribute the code to the users so they can join the team

**Once the user gets the joining code, they need to do the following:**

1. Open the MS Teams client
2. Click **Join or create a team**
3. Enter the code inside the **Join a team with a code** box and click **Join team**



### PROs:

- Fastest option
- No additional licenses required

### CONs:

- No easy way to validate if all required users joined the team with the code
- Guest users are not supported for using a joining code

## Option 5: Use a dynamic team

All the previous options more or less have the same problem: you are left with a very large team, and the out-of-the-box capabilities to manage members are limited. For team owners to review members, they can use search or settle with a lot of scrolling. There is no column filtering or sorting options in the MS Teams client. So, some common scenarios like finding “imposters” who are not in the correct department is no easy task.



To reduce your headache when managing large teams and reduce the chance of human error, it is a good idea to consider using [dynamic teams](#) for large teams. Dynamic membership enables the membership of a team to be defined by one or more rules that check for certain user attributes in Azure Active Directory (Azure AD). Users are automatically added or removed to the correct teams as user attributes change or users join and leave the tenant. For instance, you can create a rule for all users with the Department attribute Marketing to automatically join the Marketing team.

You first need to create a dynamic M365 group to create a dynamic team. Follow this [guide](#) to create your dynamic group with the defined rules on who will be a member. Once you have created the dynamic group, you can follow the steps we defined in **Option 2: Create a team from an existing Microsoft 365 group**.

#### **PROs:**

- Minimum governance needed from the IT side
- Fewer chances of human errors when managing memberships

#### **CONs:**

- AAD P1 license required for each member of a dynamic team
- There is a delay inside MS Teams to reflect dynamic membership changes once they take effect in the M365 group
- You still have to define who is the team owner manually

# BEST PRACTICES

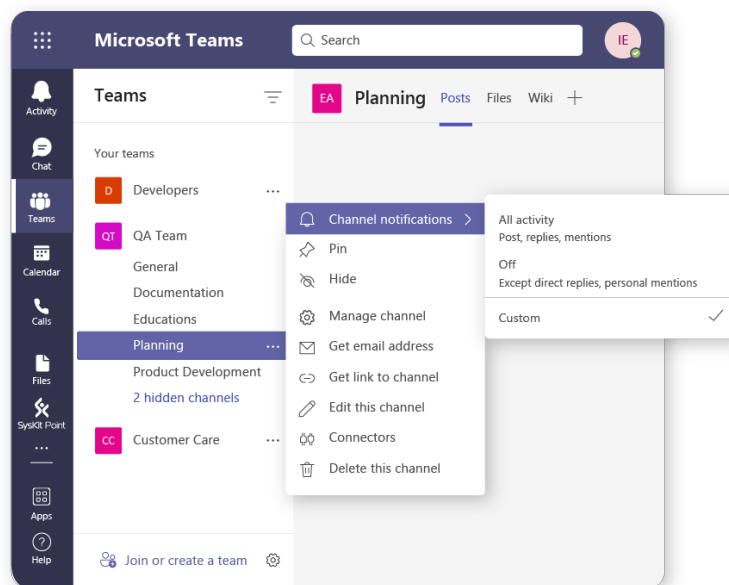
Once you finally create your large team, you must establish some rules and follow best practices.

New teams, by default, have very liberal settings empowering members with a lot of functionality. In the case of large teams expecting thousands of members, it might be a good idea to put limitations in place. Allowing too much freedom to your members could lead to non-productive and non-focused conversations, which cause a lot of distraction to all the members of that team. Do you want your end-users to be distracted from their work by constant teams notifications and mentions from large teams which might not even be business-critical?

# Best practice 1: Create channels to focus discussion

Once you've created your team, it's a good idea to start to think about the types of conversations you need to support. Create initial channels so people know where to contribute and find existing conversations. Use descriptive channel names to make it easy for people to know where to go for each conversation.

This way, you give more freedom to your members to set up different notification settings for different channels and decide which channels they want to Show/Hide based on their interests. This will ensure better productivity and fewer distractions caused by a large team with many active members.

