

SIDE-BY-SIDE: COMPARING POPULAR VIDEO CONFERENCING PLATFORMS' SECURITY AND USABILITY

Lawyers and cybersecurity experts examine the security and usability benefits and shortcomings of video conference platforms Zoom, Microsoft Teams, GoToMeeting and Webex.

BY VICTORIA HUDGINS

Just a few months ago, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, GoToMeeting, Cisco Webex and other video conference platforms were mere conveniences for making conference calls or hosting a webinar.

Now, as COVID-19 and social distancing recommendations spread, video conferencing is a must for business development and day-to-day interactions with clients, colleagues and staff.

While some leverage proprietary video conferencing software, many legal organizations, midsized firms, solos and boutiques are largely turning to commercial video conference platforms, including Zoom.

"We are absolutely flooded with calls from lawyers that need help getting used to Zoom, training on it, etc.," said Sharon Nelson, a lawyer and co-founder of digital forensics and cybersecurity firm Sensei Enterprises Inc.

As Zoom's usage and popularity grows, so have reports



of its security risks. Last week two class action suits were filed in California, alleging privacy violations. Random "zoombombings" where unauthorized attendees flood a meeting with obscene language or images have also been reported.

For some, the bad press was enough to switch to other platforms, said Sensei Enterprises co-founder John Simek. However, the security features are usually similar across different platforms, he noted.

"I don't think Zoom is less secure than a Webex or GoToMeeting environment, and it depends on what you're doing or what your needs are," Simek said.

Below, cybersecurity experts and lawyers shared what they consider the best and most lackluster cybersecurity and usability features of the top video conferencing platforms for lawyers.

Zoom

Zoom is the most popular video conference software at

the moment, with lawyers heavily relying on it because their clients prefer the platform. As it's grown in popularity, consumers have also noted its security shortcomings, but Otterbourg privacy and cybersecurity practice chair Philip Berg argued that the "fundamental privacy concern with Zoom is overblown."

He explained, "If you carefully configure the privacy and security settings of the meetings you host then the privacy and security concerns, with respect to the meeting you are hosting, you can take a fair amount of control over that."

While true end-to-end encryption is needed in Zoom, Berg noted you can activate stiffer password and access requirements easily in the platform. The problem most faced, however, was Zoom had those security controls deactivated by default, Berg said.

To be sure, requiring passcodes for a client to join a lawyer's scheduled Zoom meeting may slightly take away from Zoom's ease of use, but it's a slight inconvenience for better security, Berg argued.

Microsoft Teams

Microsoft Teams is a popular collaboration tool across industries, but its video conferencing feature is less leveraged by lawyers.

The biggest criticism about Teams is there are no dial-in

capabilities similar to Zoom, Webex and GotoMeeting, Simek said. Instead, the dial-in feature is only included in Office 365's enterprise 3 tier, which is the most expensive, he added.

However, some of Teams' security features are preconfigured in Office 365, unlike Zoom, noted enterprise software company Approvo CEO Chris Carter. Teams' security features include password requirements to enter meetings and limitations for sharing a meeting's URL. Additionally, Teams is integrated with video conference platforms including Zoom and Webex, Slack, Azure and other useful programs, Carter said.

Webex

Beyond staring at Webex's screen during a webinar, the platform isn't extremely user-friendly, observers said. While its security features match its competitors, it's "bulky," Carter noted.

"It's a big app because it's a little larger and clunkier and harder to use for some folks, especially if you are using the dial-in service versus the online capabilities," he said. Still, for lawyers attempting to log into a meeting while multitasking, there's multiple touch points to access a meeting, unlike other platforms, Carter explained.

GoToMeeting

GoToMeeting also has security features that are common among video conference platforms, Carter said. The platform's useful, but not extremely unique, security controls include the ability to see the complete list of attendees' current roles and privileges and the option to disconnect attendees.

However, the platform's user interface appears more suited for the tech and business audience, he added. GoToMeeting also includes a camera and hardware equipment to support in-office video and phone conferences, which isn't likely needed for most personal video chats.

The larger problem law firms will have to contend with as their lawyers leverage GoToMeeting and other platforms from home is securing sensitive information. However, that onus can't stop at the video conference platform, Simek said.

"I think there's too much hype about the security of these platforms. They don't know what's going on, on the other side of the machine. They could have their iPhone recording their conversation and they are not focusing on it," he said.

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