How the Covid-19 Pandemic Redefines the Utility of Enterprise Collaboration Tools

Summary: To fight the threat of Coronavirus, a number of companies have rolled out work-from-home policies for their employees. Business trips are getting cancelled, and corporations are increasingly opting for audio and web conferencing and data sharing tools. By making communication secure and cost-effective, these virtual collaboration systems will not only help to address the ongoing challenge but also make work practices more efficient in the long run. If anything, this pandemic has only expedited the adoption of new-age tools and will define how workplaces of the future will evolve.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organisation on 17 March 2020, and India being one of the affected countries, is taking all possible steps to stop the spread of this deadly disease. The Central Government announced a nation-wide lockdown that requires people to stay inside their homes. The majority of organisations, including schools, colleges, shopping malls and private companies, have been shut down.

In the wake of these conditions, businesses are taking proactive decisions to protect their workers’ health while also trying to maintain the pace of critical operations. In addition to cancelling conferences and business travel, they have asked their employees to work from home.

Regardless of whether this is a short-term or a long-lasting threat, employee safety, supportive customer services and business continuity are now the top priorities for all enterprises.

Amidst these unprecedented conditions, companies that can enable their workers to stay productive with virtual collaboration will not only gain a measurable competitive advantage but also show how well-prepared they are to survive and thrive in the times to come.

A secure set of tools for engaging and secure collaboration

Tata Tele Business Services (TTBS) offers custom applications and solutions to make business meetings and project management more effective. When circumstances make it challenging to meet peers and clients in person, enterprises can still organise high-stake meetings, resolve complex issues and build business relationships. They can continue sharing data securely and connect with parties across national borders, cost-effectively.

Our collaboration tools that help to make virtual teamwork more productive include:

Web-Conferencing

The web-based audio and video conferencing system from TTBS has a variety of features to create a rich collaboration experience. It comes with a comprehensive admin control that allows the meeting initiator to set up a conference conveniently.

Users, too, get an instant, one-click access – from any desktop or mobile device connected to the Internet – to an intuitive meeting room where they can see and talk to other participants just as they would in a real conference.

This audio and web conferencing service can connect organisations to their clients, business partners and stakeholders in more than 80 countries. By using their webcams, the meeting participants create human connections without exposing themselves to any health risk. TTBS’ audio and web conferencing software enables them to share screens, stream presentations and send files from a meeting library. Teams can record real-time conversations for future reference.

Any small, medium or large enterprise can leverage the TTBS’ audio and web conferencing service where up to 125 people can join in though flexible joining options. Unlimited Conferencing facility ensures complete peace of mind.
You can simply record the call without any extra cost, and you can refer to the meeting points as per your convenience. What’s more, you can also share your desktop or file and collaborate with people across the country and globally.

With its budget-friendly billing model, it not only helps to save up on travel costs for meetings but also cuts the charges incurred on STD and ISD calls from traditional telephony. Moreover, rental charges are fixed. So, organisations can utilise the handy tools without concerns of mounting usage charges.

**Document Management System**

With the TTBS’ document management system, employees working from home can seamlessly transfer files that need to be reviewed or updated by their colleagues. The application makes project management simpler by allowing teams to create a secure and reliable data repository with built-in redundancy. The document management application is a software-as-a-service (SaaS) that can be accessed from anywhere at any time. Regardless of their locations, it helps teams to get organised, stay on track and complete tasks as per deadlines. The virtual sharing of files between teams also helps a business to reduce the costs incurred in physical archival of documents and their transfer by courier services. With less of printing work involved, it is an eco-friendly practice.

**International Bridging Service**

The International Bridging Service (IBS) by TTBS helps organisations connect with their offices, clients, business partners and stakeholders across global locations. With this cost-effective collaboration tool, users do not need an ISD facility on their phones, and they get crystal-clear voice quality while speaking to parties at the other end. By leveraging IBS, businesses can keep their international calling budget under control and simplify the accounting for such calls through a single bill that provides all essential details. Furthermore, the system is centrally administered, provides detailed usage reports, and thereby helps to ensure that company resources are not getting misused.

**Are virtual meeting tools actually successful?**

Virtual collaboration, when executed methodically, can be even more rewarding than face-to-face meetings. It presents good opportunities to build candour and trust between team members.

Video-enabled conferencing makes people feel more engaged than basic auditory communication via mobile phones. It humanises a virtual conference room by allowing people to see each other’s reactions and emotions.

Without video, the meeting organiser may not know if a prolonged moment of silence in the virtual meet occurred because somebody was not paying attention, or they were multi-tasking, or simply nodding their head in agreement. Facial expressions help to confirm their presence and understand responses better.

Moreover, businesses can make online collaboration as interactive and engaging as a real meeting. When they enter the virtual room, they can wave and say hello to each other through webcams. Employees can also use chat boxes to send appreciative comments for colleagues and share links to supplement any information being discussed. Dialogues become more meaningful, time is used more effectively, and it is easier to measure the progress before planning out the next steps on a project.

At a time when negative media headlines, concerns about own health and worries about the well-being of family members are affecting employee morale, work from home is the best practice that organisations can adopt for business continuity.

With a combination of audio, video, text and data sharing tools to support collaboration and productivity, sailing through these stressful times is not difficult. This time, it is COVID-19 that has emphasised on the need to move towards more productive collaboration solutions like virtual meetings. However, even after the crises is over, the risks of worsening traffic conditions, global warming and other climatic changes continue to strengthen the case for migration to remote conferencing and other bridging as well as document sharing applications.
The need for digital collaboration systems also stems from the fact that workers across the globe are now increasingly looking for work from home opportunities. A report by Zapier.com published towards the end of 2019 revealed that approximately 74% of the workforce would be willing to quit a job for one that offers remote positions. This not only saves significant commuting time, but it also provides more flexibility to people who work from home. They have the discretion to plan their work schedule and perform certain tasks at a time when they are most productive rather than at fixed times of the day.

Furthermore, with employees working from their homes/remote locations, businesses save up on the rentals they pay for their buildings, the electricity bill payments and the maintenance charges for office equipment. Aetna, an insurance company in the US, reported that after implementing telecommuting policy for its workers, it gave up 2.7 million square feet of office space, which resulted in a saving of $78 million. American Express has reported that it saved $10 - $15 million yearly with its remote work policy while increasing overall business output by 43%.

With its measurable benefits, flexible working is, therefore, becoming a norm. Businesses that proactively invest in virtual collaboration tools can now future-proof their operations and make their remote work practices more impactful. They can also reduce the costs of national and international business travel.

To know more about TTBS online collaboration systems, please visit https://www.tatateleservices.com/business-services/collaboration.

Sources
2- A report by Zapier.com published at the end of 2019 revealed that about 74% of the workforce would prefer to quit a job for one that offers remote positions.