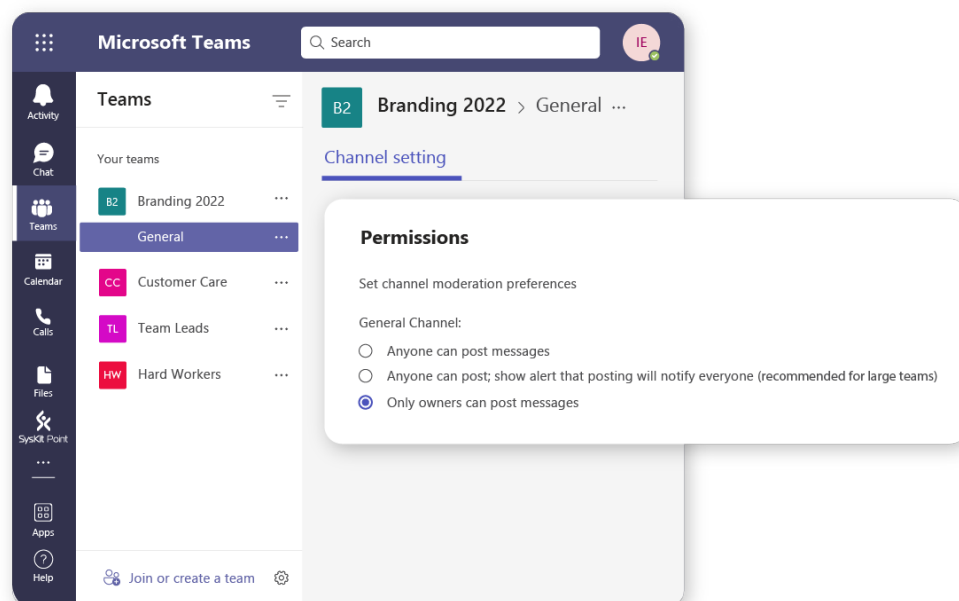


# Best practice 2: Restricting posts to the General channel

This best practice goes hand to hand with the previous one. Best practice 1: Create channels to focus the discussion. Keep a General channel for team owners to announce information to everyone, not discussions. You don't want your end-users to be overwhelmed by the number of discussions in General, and you can't remove, rename, or unfavorite the General channel. Channels appear alphabetically (with the General channel at the top).

To restrict posts in General to team owners, do the following:

1. Click the **ellipsis** next to the General channel and select **Manage channel**
2. Select the **Channel settings** tab and then **Permissions**
3. Select the **Only owners can post messages** option

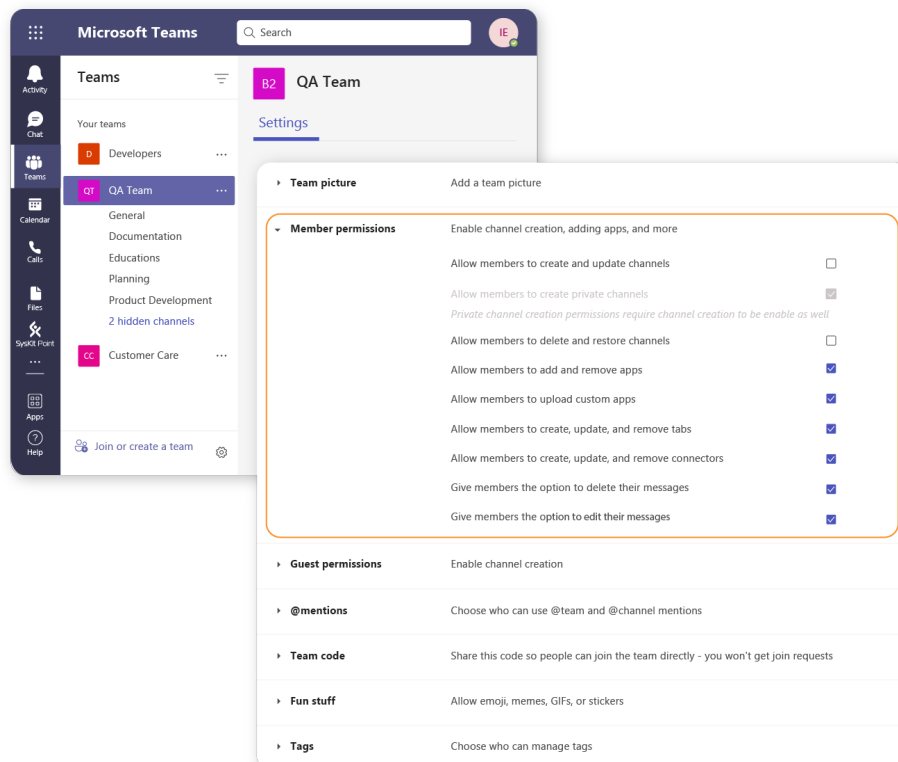


# Best practice 3: Restrict channel creation

Considering that large teams will have thousands of members, if you allow any team member to create new channels, you will end up with channel sprawl. It will be very hard for users to pick the appropriate channel for certain discussions with so many options.

