

3.3.27: Online Communication

Learning Objectives

- Compare and contrast common tools for screen / web sharing
- Explore multifeature online platforms / virtual office spaces

Screen Sharing / Web Sharing

Sometimes the most important aspect of your meeting or conversation will be the ability to see someone's computer screen. You may deliver a presentation this way, share sales figures, play a video, or mark up design prototypes. In these instances, screen sharing is your best friend.

Several of the platforms already mentioned—WebEx, Join.Me, Slack, Google Hangouts—as well as others like GoToMeeting and Highfive offer screen sharing options.

When choosing a screen sharing platform, there are a few things to consider:

- What is the main reason for my screen sharing?
 - If you are simply showing PowerPoint slides or going over a spreadsheet, most platforms work equally well.
 - If you intend to allow participants to mark up what you are showing or copy and paste into a shared file, you will need to make sure your platform does that. Google Hangouts and Amazon Chime are two platforms that offer these features.
- Will more than one person share their screen? Most platforms allow you to switch among the call participants' screens, but some make this easier than others.

Multi-Feature Online Platforms

So far, we've been seeing names like Slack, Google Hangouts, and Amazon Chime pop up in several categories. That's because these platforms offer a variety of features in order to create a complete virtual office environment.

In addition to communication features like voice, video, and screen sharing, these applications also facilitate scheduling, instant messaging, file sharing, and collaboration. They are also continually adding and upgrading features.

Chances are, if your company or team uses a tool like this, you will have been using it since day one to communicate with your immediate coworkers. Exploring the additional tools available is a worthwhile use of your time, especially if you are primarily using technology to communicate with people who are already part of your team.

Here are a few important benefits of using one platform for all your technological communications:

- You can search the whole environment for a specific item. For example, in Google Hangouts, if you don't remember whether you talked with Beth about Easter promotions via email or instant message (IM), you can simply search on "beth easter," and get results from all message channels.
- Recording is easy. If you are editing a display design as a group, and you want to keep track of how and why you made specific decisions, you can do so, usually with one click. Recordings are then sharable.
- Sticking with one platform for all internal/team communication and collaboration means that you and your colleagues need to learn only one piece of software and one set of commands.

If you want more information about these platforms as a whole—not just the voice, video, and screen sharing aspects—there are a lot of good videos on YouTube that go to varying levels of depth on specific features. Just be sure you watch fairly recent ones since these platforms are constantly in upgrade mode.

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