



**ZOOM VS MICROSOFT TEAMS, GOOGLE MEET, CISCO WEBEX AND SKYPE:**

# CHOOSING THE RIGHT VIDEO-CONFERENCING APPS FOR YOU

By Owen Hughes

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Businesses forced to work remotely due to coronavirus have relied heavily on video-conferencing software over the past few months. With companies looking for tools that can support staff in their roles and help them maintain contact with colleagues, the market for video chat and collaboration apps has hotbed up significantly.

[Zoom](#), [Google Meet](#) and [Microsoft Teams](#) have perhaps been the most closely contending services vying for users in recent weeks. Each provider has been keeping a watchful eye on their rivals and releasing updates on what seems to have become a near-weekly basis, with the view to giving them an edge over the competition. The good news for users is that the continual one-upmanship has led platform providers to [improve security](#), add new features and [make some of their services free](#).

## VIDEO-CONFERENCING SERVICES: WHICH ONE SHOULD I CHOOSE?

Of course, Zoom, Microsoft and Google aren't the only companies competing in this space – far from it. There are a number of well-established providers that have been offering video-conferencing software for years, with equally rich feature sets. This includes Cisco's WebEx – a webinar platform long-favored by organisations all over the world – as well as [BlueJeans](#), which was [recently snapped up by Verizon](#) to become part of the telecom company's 5G portfolio.

Each video-conferencing service comes with its own list of pros and cons, as well as a variation in what it offers. Still, with a little research you can ensure that you are selecting the right service for your businesses' particular requirements. The below table – which is by no means exhaustive – represents six commonly used video-conferencing platforms and chat apps, alongside some of the features worth considering when shopping around.

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	Free version available	Meeting participants (default)	Screen-sharing	Whiteboard	Meeting recording	E2E encryption	Plans from (p/m)	Mobile app
<b>Zoom</b>	Yes	100	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	\$14.99	Yes
<b>Microsoft Teams</b>	Yes (Limited time only)	250	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	\$5.00	Yes
<b>Google Meet</b>	Yes	100	Yes	No	Yes	No	\$6.00	Yes
<b>Skype</b>	Yes	50	Yes	No	Yes	Yes (optional)	\$2.99*	Yes
<b>Cisco WebEx</b>	Yes	200	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (optional)	\$13.50	Yes
<b>BlueJeans</b>	No	100	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	\$9.99	Yes

\*Skype for Business is being replaced by Microsoft Teams

## WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING A VIDEO CONFERENCING TOOL

### 1. Price

Price should by no means be the defining factor in your decision, but it's a good place to start. Many video-conferencing tools offer a free version, although these are often limited in their features and can include caps on the number of participants that can take part in a video meeting, as well as a time limit for meetings themselves. Springing for a subscription usually means you can include more people in a meeting at one time, get better user management and administration controls and benefit from third-party app integration, to name but a few benefits.

## 2. Security

Remote working during the COVID-19 pandemic [has raised all manner of issues](#) around IT security, namely that businesses have lost a great deal of visibility on the devices accessing their networks. With this in mind, organisations should ensure that the video-conferencing tools that they select feature robust security controls, and consider the need for things like meeting passwords, encrypted chats and robust admin controls that allow hosts to permit, deny and eject meeting participants where necessary.

## 3. Number of participants

Needless to say, any video-conferencing platform should have the capability to support the size of your workforce. As we mentioned earlier, most services offer a free plan that will come with a lower cap on the number of people that can participate in a meeting – commonly around the 100-200 mark. If you anticipate needing more people involved in meetings – particularly if you are a medium-sized or larger organisation – you may want to look for a plan that allows for this.

## 4. App integration

Beyond video calling and chat, if you plan on using software to collaborate on documents and projects as a team, you'll want a platform that facilitates this. Most enterprise video-conferencing tools allow users to share files, although others provide additional collaboration tools such as screen-sharing, live document annotation and integration with popular workplace productivity software, for example G Suite and Microsoft Office. This sort of integration is particularly useful for collaborating on projects as a group in real time.

## 5. Meeting recordings

The ability to record meetings can be useful for reviewing notes and making sure that any key takeaways aren't missed. It's also handy if you need to conduct an interview with a candidate or client remotely, which again is something that has become increasingly commonplace amid the coronavirus pandemic. Many video-conferencing tools [allow you to record meetings](#) and store them in the cloud (though storage can vary depending by service), while others also provide live captioning and transcription tools to make note taking even easier.

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