To restrict channel creation, do the following:

1. Click the **ellipsis** next to the team's name and select **Manage team**
2. Select the **Settings** tab and then **Member permissions**
3. Deselect **Allow members to create and update channels**
4. Deselect **Allow members to delete and restore channels**



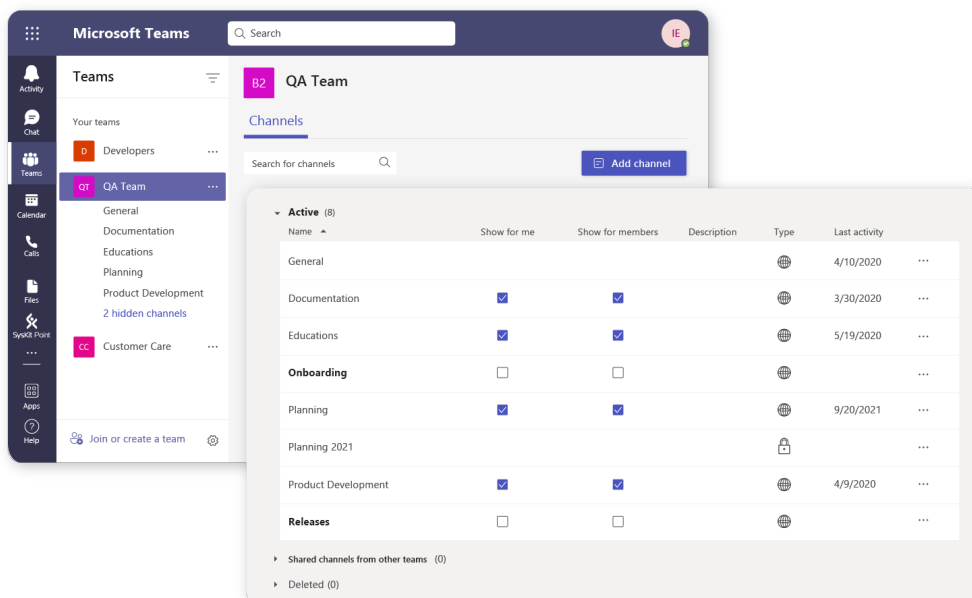


# Best practice 4: Add favorite channels

To speed up new user engagement and content discovery, you can select favorite channels available to the user by default. This way, the most important channels will be visible immediately and at the top of the Channels list.

To set up favorite channels, do the following:

1. Click the **ellipsis** next to the team's name and select Manage team
2. Select the **Channels** tab
3. Select **Show for members** for the channels you want to favorite

