



The Case for Accessible Communications Technology

Collaborative technology has cleared away physical and operational barriers that once seemed immovable. We can meet face-to-face digitally with people across the globe, work on documents and whiteboards simultaneously, and exchange sensitive data securely. Audio is crisp and clear, and video is in HD.

Most of us can participate in a webinar, for instance, with ease. But the measure of an effective communications platform is how accessible it is for everyone to participate. And it's not a minor concern.

NO GOING BACK

When millions of people began working from home several years ago, seamless communications platforms such as [Zoom for Government](#) became invaluable. They allowed us to broaden our definition of collaboration — not just replacing what was possible in person, but far surpassing it for the long term.

“People ask the question: ‘Is Zoom a pandemic solution?’” said [Matt Mandrgoc](#), Head of U.S. Governments for Zoom Video Communications. “Zoom clearly was a platform that catapulted government, education, businesses and people through [the] pandemic. What organizations have found,” he added, “is that Zoom is now an integral part of their IT and workforce modernization — and communication and collaboration — going forward.”

ZOOM IN ON ACCESSIBILITY

We all know what it's like to feel excluded from a conversation. At work, that translates to poorer job performance, lower morale and, ultimately, a less productive workforce.

Disability: IN, a nonprofit resource for disability inclusion in businesses worldwide, [recommends](#) choosing a virtual meeting platform that “empowers meeting participants to request accommodations that meet their needs” and allows for captions and “pinning” a sign language interpreter to the video screen.

Zoom for Government, for instance, provides closed captioning, either auto-generated or typed manually by an attendee, and live transcriptions. That helps the hearing-impaired, but [studies have shown](#) that captions actually help all participants comprehend, pay attention to, and remember a video. Some people simply learn better with them.

Also available is the pinning feature that Disability: IN recommends — in other words, a Zoom meeting host can spotlight a sign language interpreter during a video event and all attendees can see the interpreter, no matter who’s speaking.

For the visually impaired, screen readers translate written text — a document that someone screen shares during a webinar, for example — to help individuals with low or no vision follow the discussion. A [truly accessible platform](#) also uses easy-to-read sizes and color contrasts to view the communication tools clearly and allows participants to customize the type sizes of their chats and captions.

HOW EMPLOYERS BENEFIT

[One in four](#) adults in the United States today has an official disability, and that doesn’t include people who more generally struggle with poor eyesight or hearing. It also doesn’t reflect individuals who simply learn and process information better by reading it, rather than listening.

Special accessibility options make collaborative technology truly available to all employees, to both their gain and their organization’s. “Employers everywhere are learning that businesses inclusive of people with disabilities, including veterans with disabilities, benefit from a wider pool of talent, skills, and creative business solutions,” notes the [Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion](#) (EARN).

“They’re also recognizing disability diversity as an important way to tap into a growing market,” EARN says, “since people with disabilities represent the third largest market segment in the United States.”

SAFE AND SECURE

Still, accessibility shouldn’t come at the expense of cybersecurity. We live in a world of threat actors who seize unprotected data, and government agencies are valuable targets. So in addition to prioritizing a communications platform that welcomes all users, agencies need technology that’s certified and secure. That includes complying with the Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program and other federal security requirements, as Zoom for Government does alongside its partner, Presidio Federal.



Seventy-nine percent of government employees [surveyed](#) have faith in the security of audio/video technology.



Seventy-two percent of respondents believe those platforms make it easier for everyone to contribute equally to a conversation, and more than eight in 10 people said the technology will continue to play a pivotal role in their line of work.

“Its longevity could be chalked up to a few key aspects,” the study’s authors said, “but accessibility is likely one of the key reasons audio and video communications have a foothold within the public sector.”



DID YOU KNOW...

that [Zoom for Government](#) is **FedRAMP Moderate** and has achieved a Provisional Authorization (PA) from Defense (DoD) at Impact Level 4 (IL4) and an Authorization to Operate with Conditions (ATO-C) for DoD IL4 for Zoom Meetings with the Department of the Air Force? Zoom for Government also supports FIPS 140-2 cryptography, HIPAA compliance, CJIS compliance and 300+ NIST controls.