



Communicating Online

This paper has been written during the COVID19 pandemic amidst instructions by most countries around the world to work-from-home when possible, social distance and avoid unnecessary travel. As people get used to working in a more virtual way, there is every possibility that an increased level of communicating online will remain once restrictions on movement are lifted. This paper includes advice and guidance on the tools available to communicate online, which will also apply post-pandemic.

Many people have been forced to communicate in ways they have not previously been comfortable with, and to embrace new technology perhaps they were hesitant to use in the past. The previous rulebook of day-to-day business communication has been re-written and informality reigns.

Whether you need to communicate for your business, or connect on a more personal level, talk with with one person or many, in text or video, there is an online communication tool for you.

Instant Messaging

1. **WhatsApp** <https://www.whatsapp.com/>

There are two versions – regular and business. Use of WhatsApp is most popular across Europe and Latin America. WhatsApp for Business gives you a business profile to include your company address, email and website, statistics to see how many messages were successfully sent, delivered and read, plus the ability to automate replies to help you quickly respond to customers / clients. You cannot have both versions running with the same mobile number, so you have to choose either, or. There are reports of issues in terms of WhatsApp's security. Free to use.

2. **Facebook Messenger**

There are users in almost every country, except China. It is easy to use and can be added to your website for clients / customers to easily message you. If the people you need to reach are already on Facebook, this platform is worth considering. Free to use.

3. **Guild** <https://guild.co/>

Described as the WhatsApp for Business, this claims to have "the level of privacy, control, sophistication and service you would expect for business." There are three

price plans: Personal (1 account owner) is Free. Business (multi-admin) is £950pa. Enterprise has custom pricing.

4. **Google Hangouts** <https://hangouts.google.com/>
This requires a Google account. Users can see when people are online and when they have read messages. Similar to simple text messages.
5. **Slack** <https://slack.com/>
This is useful for Team Chat (see Team Chat section)
6. **Skype for Business** <https://www.skype.com/en/business/>
Essentially, this is a video conferencing platform, but it also features an Instant Messaging facility (see Video Conferencing section)
7. **WeChat** <https://web.wechat.com/>
Similar to WhatsApp, this is what you use to chat with clients / customers in China.

Video Chats

1. **WhatsApp Video** <https://www.whatsapp.com/>
Easy to use with the option to video call one contact or contacts in a group.
2. **Google Duo** <https://duo.google.com/>
This is Android's answer to Apple's Facetime, and can be used on Android and Apple devices. It is simple to use and its most popular feature is "Knock Knock" which gives the user a live preview of the person calling before you answer the call.
3. **Apple Facetime**
Pre-installed on all Apple devices. Easy to use. Only available on iOS phones, Macbook and iPad devices.
4. **Facebook Messenger**
Accessible via your Facebook account, chat with Facebook friends, individually or as a group.
5. **Skype** <https://www.skype.com/en/>
Can be used on mobile devices but its full potential is when used on a desktop. Up to 50 people can be on a video call at any one time. It is losing popularity to newer platforms. Available free. There is a paid version, but Microsoft has now turned this in to Microsoft Teams.
6. **Zoom** <https://zoom.us/>
This can be used for on-to-one or one-to-many (see Video Conferencing section)
7. **Houseparty** <https://houseparty.com/>
This is the least business-oriented video chat option. It is more than just for video chats as it has quizzes and games if users want to do more than sit in front of a camera to chat. Up to 8 users are allowed to be in a chat at any one time. Private video messages

(called FaceMail) can be sent to contacts. To stop people from outside the call being allowed to join, remember to click the padlock at the bottom of the screen.

Video Conferencing

1. Zoom <https://zoom.us/>

Screen sharing, whiteboard for notes during calls, chat to others on the call via messages, record meetings (either stored in the cloud or to your machine) and hold webinars. The free plan allows up to 100 participants for a maximum of 40 minutes a call. The paid versions start at £11.99 per month per host to include up to 100 participants for up to 24 hours duration for the call.

2. Microsoft Teams <https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/microsoft-365/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software>

See Team Chat section

3. WhereBy <https://whereby.com/>

Screen sharing, recording, easy-to-use. Useful for video meetings and conferences. The free version allows one admin user and 1 meeting room for up to 4 participants. Pro costs \$9.99 per month for 1 admin user and 3 meeting rooms (so 3 meetings to happen at the same time) for up to 12 participants in each room. The Business level is priced from \$59.99 per month for multiple admins, up to 10 meeting rooms for 50 participants each (12 people can be 'on stage' with video at the same time, the rest are audio-only.)

4. GoToMeeting <https://www.gotomeeting.com/>

A web-hosted service for online meetings, screen sharing and video conferencing. Meetings can be recorded and notes and actions shared after the meeting. Pricing starts at £11 per organiser per month for up to 150 participants.

5. Skype for Business <https://www.skype.com/en/business/>

If you currently use Skype for Business, you can continue to do so, but Microsoft has introduced Microsoft Teams as its replacement (see Team Chat section)

6. Google Meet <https://meet.google.com/>

Part of Google's G Suite. There is no need for all users on the call to have Google accounts – they just need to click on the link provided to them. The Basic G Suite package hosts up to 100 participants. Recording is only possible with the most expensive versions (Enterprise at €23 per user per month)

Team Chat / Collaboration

1. Slack <https://slack.com/>

Good for small groups and collaborations. It offers a one-on-one chat function, one-on-one calls within your team, a 10,000-message history, screen sharing and team video

calls. You can share files and all files and chats are synced, archived and searchable. Messages can include text, GIFs and videos. Paid plans start at \$8 per user per month.

2. **Microsoft Teams** <https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/microsoft-365/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software>

Designed for meetings and documents to help teams collaborate. Create and respond to messages, share files, video calls, screen sharing, audio / video meetings and web conferences. Price is free with Office 365 Business Essentials, and from \$5 per month per user for Sharepoint, OneDrive and cloud versions of all Office apps.

3. **Google Chat** https://gsuite.google.co.uk/intl/en_uk/products/chat/

Direct messages and group conversations, online meetings with virtual rooms (each room can support up to 8,000 people) and threaded conversations. Syncs with Google Drive to allow collaboration on Google Docs, Sheets, or Slides. Alerts to inform you when files are shared with you, comments are made or when people request access to your docs. Integrates directly with Google Calendar to schedule meetings. Chat currently supports 28 languages and is available free as part of G Suite.

Also ...

Social Media

1. **Twitter**

Twitter is good for immediacy so for when you have breaking news, announcements, important messages. Tweets can include text, links, short videos, GIFs and images.

2. **Facebook**

A good platform to build relationships and show the human side of your business. Useful to build a community on.

3. **LinkedIn**

This is typically the platform of choice for business-to-business companies. It is also an ideal platform for editorial content and to build authority for you and your brand. Displays your professional side.

4. **Instagram**

The best platform if you have a visual business.

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