

What to Consider When Evaluating

COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION SUITES

Comparing Webex, Teams and Zoom

WHITE PAPER

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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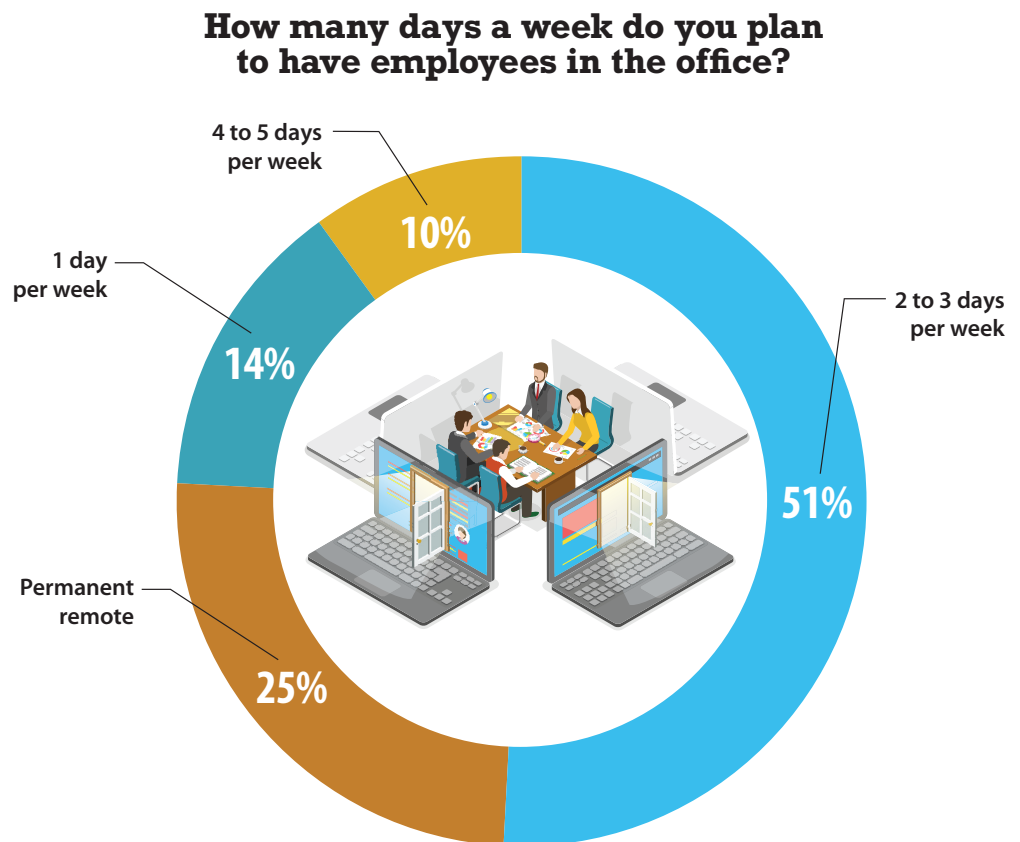
INTRODUCTION

Think about where we've been over the past few years. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound effect on the world. Businesses have compressed into months the digitization plans that they had envisioned would take years. Employees who had been tied to one location can now work from anywhere (WFA), and that trend will persist for the foreseeable future. Results from the ZK Research 2022 Work-from-Anywhere Study show that while only 22% of employees regularly worked remotely before the pandemic, 51% will work from home two to three days per week, and another 14% will do so one day per week ([Exhibit 1](#)). This indicates that the future of work is hybrid.

But are the tools we turned to during 2020 still the right ones three years later? Communication and collaboration needs have changed significantly. Back in the early days of the pandemic, we were just happy to have a tool—any tool—that enabled our teams to collaborate across time and geography. But times have changed. Now, we need a more sophisticated approach that considers hybrid work and the need for face-to-face gatherings—and everything in between.

The standard meeting platforms and chat applications are table stakes now. Companies looking to enhance the employee experience are demanding more than ever from these tools.

