Getting back to the office is important, but we're still going to need video meetings

Quizzes. Virtual birthday parties. Webinars. Video conferencing played a vital role in getting many of us through lockdown, not only connecting us with our family and friends, but also our colleagues, helping our businesses to keep running while we worked at home.

Temps de lecture : minute

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Then, for a while, it looked like we would be returning to our usual workplaces, and making fewer video calls. But new restrictions mean the return to the office is on hold again – and it's looking increasingly like there will be no "back to normal". Experts predict it could be at least two years before we see many of the freedoms and the interactions we enjoyed only a few months ago. So it's way too early to be calling time on video calls.

Many companies hadn't fully embraced home working before the pandemic hit in March this year, and they suddenly found themselves needing to support an entirely remote workforce, almost overnight. Many people started using personal apps to collaborate, like Whatsapp, or whatever video solution the IT team could roll out in the shortest timescale. As it becomes clear that remote working and video calls are here to stay, these organisations are having a rethink. We're seeing businesses look at their current solution and find it doesn't deliver everything they need for the longer term, like business-grade security, integration and collaboration.

Built for enterprise

Businesses need video conferencing that replicates the real world if they want to succeed in a remote working world. One-to-one calls, team meetings, board meetings, interactive customer sessions, live streaming for AGMs – the right solution needs to make all of these quick and easy to access.

While patchy audio or video streams can be common with consumer apps, companies need video conferencing to offer high-quality, reliable and seamless audio and video. And it needs to be easy to use: making people jump through hoops of downloading apps, with complicated invites, and complex screen-sharing will, at best, slow down productivity, and at worst, damage a firm's reputation.

Having lived through many of these problems ourselves, we designed and built StarLeaf with businesses in mind. We own and manage our own servers and platforms, which enables us to guarantee 99.999% uptime, and is unique in the industry. It means that businesses can rely on having a key collaboration tool available whenever they need them.

Anywhere working

One of the biggest business impacts of the pandemic has been on workplaces. Companies are having to completely rethink how to bring people together safely, or whether they even can. Online desk booking, track and trace, and thermometers are the tools of today's facilities managers, but it's important not to overlook meeting spaces themselves.

Even before lockdown, companies had started to move away from large conference rooms in favour of smaller huddle meeting spaces. It's why we launched our Huddle product earlier this year, to deliver an all-in-one solution, with a microphone, camera and touchscreen, that could turn any

size space into a collaborative video space, quickly and cheaply, without the need for complex installation. Post-pandemic, huddle spaces have become even more important – with people wanting to collaborate in smaller, safer groups.

What about people working at home? Whether your teams are following government guidelines to work at home, or you have to limit the number of people you can bring back to the office, a significant proportion of your team will need to spend time working at home for the foreseeable future. If you don't want productivity to suffer, your collaboration tools will need to be intuitively simple, and give people the same experience, whether they're socially distanced in the office, or sitting in their kitchen at home.

Security

Since the start of lockdown, a number of serious video conferencing security issues have hit the headlines. Data protection is a huge concern for organisations operating in sectors with sensitive data and significant security requirements, for example healthcare, legal and public sector. These organisation's IT teams and CTOs will be looking for the most secure, yet cost-effective, ways to get the most out of video calls when their teams are spread across the globe.

The wholly owned StarLeaf platform is super reliable, but also highly secure – security is, and always has been one of our top priorities. We run our own end-to-end network, develop our solutions in-house, and we've gained ISO/IEC 27001, one of the most stringent global information security certifications. It's one reason why organisations like the NHS and democratic bodies trust and rely on us.

For the future

If the coronavirus pandemic has proved anything, it's just how versatile

videoconferencing is. People's need for secure video conferencing technology was growing steadily long before the rise in demand we saw in lockdown.

Video meetings will once again this winter allow us to keep working, to support our clients and will safeguard many roles, across a broad cross section of industries and sectors. The office return may have been put on hold, but for video meetings this is only the start of another new chapter.

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