Online Collaboration Tools – The New Normal for Business Meetings

Summary: Covid-19 has already disrupted normal work practices across industries, and it was digital technology for collaboration that came to the rescue of most businesses at this time. The crisis will have a lasting impact on how organisations function and will encourage them to be more flexible with their work culture, even if they were not originally the proponents of a remote workforce.

Businesses could not have envisaged a crisis that would, almost overnight, leave a lasting impact on the way companies do business. Despite initial qualms that it would be complicated for employees to work from different locations, most organisations have realised that the remote work practice enforced by Covid-19 could be a norm for the long-term. Businesses already under pressure to tightly manage costs should be able to sense a clear opportunity to realise the cost benefits of a remote workforce if they are smart.

According to a recent Gartner survey,¹ about 74 per cent of CFOs plan to “shift at least 5 per cent of previously on-site employees to permanently remote positions post-COVID-19.”

Collaboration between employees is an essential feature of their productive operations. When they do not share a common workplace, audio and web conferencing tools emerge as the smart tools that keep them virtually connected. By leveraging such systems, communications can be executed more effectively whilst they retain the safety of their homes.

Even after the lockdowns are fully lifted, conferencing tools will remain significant in the corona-impacted world where domestic and international business trips may also remain suspended for an extended period. Organisations able to confirm that they expect minimal disruptions to their work processes, with most activities ready to be executed off-site, will emerge ahead of the curve.

The user-friendliness and technology improvements that conferencing tools have imbibed over the past few years have come in handy, just when the world needs them the most. They are expected to reduce friction and virtually bridge the gap between colleagues. However, the multiplicity of these applications and their haphazard use by employees makes them less effective and actually ends up hindering communication. It also poses a challenge for IT teams that find it difficult to keep track of the different apps that might be in use. Some of these apps may also carry bugs that can compromise on personal details of users and harm their devices.

Choosing a tool that will contribute to the productivity of your organisation

When you have a wide range to choose from, it is essential to adopt a tool that is consonant with the ways your teams function. Are some of the employees comfortable using only the audio features while others prefer to see each other as they collaborate? Do teams communicate in real-time, or is there any time-zone lag?

As you select an application, remember that online collaboration tools must operate the way your employees do, and not the other way round. You can also interview your IT administrators to list the qualities of a conferencing system that will be secure and productive to use.

The audio and web conferencing solution by Tata Tele Business Services (TTBS) offers a carrier-grade collaboration experience as direct and seamless as meeting colleagues in person. Users can effortlessly navigate through their online conference with a centralised control menu bar to quickly access all meeting controls.
TTBS’ audio and web conferencing tool enables your employees to host a meeting online with one click from any device – smartphone, tablet, laptop, desktop – giving a unified and consistent experience. It can be used on Windows, Android and iOS devices. Up to 125 people can participate in the online meeting.

They can choose to use their webcam or simply participate via an audio-only mode. The application provides the freedom to make unlimited domestic audio calls with crystal-clear voice quality. The premium version of the application also brings international dial-in access. The auto-dial feature helps to call multiple numbers quickly without gaffes of dialling in wrong numbers. What’s more, it is easy to record a conversation for future reference and create minutes of meetings for those who missed the discussion.

Users can mute their individual lines to avoid unnecessary noise when someone else is speaking and can share their screens for presentations or to let others see their spreadsheet, document, video or software. Thanks to customisable video layouts, it is simple to toggle back and forth between the screen share and webcam-based video.

**Long-term usage of audio and web conferencing service – is it different this time?**

This is not the first time that web conferencing tools have seen a spike in demand. On a global scale, the disruption caused by the 9/11 event in 2001 and the outbreak of SARS contagion that affected 29 countries in 2002-2003² had also prompted companies to use video meetings instead of travelling. However, those earlier generations of videotelephony were complex, sluggish and costly to operate.

Technology has advanced since then, and web conferences today are easier to deploy and join. The new cloud-based hardware-as-a-service systems allow organisations to build personalised meeting rooms with the flexibility of scaling up and down as required.

Furthermore, the rise in demand for web conferencing applications goes even beyond technology this time and broaches the issue of how humans choose to work. *As per a recent study by Frost & Sullivan*,³ agile and radical working patterns will be one of the key forces driving the future of work. It also mentioned that 90 per cent of Gen Z workforce would prefer to choose their work location, and 80 per cent will want to leverage cutting-edge technology.

The environment created by Covid-19 will only accelerate the need for such agile work styles and will increase the adoption of apps that enhance the work-life balance.

We saw the containment measures against coronavirus leading to lockdowns, mandatory social distancing, and closure of organisations of all kinds. The impact of this pandemic on virtual collaboration in 2020 and the years ahead will be disruptive. The way it has affected connected workplaces around the world, it is bound to have a sustainable and long-lasting influence on user awareness, and eventually, the acceptance and adoption of remote work practices.

Understanding this need to keep audio and web conferencing solutions ready for the future, TTBS devised a secure and versatile app tailored to organise remote business meetings at any level. A simple OpEx model also makes it affordable for enterprises of all sizes. And it addresses the issues of manageability and monitoring with comprehensive support by a trained team of our associates.

To know more about the TTBS audio and web conferencing service, click on [https://www.tatateleservices.com/business-services/collaboration/conferencing-services](https://www.tatateleservices.com/business-services/collaboration/conferencing-services).

Sources