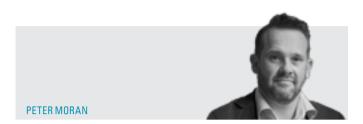# ZOOM

Getting into a meeting generally requires only one or two clicks.

PETER MORAN

Which practitioners would find this technology useful?

Practitioners wanting to cheaply and easily arrange video conferences and teleconferences with multiple parties.

How does it work?

A Zoom account must be set up which can be done via the Zoom website. Zoom provides various packages starting with a free basic package. For practitioners who look to use Zoom more regularly, a paid package will most likely be required as this removes the 40-minute time limit and adds other useful functionality.

Once an account and profile are set-up, the meeting organiser then sets the meeting date and time in much the same way as setting up a group calendar appointment in Outlook. The email addresses of the participants are added and once the meeting time is finalised and sent, each participant receives a calendar invitation with the necessary Zoom link. The recipient needs to do nothing more than accept the invitation at that point.

At the time of the meeting, all the meeting participants have to do to access Zoom is click on the Zoom hyperlink in their calendar appointment, which then opens up Zoom via an internet browser window. The Zoom portal does not need users to download additional software, making the first use of Zoom much quicker and easier than with some other similar applications.

Once in the meeting, the participant can control whether they use their computer microphone and camera or a plug-in device such as a headset. Users can easily mute and unmute their microphone and can also switch off their video if they only want to talk. The names of participants are shown on the screen and the person who is speaking is highlighted and shown as the largest screen automatically.

Other features include that any of the participants can easily share their computer screen with the group. This can be excellent for calls with parties talking about particular documents – the practitioner can easily bring up the document on everyone's screen and navigate the parties through it. Or, the system can be used for remotely training team members in online systems by sharing screens and navigating through those shared systems. Zoom also allows for video calls to easily be recorded and uploaded in a digital format.

Benefits

The key benefit of Zoom is how easy and intuitive it is to use. In the early days of software video conferencing, much time was often lost at the start of video conferences while participants figured out how to download and use the software, or connect their microphone or video. With Zoom, such delays rarely happen, even with first time users, because the set-up is so easy and functional. Getting into a meeting by users generally requires only one or two clicks.

Another key benefit of Zoom is that it is just as functional as a mobile application as it is as a web application. Should a participant not have access to the internet, Zoom can be accessed from a mobile phone, either via a mobile app or, alternatively, by dialling in as one would with a traditional teleconference system. However, even as a traditional teleconference system, Zoom outperforms because users do not need to remember or enter telephone numbers and access codes – they simply click on the link in their calendar appointment, tap on the option to do the call using their telephone and Zoom does the rest by autodialling in the necessary teleconference numbers.

Risks

Participants need to be aware that their call can be recorded by any user (although Zoom will show that the video call is being recorded). Video calls are still not as good as face to face meetings. Internet or mobile reception is required to use Zoom.

As with all cloud services, there are risks with third parties holding privileged and confidential information, particularly when video calls are recorded by Zoom.

Costs

The basic package is free. The Pro plan is $15 a month and the Business plan is $20 a month. Most practitioners will most likely need at least the Pro plan given the time limit and other useful functions not accessible in the basic package.

Downsides

As with electronic signing software, some users might still struggle with navigating through the necessary steps to use Zoom. While easy to use and intuitive for people comfortable with using technology, some practitioners and clients might find even concepts like clicking on hyperlinks or activating the camera and microphone a challenge. Use of Zoom therefore needs to assume a minimum level of technology literacy for all. Otherwise, it is hard to think of downsides and I expect use of products like Zoom will become ubiquitous and mainstream in the not too distant future. ■

Peter Moran is a principal at Peer Legal and founder of the Steward Guide, an online technology guide for lawyers (www.stewardguide.com.au).

SNAPSHOT

What is Zoom?
A video and teleconferencing web application

What type of technology?
Cloud portal and mobile application

Vendor
Zoom Video Communications Inc

Country of origin
US

Similar tech products
Skype
Bluejeans
Adobe Connect
Facetime
(via an iPhone)

Non-tech alternatives
Traditional teleconferencing services
Face to face meetings

More information
www.zoom.us