

Gmail redesign turns it into a one-stop productivity suite [Update: It's official]

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- Gmail with tons of extra controls. There are now sections for “Mail,” “Chat,” “Rooms,” and “Meet.”
- The new mobile app, complete with all those new tabs.
- Gmail will point out messages you're ignoring.
- The “Chat” tab uses the dual-pane layout.
- Video chat gets a picture-in-picture view.
- All the old right-side panels are still here, so it's like every GSuite app in a single page.

It looks like big changes are coming to Gmail. Twitter user Tahin Rahman posted leaked slides (first spotted by 9to5Google) detailing a merger between Gmail, Google Docs, Google Chat, and Google Meet that looks to be coming to the Web and mobile soon. Google's “Cloud Next 2020” conference kicked off yesterday and will be ongoing for the next three weeks, and we've heard rumors in the past detailing this exact thing, so the slides appear to have been leaked early.

The goal of all this looks to be turning Gmail into a one-stop-shop productivity site, where you can do Slack-style room-based chat or single chats, make video calls, edit documents, and send emails. The desktop site is getting extra

controls in the top header and sidebar, while the main panel—which normally shows the inbox or a message—looks like it can be swapped out for other content, like a Google Doc. Meet video calls can be full-screened or float around in a picture-in-picture-style window. Don't forget, this is all *in addition to* the right-side panel that was introduced in the 2018 redesign, which also lets you open Google Calendar, Keep, and Tasks inside Gmail. With this design, it's like having every Google productivity app—Gmail, Chat, Meet, Calendar, Keep, and Tasks—crammed into a single page that makes you wonder why it's even called "Gmail" anymore.

Gmail has had a side-by-side two-panel view for a while, showing an Outlook-style inbox on the left and a message on the right. With this redesign, it looks like there's more of a focus on the two-panel view. The "Chats" page uses this two-panel view by default, and you can show "Chat," "Files," or "Tasks" in the left panel, with a document or something else living in the right panel. Google appears to be taking the layout of Gmail and using it for all sorts of other functionality.

The mobile Gmail app is getting revamped, too, with bottom tabs for "Mail," "Chat," "Rooms," and "Meet" all in the single Gmail app.

A sticky future

Since Gmail is one of Google's most popular and "sticky" products (meaning people spend a lot of time in it), it is often used as a trojan horse for less popular Google products. In this case, along with all the productivity stuff, Gmail is being used to boost Google Meet (the company's Zoom competitor) and Google Chat (the company's Slack clone, formerly Hangouts Chat). Both apps are victims of Google's need to constantly tear down and rebuild its messaging apps over and over again, making it hard to build any kind of user

base. Chat and Meet are both pretty new and immature apps, and they weren't ready in time to ride the work-from-home video chat craze brought about by COVID-19.

Previously, we've seen Gmail get infected with Google+ and Google Buzz, back when Google was using Gmail to chase the last Internet fad, social media. The productivity additions make Gmail look way more complicated, but at least they fit some kind of reasonable workflow.

We'll probably hear more about this during Google Cloud Next, which is happening for the next three weeks. July 21 starts the "Productivity and collaboration" week, which sounds like a good spot to formally announce these changes. A talk called "Communication in G Suite: The future of Gmail, Chat, Meet, and More" sounds like the one to watch.

Update: Google makes it official

With the leak already out there, Google went ahead and made it official with a blog post titled "Introducing your new home for work in G Suite." The post reads "G Suite now intelligently brings together the people, content, and tasks you need to make the most of your time. We're integrating core tools like video, chat, email, files, and tasks, and making them better together, so that you can more easily stay on top of things, from anywhere."

There's also a video:

[embedded content]

Part of the sales pitch appears to be that, by combining all of this stuff into a single app, it will be easy to let everyone else know when you're busy. For instance, if you have a call scheduled in Google Meet, your Chat profile can show that you are busy in a call. If you want to focus and turn off notifications for a few hours, a single control can mute incoming messages from all of these services.

The most important takeaway is that, for now, this is only for G Suite and not consumer versions of Gmail. Google told The Verge Gmail-integration-with-everything will launch this week as an “early access preview” for G Suite customers with a rollout to all G Suite accounts later this year. As for consumer accounts, Google told The Verge it is “actively thinking through how and when to bring this experience to the consumers who might want it.”

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