

## IN THIS CHAPTER

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- » A brief introduction to online collaboration
- » A quick look at the G Suite mobile apps

# Chapter 1

## G Suite: The 50¢ Tour

Way, way back in 2006 (an era so far in the distant past that people somehow had to manage back then with no iPhones or Android devices), the wonderful eggheads at Google came up with an idea: What if, they mused amongst themselves, businesses could avoid dealing with the headache-inducing and sanity-destroying complexity of managing high-tech services such as email, messaging, scheduling, and file storage? What if, they continued, *Google* managed those services and all businesses had to worry about was, well, *business*? “Wouldn’t that be *great*?” they asked themselves.

The answer to that last question must have been a resounding “Yes!” because in that year Google Apps was born. This collection of online apps for email, messaging, calendars, and, a year or so later, documents and spreadsheets was an instant hit and has been sprouting new apps ever since. Now known to the world as G Suite, Google’s business-focused collection of online apps just keeps getting better and more popular. In this chapter, you discover what G Suite is all about, explore what G Suite offers, and have your most pressing G Suite questions answered. Won’t that be *great*?

# What Is G Suite?

In the world of business jargon, a *silo* is a person or department that can't or won't share information with other people or departments in the company. Not all that long ago, *all* employees were silos in a way. Why? Because they beavered away at their computers using installed software such as Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel, with all of their documents stored safely on their hard drives. Sure, every now and then they shared a document on the network or via email, but for the most part they worked in not-so-splendid isolation from their peers.

But as management gurus and overpaid consultants have been telling anyone who'll listen for at least a couple of decades now, silos are bad. On an individual level, silos make everyone less efficient and less productive; on a departmental level, silos create duplication of effort and endless turf wars; on a company level, silos inhibit growth and innovation.

Yes, silos are nasty things, but how do you get rid of them? An alarmingly large number of management reports and business books have been written to answer that question. It's a complex and difficult topic, but here are three solutions that are almost certainly common to all those reports and books:

- » Make it easy for individuals to access their software and documents no matter where they are or what type of device they're using.
- » Make it easy for people on the same team or in the same department to collaborate with each other.
- » Make it easy for people on different teams or in different departments to share information with each other.

And that, at long last, is where G Suite comes in. Google's G Suite is a set of applications that's designed to tear down silos. How? By implementing the preceding list of solutions in the following ways:

- » **G Suite apps aren't installed on your computer.** Instead, they live online (in the *cloud*, to use the vernacular), so you can access them from any location that has Internet access, using any type of device — desktop PC, laptop, Touch PC, tablet, smartphone, you name it — that you have handy.
- » **G Suite apps are built with collaboration in mind.** For example, two or more people can work on the same document at the same time. No, I'm not just making that up — it's a real feature. G Suite also enables you to easily email, meet, and chat with members of your team or department, so everyone stays in the loop.

» **G Suite documents aren't stored on your computer.** Instead, all G Suite data and documents reside in the cloud, so it's a snap to share them with anyone in your company.

Silos, schmi-los!

## What You Get with G Suite

My dictionary defines a *suite* as “a connected series of rooms to be used together.” You're probably thinking *hotel suite*, but that definition is actually a succinct and useful definition of the *Suite* part of the G Suite name. You can, in fact, define G Suite as “a connected series of Google apps to be used together.” That is, the G Suite apps are all awesome when used by themselves, but they're designed in a way that connects them together to make your work life easier, more efficient, and more productive.

Okay, so what are these apps that I've been going on and on about? Table 1-1 provides the list, with pointers to where you can find more info later in this book.