Exhibit 1: The Future of Work Is Hybrid



ZK Research 2022 Work-from-Anywhere Study

So, to explore the landscape, we at ZK Research have assessed the current state of the top collaboration and communications tools, including Webex, Teams and Zoom. Although other tools also provide elements of communication and collaboration, we have chosen to examine these three solutions because they are comparable suites offering a broad swath of core communication and collaboration functionality.

SECTION II: DEFINING A MODERN COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION SUITE

Just what should you expect from a modern communication and collaboration suite? At a minimum, you should anticipate having a single app for meeting, calling and messaging. Chat functionality should be intuitive and integrated.

These days, security is paramount, so an enterprise-grade, secure platform is key. Think about other functionality you might need, such as a phone system, webinars (with polling) and whiteboarding. Plus, think about what artificial intelligence (AI) might be able to help with—audio, video, language and analytics. Importantly, consider the employee experience (EX)—because your coworkers will be the harshest critics.

In addition, your needs have probably changed in the past few years, so be sure to consider that when evaluating options.

SECTION III: PROFILES OF WEBEX, TEAMS AND ZOOM

Webex by Cisco

Webex by Cisco traces its history back to the mid-1990s, when it was one of the first web-conferencing systems. Since then, Webex has developed into a comprehensive communication and collaboration suite that offers video conferencing, chat-based collaboration, webinars, events and cloud-based calling.

In addition, Webex integrates with Cisco's broad device portfolio, which enables enhanced meeting experiences in different room settings. In addition, features such as Webex Assistant and partner integrations from the Webex App Hub provide a holistic solution for organizations seeking advanced collaboration and communication tools.

Microsoft Teams

Developed by Microsoft and christened "Teams" in 2017, the tool originated as part of Groove Networks, which Microsoft acquired in 2005. Teams is a collaboration and communication platform that integrates with various Microsoft 365 applications. It offers chat-based collaboration, video and audio conferencing, team channels and integration options with third-party applications. Teams' focus is on integrating with the Microsoft ecosystem and other Microsoft tools.

Zoom

A video conferencing and collaboration platform, Zoom was founded in 2011. The company offers video conferencing, screen sharing, webinars and audio-conferencing capabilities.

Zoom rose to prominence during the pandemic as organizations needed an option for remote work, online education and virtual meetings.

Since then, Zoom has added new capabilities to its portfolio—including calling, chat, events and contact center. Additionally, Zoom's App Marketplace features many third-party applications that bring additional functionality to Zoom users.

SECTION IV: ASSESSING THE SOLUTIONS

In this section, we'll look at each solution's features and functionality. We'll also explore integration and compatibility, security and privacy, user interface and ease of use, and pricing.

Features and Functionality

Webex: Webex by Cisco offers features such as high-definition (HD) video and audio conferencing, screen sharing, recording and playback, whiteboarding, virtual backgrounds and meeting scheduling. It also provides integration with other Cisco collaboration tools. In addition, through the unified Webex suite, users can now access all functionality—including chat, calling (which can shift from a meeting to the public switched telephone network [PSTN] easily in the app), webinars with up to 100,000 attendees, asynchronous video for messages, whiteboarding, Slido for polling, Q&A, quizzes and even hybrid event management.

Teams: Microsoft Teams offers video and audio calling, chat-based collaboration, document sharing and co-authoring, screen sharing, meeting scheduling, integration with other Microsoft Office 365 apps and third-party app integrations. Other features are available but are not embedded in the app—they're part of the broader and separate Microsoft offering.

Zoom: Zoom provides features such as HD video and audio conferencing, screen sharing, recording and transcription, virtual backgrounds and breakout rooms within the app. Zoom also now offers Webinar and Translated captions as part of its enterprise packaging.

Our call: Cisco has the broadest set of features and functions.

Integration and Compatibility

Webex: Webex integrates with hundreds of industry-leading applications and tools, enabling customers to get their work done faster. Key integrations include Apple, Google, Box, HubSpot,

ServiceNow and Mural. Customers can also build their own applications using Webex Connect, a low-code/no-code toolkit.

