

Virtual meeting software

What's the difference between the most common virtual meeting software from a virtual trainers point of view?

PROMOTE[®]

Zoom



Zoom is primarily designed as a meeting software that is relatively simple to start using. It enables participants to connect and share screens easily. The advantages from a virtual classroom perspective is other than providing clear and easy access to a virtual presence, it also enables breakout rooms and a chat function. Also, thanks to the way it uses bandwidth, this can be used well with participants who have slow and fast internet connections. An additional element that is useful is that it's simple to add the Zoom meeting information to email invitations.



The main drawback is as this is designed from a meeting perspective; it has a limited functionality in terms of replacing a classroom environment. There can be some challenges with reorganizing the breakout rooms and the chat is persistent, meaning that different topics are entered into the same comment field. There have been some challenges with security reported, which does give us some cause for concern.

Adobe Connect



Adobe Connect is a versatile tool that enables a wide range of "classroom" activities to be planned and designed out. As such, it is able to replicate a wide range of interactions that duplicate face-to-face activities. From a virtual classroom perspective, it's a really useful tool to apply because of the wide range of functionality. It's primarily based on the use of pods, which enable you to divide the screen real by customizing the layout. Adobe connect supports the use of breakout rooms and the sharing of information.



The major drawback is the appearance of the tool. It has been described as an 80s throwback. Our understanding is that the newest version that is under development at the moment looks much better but doesn't yet have the same functionality. Another challenge is that there is a learning curve in terms of how to really get the best out of Adobe Connect. It's worth the effort but it takes a little longer to master the functionality.

GotoMeeting



GotoMeeting is an online meeting, desktop sharing, and video conferencing software designed really to hold team meetings. It lends itself to Learning in the same way that many other primarily meeting platforms do but is not designed to offer more advanced functionality. GotoMeeting does have an ease of use going for it and so far, we have had few challenges in incorporating participants from around the globe.



The invitations are pretty straightforward when integrating with email. Screen sharing is also pretty easy, once a basic level of technical understanding exists, there is a record function as well that can be used for people unable to attend a given session. In terms of downsides, the primary one that we experience is the lack of functionality beyond the basic of what is available for meetings. For what it is, it works fine but this also means that there is limited flexibility in terms of creating engagement through variation and interaction, particularly since there is no breakout function.

MS Teams



Microsoft Teams is less of a virtual classroom tool and more of an all-in-one collaboration suite for business – think, Microsoft's answer to Slack (for those familiar with Slack). As virtual meetings can reasonably be considered a key part of collaboration, the Microsoft Teams suite has included a solid inbuilt web-meeting solution. It's scalable (up to 10,000 people) and secure and makes file sharing and screen sharing easy.



MS Teams has it's greatest application within closed organisations and closed teams – even with reduced 'classroom' functionality there are clear advantages of everyone being on and familiar with the same system. Outside of closed organization groups, MS Teams has less advantages.