**TABLE 1-1** The G Suite Apps

App	What You Can Do with It	Where to Find More Info
Gmail	Send and receive email messages. (See Figure 1-1.) You can also share files as attachments, organize messages, control email conversations, and more.	Chapter 2 Chapter 18
Calendar	Maintain an online schedule of appointments and other events. (See Figure 1-2.) You can also see reminders of upcoming events, schedule repeating events, share calendars, and more.	Chapter 3 Chapter 12
Contacts	Create and maintain an online address book. (See Figure 1-3.) For each contact, you can store info such as the person's name, email address, and phone number. You can also import contacts, group related contacts, and more.	Chapter 4
Docs	Create, edit, and collaborate on word processing documents. You can change the layout, add bulleted and numbered lists, work with headers and footers, format text, paragraphs, and pages, and more.	Chapter 5 Chapter 6 Chapter 7 Chapter 11

(continued)

**TABLE 1-1 (continued)**

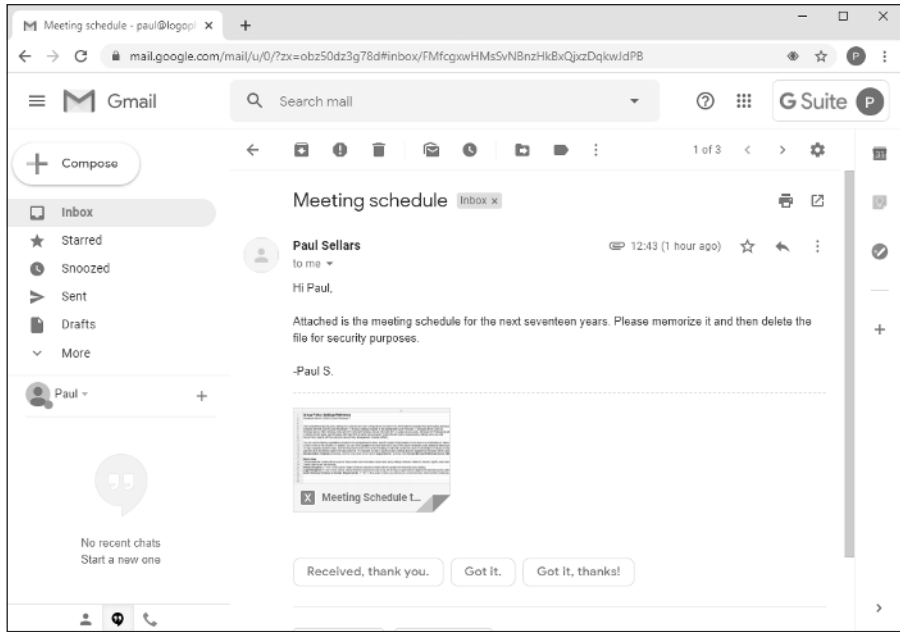
App	What You Can Do with It	Where to Find More Info
Sheets	Create, edit, and collaborate on spreadsheets. You can build formulas, sort and filter data, analyze data, and more.	Chapter 8 Chapter 9 Chapter 11
Slides	Create, edit, and collaborate on presentations. You can change the theme, show your presentation, create slides that include text, images, shapes, and more.	Chapter 10 Chapter 11
Meet	Set up and join online meetings. You can invite people to a meeting, share resources, record and live-stream a meeting, and more.	Chapter 13
Chat	Exchange real-time messages with members of your team, department, or organization.	Chapter 14
Groups	Join and create groups for posting messages, sharing files, and more.	Chapter 15
Forms	Create forms, quizzes, and surveys to gather information and opinions from members of your team, department, or organization.	Chapter 16
Keep	Create, edit, and share notes.	Chapter 16
Drive	Store, manage, and share files online.	Chapter 11

