



# THE MILITARY ORDER OF THE WORLD WARS®

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## **MOWW VIDEOCONFERENCING STUDY (PART I)**

### Preface

**Videoconferencing is a vital means of communication and teambuilding**

- For more than two decades, the Department of Defense and other elements of the US Government and corporations worldwide have used video teleconferencing (VTCs) to great effect to communicate, lead, manage and collaborate nationally and internationally.
- Videoconferencing brings people together who are not collocated, personalizes the convening with video, and is an excellent means to build teams, address a range of topics, and build esprit de corps. It should not be an undesirable option to be avoided.
- Instead, videoconferencing is a terrific option that saves time and resources, and that is an excellent and permanent complement to in-person sessions. Within MOWW, we call that “Hybrid Operations,” and in a geographically distributed national organization, it is a vital communications tool.

### Video conferencing tips

- Video conferencing techniques are experimental for most, which means chapters, etc., may have a few rough edges at the beginning.
- However, if you persist, you will learn more, things become smoother, and you will be happy with the result. The bottom-line up front: practice makes perfect.
- If a presenter will use slides, practice using that capability in a “training session” well before the actual video teleconference to work out the “bugs” and to become practiced in using this capability.
- Please note that our speaker is on active duty and the DOD specifies "Microsoft Teams" as the method of contact. We have practiced with it, and it is easy to use.



### Tips for participants

- You are on camera all the time; everyone is on camera all the time. Make sure what you do and the expressions you make will be seen and heard by all.

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- Please mute your computer microphone before joining, otherwise we and you will have an unpleasant level of ambient sound coming in from many sources. Remember: what ever you say will be heard, even whispers to other people in the room with you.
- Do not make phone calls while you are on a video conferencing session because it sends the wrong message (disengagement) and when you speak on the phone, or others around you, you will become the center screen and everyone will hear what you have to say.

### Finding the ideal videoconferencing software

- Many video conferencing plans are less expensive if you pay annually instead of month-to-month.
- Some plans charge per user. Know how many are allowed per plan and check about add on users.
- If the video conferencing software you are interested in does not offer a free plan or free trial, request a demo so you can see it before you commit to buying.

### For large meeting venues, do not forget the equipment!

- Room size matters. Once you have selected a video conferencing software platform, you will need to evaluate how it will fit into your meeting room environments.
- The most important thing to keep in mind is that the size of your conference rooms will determine the exact type of equipment you need. A simple personal computer camera is fine for one-on-one meetings, but this technology will not scale for larger rooms with multiple people.

### Find the best video conferencing equipment.

- Sound Quality. A noisy conference room is going to turn into a distracting meeting experience. Likewise, if you are taking part from home, mute yourself if you are not actively speaking. Also, do not rustle papers, type on a laptop or phone someone when you are in a videoconferencing session.
- Hardware. The hardware you use is also going to determine the quality of your meetings, so you will need to make sure your equipment can support web collaboration. This includes items like microphones, controls, speakers, cameras, digital signage and displays.

## ZOOM



- Zoom is a heavy hitter in the video conferencing world because of the many options included in every plan. The platform also boasts flawless video, crystal clear audio and instant sharing capabilities that make it our favorite choice for video conferencing. Many people who use Zoom often switch from other conference call software because of frustrations they face using other available platforms.
- Zoom is the ideal web meeting software for users who want to simply and effectively connect with customers and clients remotely. It also has Chrome and Linux OS support for increased flexibility and secure socket layer (SSL) encryption to guarantee secure communications.

- All Zoom plans include:
  - Screen sharing from desktops, tablets, or mobile devices
  - Whiteboarding
  - HD video and voice
  - Unlimited number of meetings per month
  - Secure Socket Layer (SSL) encryption
  - Chat and messaging (private and group)
  - Scheduling with Chrome extensions
  - Meeting record option
  - Ability to join a meeting by telephone
  - Instant or scheduled meetings
  - Online support
  - Breakout rooms
- Breakout capabilities let you divide your meetings into as many as 50 separate sessions!
- There is also a free version of Zoom, but the features and capabilities are limited.
  - Conferences that have many participants cannot go beyond 40 minutes.
  - For advanced features like user management, interoperability, custom meeting IDs for individual participants, phone support and managed domains, you must subscribe to one of its premium plans. Fortunately, the paid plans are typically less expensive than comparable plans with other providers.
- Participants. The number of participants allowed per meeting will vary based on the plan you select. You have the option to add on more participants with every plan except the free version.
- Zoom Webinars & Events
  - Does your company conduct webinars or live demos? Zoom Webinars and Events let you engage with an unlimited audience in live, virtual events.
  - In Zoom Rooms, wired and wireless content sharing is available, as well as the option to remotely control and monitor meetings from one centralized interface.
  - You can also implement digital signage and scheduling displays to help enhance office communication and make booking meetings easy!
- The Defense Department banned using Zoom for official business due to questions about its security. The order applies to use of government devices such as computers and cellphones for official business. An approved option called “Zoom for Government” is still available for DOD use but only for “publicly-releasable DOD information not categorized as For Official Use Only,”

## Microsoft Teams



- Microsoft Teams is designed for seamless efficiency and collaboration. It integrates with Office applications like Word and SharePoint, and its design and infrastructure make it exceptionally interactive. The company has also made it possible to integrate Skype for Business into Microsoft Teams.

