

# An overview of Collaboration and Communication Tools

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Zoom

Recently Zoom has become a household name and has become the generic term for an online video meeting. Zoom excels in creating quick online video meetings and conferences. With the basic free subscription Zoom can host up to 100 participants, with a maximum of a 40-minute meeting. Beyond the basic plan, Zoom offers three other plans at various monthly prices with a variety of features. For example, the Pro plan is priced per host, with up to 100 meeting participants and a maximum meeting time of 24 hours. The paid subscription plans also provide the host with additional admin features, allowing for participant mic mute, disabling chat, etc. Zoom lacks many of the collaboration features found in competitor products. While files can be shared in Zoom meetings, file storage for future use is limited or non-existent. Since Zoom's business focus is based solely on online video meetings/conferences, it doesn't have many additional integrations with other applications. Zoom recently announced Zoom Phone, where traditional phone calls can be made within the Zoom application.

Teams

Microsoft Teams, or simply Teams, is a collaborative communication tool that goes beyond the quick online meeting. While Teams is free to use without a Microsoft 365 subscription, additional features are unlocked with a 365 subscription. Still, the free version of Teams includes online meetings/video calling, unlimited chat/search, up to 10GB of Team file storage and up to 2GB of personal file storage per person. In addition, the free version provides for group channel meetings and screen sharing. Teams really begins to shine for an organization with a Microsoft 365 subscription. When the online video staff meeting ends, the conversation can continue between your staff. Your organization's staff can use Teams to chat about the work of the day or collaborate on longer and larger projects to keep the conversation going. Staff members can use Teams to invite your customers and clients to the meeting too, as guest participants. With 365, Teams also integrates tightly with the Office suite of applications, SharePoint, and other Microsoft online applications like Planner, which helps to track longer running projects. Teams can be the central hub of your organization where staff go first to converse with other staff and customers/clients, access and share files, and even make a traditional call with the add-on Microsoft Phone System.

## Google

Google offers a few collaboration and meeting tools across its platform. Google Meet, formerly google hangouts, is a multi-user video chat tool, capable of supporting up to 250 participants (free through Sept 2020). Google meet was designed for business and is integrated into the GSuite. Meet is also available, without some of the enterprise functionality, in Gmail. Anyone can be invited to join a Google Meet meeting. Meet is designed for real time communications. Meet runs entirely out of the browser, with apps available for mobile platforms. Functionality is available like screen sharing, whiteboarding, and integration with meeting room hardware.

Google also has a consumer-oriented service known as Google Duo. Duo is akin to Apple's Facetime but is platform agnostic. Apps are available for iOS and Android and can also be used in a web browser. Duo supports a maximum of 12 people in a call.

The final component in the Google communication and collaboration ecosystem is Google Classroom. Classroom was designed for education but can be used by any Google Account holder. Classroom can provide facilities for managed discussions and allows for sharing content.

Slack is a communication and collaboration tool like Microsoft Teams. Slack was the first mover in this space, but Microsoft has quickly grown into a formidable rival. Slack tends to be popular with those not in the Microsoft ecosystem. Slack provides video calling for a maximum of 15 participants, as well as text chat and threaded (channel based) text discussions. Slack uses a "Freemium" model, providing some capabilities for free, while others require a paid license.

## Additional Options

GoToMeeting has been around for quite some time and provides a quality video communication tool. GoToMeeting is limited to 26 participants. However, its partner product, GoToWebinar, supports up to 1000 participants. GoToWebinar also provides advanced tools for presenting pre-scheduled webinars. The GoTo products use a tiered pricing model, licensing per host, with increasing limits and features as the tiers increase.

Webex is another long-standing player in the video collaboration tool market, providing a platform with a maximum of 200 participants in a meeting. Webex has expanded its offering to include more team collaboration tools, instead of just 1:1 communications and hosted meetings, including hosted file sharing and persistent "spaces" for collaboration outside of a scheduled call. Webex uses a tiered pricing model like the other products, increasing features and limits as the tiers increase.

Facebook groups and Facebook messenger have a big consumer presence and provide capabilities to host up to 50 people in a video chat at once. There are no business tools included, such as whiteboarding and file sharing, nor is business security available. However, for families, church small groups, etc., it's still an extremely popular tool. Facebook messenger is free.

