

Video Teleconferencing Puts Humans at the Center of Interactions



Video teleconferencing plays a vital role in helping organizations get closer to the communities and constituents they serve.

Jennifer Chang, head

of U.S. state and local government for Zoom, discusses how organizations can effectively bridge the gap between in-person and virtual engagements.

How has video teleconferencing changed due to the pandemic?

Video teleconferencing offers a new way for community members to contact and interact with their government. It has gone from a nice-to-have to a must-have. Government organizations are re-imagining how they leverage collaboration tools to deliver more efficiently on their mission, whether it's enabling remote or hybrid work, accelerating the delivery of services or increasing the equity of access for constituents at city council meetings and other functions.

What are the key tenets of a good teleconferencing experience? Human-centered design is important for bringing parity to in-person conversations and virtual engagement. It's all about creating an equitable, simple-to-join and simple-to-use human experience for everyone. Important features include an immersive view so meeting hosts can arrange participants into a single virtual background as if everyone is in the same room. Hosts should also be able to manage the meeting flow effectively and efficiently – for

example, by enabling nonverbal cues so attendees can exchange information without interrupting presentations. Another key capability is extensibility and integration into existing applications so organizations can share applications in real time. Finally, solutions should include options for live translation and closed captioning.

What technology capabilities are essential to support video teleconferencing for constituents?

Government organizations must be able to scale large meetings while also maintaining security and control over the materials and the audience. Features such as live streaming, Q&A moderation and polling help expand reach and enhance control over how content is shared and viewed without interrupting the flow.

Security is a concern on collaboration platforms. What rules of thumb should organizations follow?

Education is absolutely critical. Organizations and individuals must understand how to properly leverage the features that protect information exchanged over a collaboration platform. Privacy and security tools should include capabilities to prevent participants from joining via multiple devices at the same time or from a different device after being removed from a meeting. Tools should also require all meeting participants to be authenticated; gather consent from meeting participants for when a host unmutes them; and dictate whether attendees can screen-share, change their name or use the chat function.

What types of video teleconferencing use cases are proving to be valuable?

We're seeing a lot of success with court applications. One great example is the Texas judiciary, which announced in February 2021 that more than 2,000 state judges had hosted a combined total of more than one million virtual hearings via Zoom since the pandemic began in March 2020. We anticipate courts and justice systems will continue to leverage videoconferencing in lieu of, or in combination with, in-person hearings due to the benefits it brings to witnesses, judges, jurors and other participants. In the social work realm, video teleconferencing helps increase access and care between in-person visits.

What's next for video collaboration and the user experience? How can organizations prepare?

The future of the government experience is hybrid. Organizations can prepare by reimagining what the hybrid workplace is going to look like and how they can leverage technology to create a future where both the organization and its constituents can thrive. When government organizations contemplate modernization goals, we encourage them to put the constituent at the heart of the process. We suggest they ask questions such as how they can drive parity between the in-person and online user and how they can use the same tools that constituents use in their personal life – text, chat and so on – to increase a constituent's confidence and engagement.



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