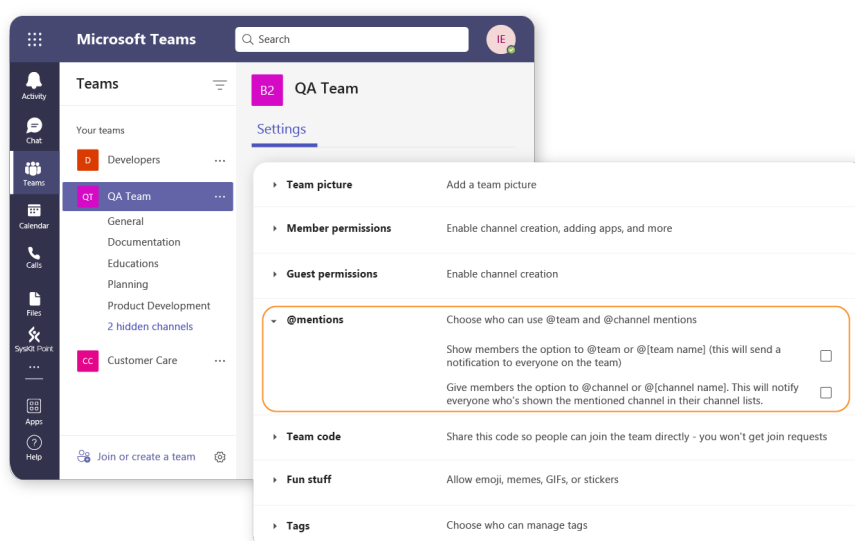


# Best practice 5: Regulate team and channel mentions

Team and channel mentions can draw the whole team's attention to individual channel posts. Once a mention is used in a post, a notification is sent to thousands of team members. If the notifications are too frequent, team members can become overloaded and complain to team owners. You can imagine that this works well in small teams, but it will be problematic when it comes to large teams.

To prevent team or channel mentions, do the following:

1. Click the **ellipsis** next to the team's name and select **Manage team**
2. Select the **Settings** tab and then **@mentions**
3. Deselect **@team mentions**
4. Deselect **@channel mentions**

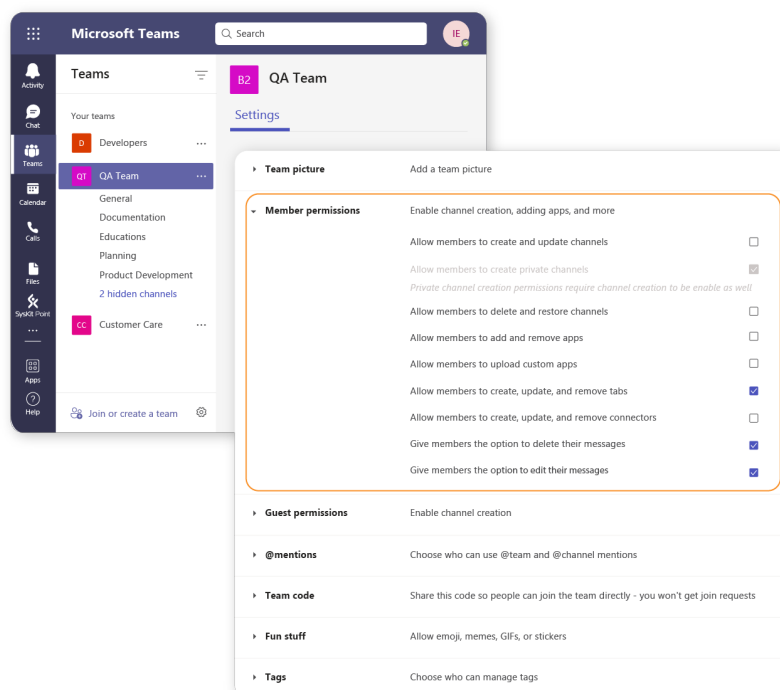


# Best practice 6: Regulate applications and bots

To prevent the addition of distracting applications or bots, team owners can disable, add, remove, and upload apps and connectors for team members. For example, users can add bots to follow active Twitter feeds, constantly posting new messages.

To regulate applications and bots, do the following:

1. Click the **ellipsis** next to the team's name and select **Manage team**
2. Select the **Settings** tab and then **Member permissions**
3. Deselect **Allow members to add and remove apps**
4. Deselect **Allow members to upload custom apps**
5. Deselect **Allow members to create, update and remove connectors**