Teams: Teams integrates with Microsoft Office 365 applications such as Outlook, SharePoint and OneDrive. It also supports integration with third-party apps through its app marketplace, keeping employees in the flow of work. Key integrations include ServiceNow, Trello, Jira and Adobe.

Zoom: Zoom offers integrations with apps and platforms including Slack, Google Workspace, Microsoft Teams and various customer relationship management (CRM) tools. It provides application programming interfaces (APIs) and software development kits (SDKs) for developers to build integrations.

Our call: Integrations tend to be comprehensive for each provider, warranting a tie.

Security and Privacy

Webex: Webex places a strong emphasis on security, offering features such as end-to-end encryption, secure meeting links, password protection and host controls to manage participant access. The solution complies with various industry standards and regulations. Webex's security is enabled by Cisco, which is one of the top three security companies across all relevant categories.

Teams: Teams incorporates data encryption, multi-factor authentication and compliance with industry standards including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and ISO 27001. However, the solution can be a target for phishing, and it can be challenging for companies in regulated industries to ensure compliance.

Zoom: In the past, Zoom faced security and privacy issues, including unauthorized access incidents and data breaches. Zoom has taken a number of measures to enhance security, including hiring a chief information security officer (CISO), but organizations with stringent security requirements may still have concerns.

Our call: Security/privacy goes to Webex.

Email and Calendaring

Webex: Webex's solution does not include email, but it does offer integrations with Outlook.

Teams: Teams works with Office 365 applications, including the ubiquitous Outlook (which provides email and calendar functionality).

Zoom: Zoom offers native integration of email and calendaring and also can integrate with Outlook.

Our call: Email and calendaring go to Teams, as Zoom is a new entrant in this field.

User Interface and Ease of Use (or Complexity)

Webex: Webex has a user-friendly interface with intuitive controls, a single management console and an easy-to-navigate layout. It offers web-based and desktop applications, making it accessible across different devices.

Teams: Teams is tightly integrated with the Microsoft ecosystem, which can make it less user friendly for those who do not use other Microsoft Office 365 applications. Some functionality can be puzzling to use, such as adding a virtual background or other video enhancements. In addition, users unfamiliar with Microsoft products may experience a steep learning curve.

Zoom: Zoom's interface is simple and straightforward. All functionality is viewable—either before or during a meeting—in the Settings menu.




Our call: Webex and Zoom are tied for user interface and ease of use.

Pricing

Evaluating disparate solutions based on pricing can be challenging because products are often packaged differently and include different elements. For our purposes, we looked at seven buckets:

1. Starting cost
2. Panel, multistream and device management
3. The ability to host webinars with up to 5,000 attendees
4. Integration of advanced polling and surveys
5. Virtual events capabilities
6. Vendor management for video endpoints and interoperability
7. Total cost

Let's begin with the base or starting cost. The Zoom One Enterprise Plus license costs \$30.00, and the Microsoft Teams license is \$19.99 per user per month. The Webex Suite starts with an advan-

			 Microsoft Teams			
Starting cost	Zoom One license	\$30.00/PUPM	Teams license	\$19.99/PUPM	Webex Suite license	\$11.95/PUPM
Panel, multistream, device management	Zoom Rooms	\$0	Microsoft Teams Rooms	\$15.00/PUPM	Interop RoomOS and Control Hub Device Management	\$0
Webinars with up to 5,000 attendees	Additional fee required	Up to 1,000, additional \$\$		\$	Webinars with 5,000 attendees	\$0
Advanced polling and surveys	Additional fee required for Slido	\$0 \$10.00/PUPM for advanced features via Kahoot	Additional fee required for Kahoot	\$10.00/PUPM	Advanced polling and surveys	\$0
Virtual events	Additional fee for an outside solution	\$0 \$ - extras	Additional fee for an outside solution	\$	Virtual and hybrid events	\$0
Vendor management for video endpoints, interop		\$		\$	Single tool to manage all video, calling, devices, interop	\$0
Total cost		\$40.00/PUPM plus an additional fee for virtual events and vendor/endpoint management		\$44.99/PUPM plus additional fees for webinars, virtual events and vendor/endpoint management		\$11.95/PUPM, including everything listed

Note: Zoom Events does not include lead retrieval, on-site check-in with badging, support for 100,000 attendees or real-time translation for external attendees.

