

Microsoft's Garage becomes an incubator of consumer apps

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For five years now, The Garage has served as Microsoft's incubator for employees' passion projects, an internal community of engineers, designers, hardware tinkerers and others from all different parts of the company who work on their own or with others on pet projects, some of which could potentially benefit the company.

Now, The Garage is being extended to also become a portal for customers to get "incubation" apps - lightweight, consumer-oriented, single-scenario apps that have been conceived of and brought to market quickly - into the hands of customers who can provide feedback, according to Microsoft. The apps include both those designed for work and for play.

About 15 Garage apps launched Wednesday at microsoft.com/garage target="_blank">www.microsoft.com/garage. The apps, some of which are cross platform, include Next Lock Screen, available on Android, which brings information to a user's lock screen, and Collaborate, available on Windows Phone and Windows 8.1, which is a shared whiteboard experience.

This expansion of The Garage's focus appears to be another way that CEO Satya Nadella is working to change Microsoft's culture to become more agile, quick and willing to experiment.

The Garage apps are first reviewed by an internal audience of Microsoft employees before they are available to the public, according to a

Microsoft blog post.

And "if an app doesn't work out, "We want to tell our engineers, "That was awesome, you did something really important for us. We learned tremendously from this app experience, and we know what will and what won't resonate with users from that. Congratulations! Now - move on to the next one and create something else," Emma Williams, Bing Design's general manager, says in the blog post.

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