

Free Conferencing Tools, Thanks to Coronavirus

Written by Alice Marshall
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The coronavirus outbreak has led to more employees all over the world working from home, leading to an opportunity in conferencing and collaboration tools-- something Google, Cisco, Microsoft and Zoom have noticed, and set out to exploit.



Google already has 8000 Irish employees working from home, and to set an example is offering free access to advanced Hangouts Meets videoconferencing capabilities to all G Suite and G Suite for Education customers. The service handles larger meetings with up to 250 participants per live call, as well as streaming for up to 100000 viewers within a domain. In addition, users can record meetings and save them to Google Drive. Such features are usually available within the G Suite Enterprise Edition and G Suite Enterprise for Education, but will be free for all customers until 1 July 2020.

As one of the veterans in conferencing space, Cisco Webex is available free of charge with no time restrictions, support for up to 100 participants and toll-call dial-in, if in the form of a 90-day

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free license to business that are not already Webex customers. Otherwise the free Webex plans limits conferencing to up to three users with HD video, screen sharing on desktop and mobile devices, and limited recording options. Meeting times are also capped to 40 minutes, with just 1GB of online storage.

In response to the virus threat, Microsoft has a 6-month Office 365 E1 trial offer. It includes full meetings, collaboration and workflow abilities, and allows organisations to use Teams immediately. In addition, The free version of Teams no longer has restrictions on user limits, adding to the already impressive support for up to 300 members with guest access, one-on-one and group video and audio calls, file sharing (2GB per user and 10GB per team), screen sharing and document collaboration via online Office apps.

The final major videoconferencing provider with a coronavirus offer is Zoom. So far this is available only in China, with Basic (free) users getting unlimited conferencing time for meetings with more than two participants. The regular Basic offering allows unlimited one-on-one meetings, and group sessions of up to 40 minutes with 100 participants.

Go [G Suite: Helping Businesses and Schools Stay Connected in Response to Coronavirus](#)

Go [Cisco Webex: Supporting Customers During this Unprecedented Time](#)

Go [Microsoft Office 365 E1](#)

Go [Zoom's Commitment to User Support & Business Continuity During the Coronavirus Outbreak](#)