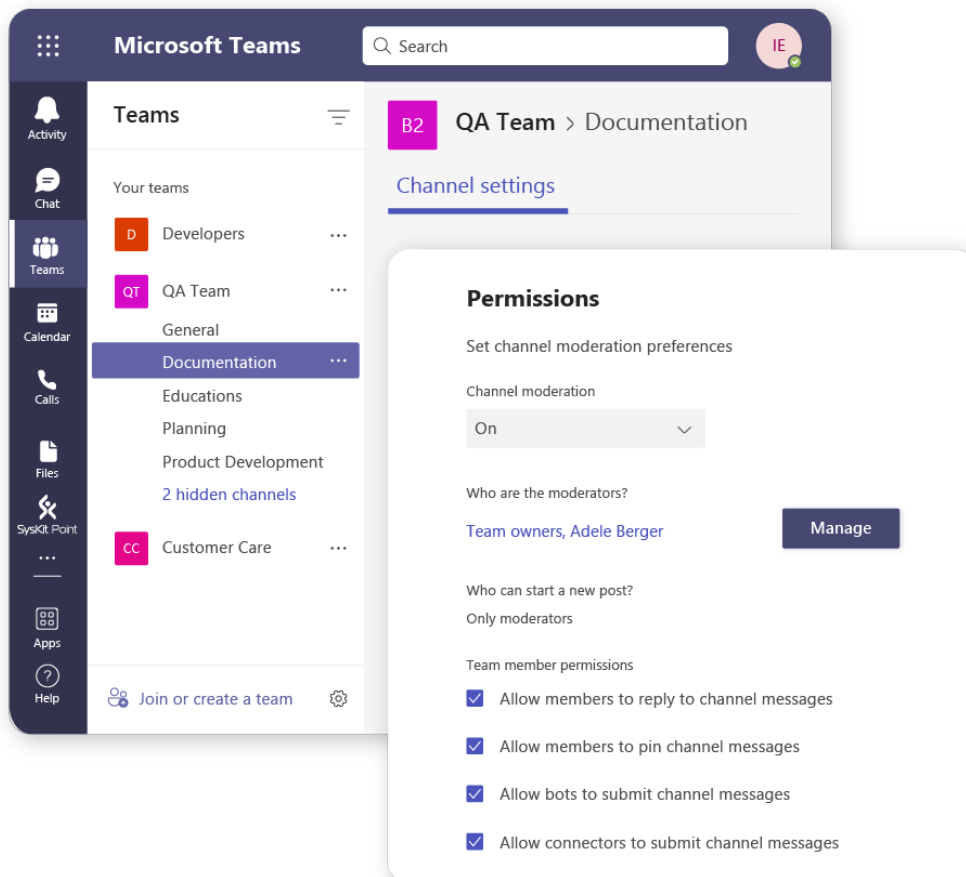
# Best practice 7: Consider setting up moderation in your channels

Team owners can turn on moderation for a channel to control who can start new posts and reply to posts in that channel. When you set up moderation, you can choose one or more team members to be moderators. Team owners are moderators by default.

For example, the Marketing team uses a specific channel to share key project announcements and deliverables. Sometimes team members post content to the channel that more appropriately belongs to other channels. The team owner wants to restrict information sharing in the channel to only announcements so that team members can use that channel to stay on top of what's important.

To set up moderation, do the following:

1. Click the **ellipsis** next to the channel you want to set up moderation for and select **Manage channel**
2. Select the **Channel** settings tab and then **Permissions**
3. Set **Channel Moderation** to **On**
4. Use the **Manage** button to set up additional moderators



# SUMMARY

Like with most things when dealing with large teams, it is important to have a plan and follow best practices. First, define your plan and see if an MS team is an appropriate choice for your use case. Then put in place the necessary controls for teams and channels. Without control, your large teams will be chaotic, leading to many topics and notifications popping out, which will overwhelm your users and serve as distractions from their work.

In addition, even with all the technical safeguards and best practices, never forget that user education is also a key factor. Try to educate your users on how to start new topics and when to use existing ones. Educate them on writing informative topics and descriptions and how to choose appropriate conversation channels. When you master all of this, you will have a great experience using large teams.

# MS Teams governance with SysKit Point

Dealing with large MS Teams environments is no easy task. From keeping track of what is created for which purpose, to who owns it, and what guest users have access to. [SysKit Point](#) can help you keep your MS Teams environment under control by providing you with all the necessary admin insights and automation for controlled growth. You can fully automate tasks such as provisioning new teams with approvals, doing periodical access reviews, or enforcing a minimum number of owners.

## References

- [Manage large teams in Microsoft Teams - Best practices](#)
- [The Joys of Managing Large Microsoft Teams](#)
- [Create or update a dynamic group in Azure Active Directory](#)
- [Best practices for organizing teams in Microsoft Teams](#)

## **SysKit**

Krste Pavletića 1

10000 Zagreb, Croatia

+44 (0) 20 3322-2034

+1 (631) 406-4900

+1 (855) 855-5071

**[sales@syskit.com](mailto:sales@syskit.com)**

[www.syskit.com](http://www.syskit.com)