Zoom's polling feature does not include advanced capabilities such as word clouds, sentiment analysis and topic analysis.

PUPM = per user per month

tage—costing roughly \$8.00 less per user per month than Teams and \$28.00 less than Zoom.

For panel, multistream and device management, Webex and Zoom include this in their monthly fee. For Microsoft Teams Room, the cost is \$15.00 per user per month. For this functionality, there is no additional charge with Webex.

Webinars have become an essential communication channel for companies, so the ability to host them simply and affordably is vital. There is no comparable individual price for Teams, and Zoom caps attendees at 1,000. Webex distinguishes itself by offering webinars of up to 5,000 attendees as a standard part of the Webex Suite.

If you'd like to integrate advanced polling and surveys into your webinars and meetings, that'll cost you extra with Zoom and Teams. Zoom does have basic polling capabilities, but additional

features will add \$10.00 per user per month, as will Teams for Kahoot. Webex includes Slido in the base price.

Running virtual events is another key way to engage with customers and prospects. Zoom includes basic virtual events, though advanced features will incur an extra fee. If you're using Teams, you'll need to find an outside solution that could cost a considerable sum. On the other hand, this functionality is included in the Webex Suite.

When it comes to vendor management for video endpoints and interoperability with Zoom and Teams, you'll have to look elsewhere for a solution. However, Webex offers a single tool to manage all video, calling, devices and interoperability, and it's included in the base price.

The total cost is where things get really interesting. Adding up the costs for Zoom with the additional elements that have a clear per-user monthly fee, we come to a total of \$40.00, and that does not take into consideration the additional costs for virtual events. For Teams, we find a similar situation: \$44.99 per user per month. Then you'll need to consider the additional fees for webinars, virtual events and vendor/endpoint management. Even if we're generous and call the monthly cost with additional functionality less than \$20.00, you're still looking at something in the neighborhood of \$60.00 per month per user—but in all likelihood, considerably more. With Webex, there is one price: \$11.95 per user per month.

Our call: Webex's simple and inclusive pricing model gives it a significant advantage.













SECTION V: CONCLUSION

Selecting the right communication and collaboration solution for your company can be a complex task. It might seem simple on the surface, but there are many factors to consider. We recommend that you conduct your own review following the structure of our analysis in this report. Your needs might differ from our evaluation, but the areas we highlighted are a good starting point: features and functionality, integration and compatibility, security and privacy, email and calendaring, user interface and ease of use, and pricing.

Each of the solutions we reviewed is a worthy competitor. Both Zoom and Teams have pluses and minuses—and we don't want to denigrate either one because they might be suitable for certain enterprises. But our results are clear: Webex led or tied in five of the categories we evaluated, with Zoom and Teams each leading or tying in two of the categories ([Exhibit 2](#)).

These results should be enough evidence that Webex is worth considering. Webex has come a long way in the past few years and now stands as the leading option. On price alone, Webex is a clear winner.

Exhibit 2: Our Assessment

	Features and functionality	Integration/compatibility	Security/privacy	Email and calendar	User interface	Pricing	Total
Webex				—			
Teams	—		—		—	—	
Zoom	—		—	—		—	

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A Note on Our Methodology

We relied on several sources for the information we present here. First, we carefully tracked our experience using these various platforms. One of the great benefits of being an analyst firm is we're on countless calls and conferences, so we have experienced just about every platform out there. In addition, we used publicly available information to assess each of the categories we rated. Moreover, we have either had one-on-one briefings or attended group briefings (in person or online) for each of the solutions we reviewed.

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