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- This program was designed as a response to the growing number of collaboration tools, like Slack, which have dominated the market in the last few years. Microsoft Teams is a catch-all chat tool for the workplace, but its video conferencing option is just as compelling and powerful. Users can launch video conferences directly from their chats.
- All Microsoft Teams plans include:
  - Web version of Word, Excel, and PowerPoint
  - File storage and sharing
  - Up to 300 users
  - 24/7 phone and web support
- One of the newest features included in Microsoft Teams allows users to invite guests that are not part of their enterprise's Azure Active Directory. In addition, the mobile version of Microsoft Teams supports voicemail on Android and iOS.
- Considering security concerns with Zoom, DOD is having people work remotely through a temporary work environment based on Microsoft Teams called the Commercial Virtual Remote (CVR) environment. It is a DOD-only deployment of Microsoft Teams and several Office 365 tools.

## GoToMeeting



GoToMeeting

- Even though GoToMeeting no longer dominates the video conferencing space, it remains a highly polished remote meeting software with an extensive list of features that would satisfy the needs of most business environments.
- This user-friendly software has a few important advantages over its competitors, including its polling and "raise a hand" features. Furthermore, GoToMeeting allows unlimited video meetings and secures these meetings with end-to-end encryption.
- All GoToMeeting plans include:
  - 24/7 customer care
  - HD video
  - Unlimited meetings
  - Screen sharing from desktops, tablets, or mobile devices
  - Messaging
  - Web audio – no phone required
  - Security
  - With a 14-day free trial, you can see the ease and convenience of the features first-hand.
- Participants. GoToMeeting allows 10 to 250 participants, depending on the type of plan you get. However, the free version allows a maximum of three participants vs. up to 100 on other platforms.

## ezTalks Meetings



- The biggest selling points of ezTalks Meetings are its continuous technological advancements and its developers' unwavering commitment to introducing cutting-edge features and state-of-the-art video meeting protocols.

- This solution is compatible with Android and iOS devices and has a straightforward user interface, even for first-time users. ezTalks Meetings is a solid web application for video conferencing in healthcare, community, and education. However, with less distribution and adoption as Zoom, you may find less partners familiar with the tool.
- All ezTalks Meetings plans include:
  - Unlimited number of meetings
  - Instant or scheduled meetings
  - Join by telephone call-in
  - HD video and audio
  - Private and group chat
  - Interactive whiteboards
  - Screen sharing with co-annotation
- In the free version, it is possible to accommodate as many as 100 people in a single meeting for up to 40 minutes and host an unlimited number of HD video conferencing recordings on this platform.

## StarLeaf



- StarLeaf is outfitted with its own API, which makes it possible to customize its conferencing. The company provides an extensive range of upgrades and integrations including Slack and Skype for Business, and it comes with a complimentary app for Android, iOS, and Windows users.
- StarLeaf's unique architecture allows you to deliver business-wide connectivity, avoiding the limitations associated with virtual meeting room solutions. The platform is an incredible alternative for those who do not want to spend on costly on-premise video infrastructure.
- All StarLeaf plans include:
  - Global audio dial-in telephone numbers
  - Full interoperability with Skype for Business
  - Unlimited guest invitations
  - Calendar integrations with Outlook and Google
- StarLeaf is UK-based but has a rapidly growing international client base in Europe, New Zealand, America, and Australia. The company has plans to invest in APAC and expand worldwide.

## Cisco Webex



- Cisco Webex is an excellent video collaboration software for online training, webinars, and remote support. It is excellent for businesses that have legitimate security concerns. This teleconference software features Transport Layer Security (TLS), third-party accreditations, encryption, firewall compatibility, single sign-on and secure scheduling options.
- Cisco Webex includes seamless integration with Outlook and the ability to use it across different platforms including Mac, Windows, and iPads. What is more, Cisco Webex is part of an ecosystem of interoperable solutions for working remotely. It allows you to add specialized functionalities for training, remote technical support, or webinars.

- All Cisco Webex plans include:
  - Screen sharing
  - HD video
  - Unlimited meetings
  - Cloud recording and storage (limits vary by plan)
  - Business-hours phone support for lower level plans and 24/7 support for pricier plans
- Participants. The free video conferencing version of Cisco Webex is limited, only allowing two participants in meetings. For paid plans, Webex allows between 50 and 1,000 participants.

## Next Steps

- While most chapters have not used videoconferencing yet, many have, and based on anecdotal evidence, those have generally used Zoom due to its free or low-cost nature, its ease of use, and the capabilities it offers.
- As the use of videoconferencing becomes more widespread and routine in the Order, this platform choice is expected to be the choice as more chapters implement Hybrid Operations, although the other platforms, notably Microsoft Teams, are as or more capable. Cost will likely continue to be a major determining factor, and the expected widespread use of Zoom will inform the technical solution of this study's Phase II
- Part II of this Videoconferencing Study will examine requirements, capabilities, implementation issues, and initial and recurring costs surrounding using videoconferencing during annual MOWW Conventions. Whether this is done by organic means or by contract support remains to be seen.
- The videoconferencing focus will be on the convention's Business and General Staff sessions, the training sessions, and the CINC Banquet. Phase II will include coordination with the Education & Training Committee and the Finance Committee. The Estimated Completion Date (ECD) for Part II of this study is 30 November 2020.