## Using Apps Online — Really? Here Are the FAQs

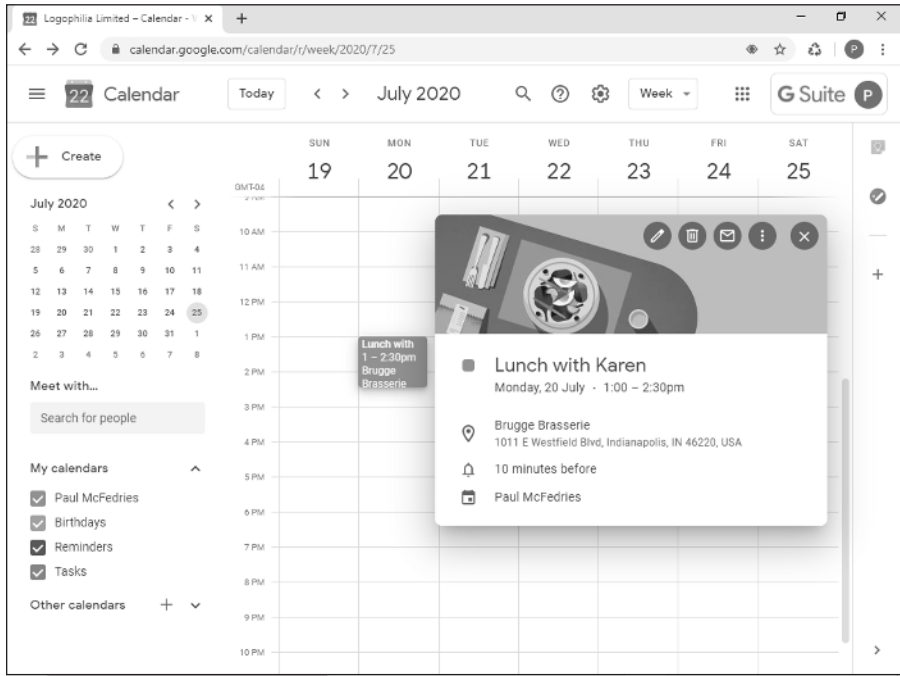
When folks switch to G Suite, if they're used to working with programs installed on their PCs, then the idea of using apps that somehow work online is the stuff of science fiction. It doesn't help that the G Suite apps *look* just like their PC-installed counterparts. (Check out Figures 1-1, 1-2, and 1-3 to see what I mean). How is any of this possible, and does it actually work? Those are great questions, and I'll try to answer them by walking you through a long list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) from people just like you who are new to G Suite:

» **Won't everyone on the Internet see my stuff?** Nope. Your company's G Suite administrator will have provided you with a G Suite account. This means the only way to see your stuff is to sign in using your G Suite email address and account password. The only way other people can see your stuff is if you choose to show it to them by using G Suite's extensive collaboration-and-sharing features. (See the chapters in Part 3.)

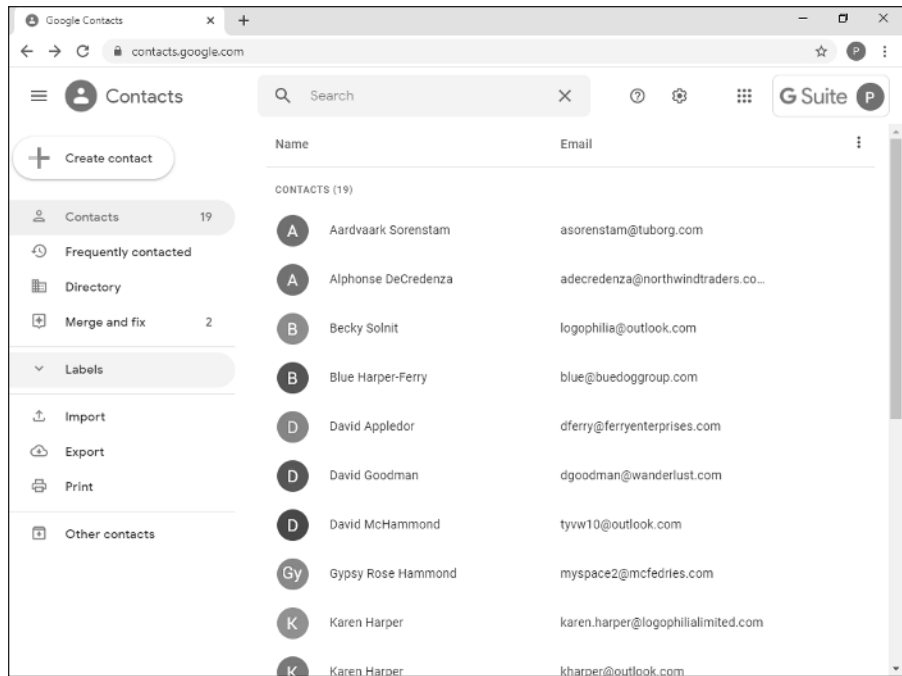
- » **Okay, but can't tech-savvy snoops somehow "tap in" to my data as it goes back and forth between my computer and wherever this "cloud" is located?** Dang, but that's a good question! The bad news is that, yes, it's technically possible for someone to "eavesdrop" on your data, a practice called *packet-sniffing*. The good news is that your data is scrambled (*encrypted*, in security-speak) as it travels between the cloud and your computer, so all that theoretical packet-sniffer will sniff is gobbledygook.
- » **Okay, but won't my account get hacked?** Sheesh, you just won't let up, will you? The short answer is "Probably not." Yes, I know, that *probably* isn't very reassuring. Let me say two things about this:
- First, know that the Google servers that are home to your G Suite apps and data are among the most secure in the world. No system is hackerproof, but Google's systems are as close as you can get.
  - Second, it's axiomatic (taken for granted, in other words) in security circles that the virtual chains that secure online systems are only as strong as their weakest link. What's the weakest link in the G Suite security chain? I'm afraid the answer is *you*. No offense intended, but even with an online service that has state-of-the-art security, that protection means nothing if attackers get their mitts on your sign-in data. So keep your password to yourself and be sure to carefully read all the good stuff in Chapter 19.
- » **Is my data safe?** Definitely. G Suite keeps multiple copies of your data in different locations in the cloud, and it also regularly backs up your data.
- » **But won't there be big problems if the power goes out?** Nope. The G Suite apps save your documents and data as you work, so even if your power goes down for the count, your data remains safe and sound on the G Suite servers, waiting patiently for you to return.
- » **Can I work when I'm offline?** I'm afraid not. G Suite's apps are all online-only, so you need an Internet connection to access and work with any G Suite app.
- » **G Suite has so many apps! Do I need to keep them all updated whenever new versions come out?** No, and this is one of the key benefits of using online apps. You'll never — I repeat, *never* — have to install or update any of the G Suite apps! All that malarkey is handled behind the scenes by Google, so every time you access, say, Gmail, you can rest assured that you're using the very latest version of the app.
- » **A nerd I know described G Suite as "SaaS," which is too weird for me. Do I need to know what SaaS is?** Not even a little bit. (But if your curiosity gets the better of you, have a read of the nearby sidebar "Another FAQ: What's all this about a 'cloud'?" for the answer.)



**FIGURE 1-1:**  
Gmail: G Suite's  
email app.



**FIGURE 1-2:**  
Calendar:  
G Suite's  
scheduling app.



**FIGURE 1-3:** Contacts: G Suite's contact management app.



TECHNICAL  
STUFF

## ANOTHER FAQ: WHAT'S ALL THIS ABOUT A "CLOUD"?

I've mentioned the term *cloud* a couple of times now, so let me take a few minutes of your precious time to explain what I'm talking about. In many network diagrams (schematics that show the overall layout of a network's infrastructure), the designer is most interested in the devices that connect to the network, not in the network itself. After all, the details of what happens inside the network to shunt signals from source to destination are often extremely complex and convoluted, so all that minutiae would serve only to detract from the network diagram's larger message of showing which devices can connect to the network, how they connect, and their network entry and exit points.

When the designers of a network diagram want to show the network but not any of its details, they almost always abstract the network by displaying it as a cloud symbol. (It is, if you will, the yadda-yadda-yadda of network diagrams.) At first, the cloud symbol represented the workings of a single network, but in recent years it has come to represent the Internet (the network of networks).

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So far, so good. Earlier in this millennium, some folks had the bright idea that, rather than store files on local computers, you could store them on a server connected to the Internet, which meant that anyone with the proper credentials could access the files from anywhere in the world. Eventually, folks started storing programs on Internet servers, too, and started telling anyone who'd listen that these files and applications resided "in the cloud" (meaning on a server — or, more typically, a large collection of servers that reside in a special building called a *data center* — accessible via the Internet).

All the G Suite components (Gmail, Calendar, Docs, and so on) are examples of such apps — in the rarefied world of cloud computing geeks, these apps are described as *software as a service*, or *SaaS* — and they all reside inside Google's cloud service called, boringly, Google Cloud. So that's why I say that G Suite apps and your data live "in the cloud." That's also why, as I mention a bit earlier in this chapter, you need an Internet connection to use G Suite: It requires that connection to access all its cloud stuff.

## Introducing Online Collaboration

When I talk to people about G Suite, the feature that invariably raises eyebrows is online collaboration. Just the notion that two or more people can work on a document at the same time seems, well, *magical*. Yep, there's some mind-bogglingly sophisticated technology behind G Suite's collaboration features, but you don't require a PhD in computer science to use them.

As an example, take a look at Figure 1-4, which shows a file open in Docs. The figure actually shows a fistful of collaboration features, but I want to bring your attention to just these four:

- » In most cases, inviting fellow collaborators is a simple matter of clicking the Share button, pointed out near the top-right corner of Figure 1-4. You choose whom you want to share the document with, add a brief note (optional), and then send the invite. The invitees receive a link that they can click to be taken directly to the file to start their editing duties.
- » The G Suite app lets you know who's editing the document alongside you by displaying an icon for each collaborator. You can hover the mouse pointer over an icon to see that person's name and email address, plus options to contact that person via email, set up a meeting, send a message, or start a video call.



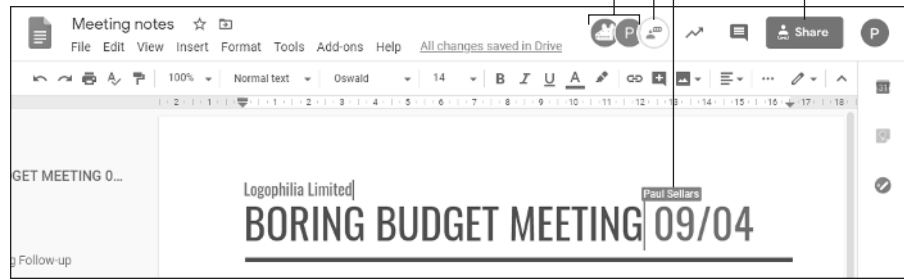
- » The G Suite app also displays the Show Chat button, which enables everyone to send messages back and forth. The potential for fun here is unlimited!
- » The G Suite app even shows you, in real-time, a tiny pop-up with the name of each collaborator so that you can see at a glance where each person is performing their editing chores.

Click Share to invite people to collaborate on the document.

The name of the person editing this part of the document

Click Show Chat to chat with your fellow collaborators.

Each icon represents someone working on the document.



**FIGURE 1-4:**  
A Docs file, with  
several people  
editing.



REMEMBER

I wrote this section to give you just a taste of G Suite collaboration prowess using the Docs app. For the full scoop on Docs collaboration, head for Chapter 11.

## Going Mobile

Although I don't talk about them in this book (otherwise, the book would be twice as long as it is), most of the G Suite apps come with mobile versions that run on Android and iOS devices. See either Google Play on your Android device or the App Store on your iOS device to install any of the G Suite apps.

To give you an idea of what's available, Table 1-2 runs through the G Suite apps, shows you how to access each one on the web, and lets you know whether an Android or iOS version is available.



REMEMBER

For those G Suite apps that lack a version specifically for your mobile device, you can still access those services on your phone or tablet by using your mobile web browser to surf to the app's web address.

**TABLE 1-2****The G Suite Mobile Apps**

App	Web Access	iOS App	Android App
Gmail	mail.google.com	✓	✓
Calendar	calendar.google.com	✓	✓
Contacts	contacts.google.com		✓
Docs	docs.google.com	✓	✓
Sheets	sheets.google.com	✓	✓
Slides	slides.google.com	✓	✓
Meet	meet.google.com	✓	✓
Chat	chat.google.com	✓	✓
Groups	groups.google.com		
Forms	forms.google.com		
Keep	keep.google.com	✓	✓
Drive	drive.google.com	✓	✓