



Bridging the gap between in-person meetings and emails

Truly we are living in strange times, with everyone having to adapt to an unprecedented situation. Following the lockdown a lot of businesses are having to operate 100% remotely for the first time and during the working day colleagues are having to fit in scheduled meetings alongside more instant forms of communication. In a remote-first model, it is the latter that will be most impacted.

On average it takes five to 10 minutes to schedule an appointment, while the default time set for a meeting in a calendar is 30 minutes. On top of this, someone needs to write up and share the minutes and agenda, which will take at least another 10 minutes. If the meeting is recurring no further scheduling is needed, but if not someone will also need to set a date for the next one.

Add all this up and a simple discussion can take up to an hour to complete, as well as causing a significant interruption to the flow of work. It can take another 10 minutes to refocus the brain between switching tasks, while there are also delays that must be taken into account. Finding a time when all the stakeholders involved are free can be difficult and although this allows for thorough preparation, it can result in slow and unresponsive decision making.

The question is, can time be saved by avoiding scheduled meetings and video calls? But also, what happens to the unscheduled and instantaneous style of communication in this new remote working environment?

In 2014, Peter Cardon and Bryan Marshall conducted a study on The Impacts of Team Listening and Unscheduled Meetings on Team Coordination. They found that the frequency of unscheduled meetings increased team

coordination but that the frequency of scheduled meetings did not.

Finding an appropriate solution to this issue is difficult given the software on offer. Colleagues can call each other, but this is one-to-one, while day-long conference calls create concerns over privacy. Some companies have looked to set up a WhatsApp group where colleagues can post voice notes. However, IT management and governance generally avoid this sort of approach as it is not a branded environment.

With companies going entirely remote and in-office meetings no longer possible, business leaders need to think of a new approach to encouraging spontaneous communication within teams, and this is where we can help. Watch and Learn offers businesses a team listening environment through the use of video chat and voice notes. Users can listen to their team without interrupting other colleagues, while also enjoying frictionless communication with no scheduling needed.



Productivity and meetings

During the day the majority of employees in the office environment are glued to their inboxes. But in the evening, if people are not exercising or spending quality time with friends or family, they are likely consuming entertainment via Netflix or another on-demand video service.

The question is what do you enjoy doing more? Trawling through your inbox or watching your favourite shows on Netflix? I know what I prefer.

As humans, we tend to respond better to face-to-face communication. So what if the business world could make the inbox more personable and based around our favoured forms of communication? How would this improve the quality of engagement and communication throughout your business?

Instead of having email threads, why not have video episodes. Trawling through lengthy email exchanges is time consuming and energy-sapping, but this would not necessarily be the case with easily-accessible video updates and messages. As an approach, it takes less time and offers more engagement, while the searchable transcript saves you from having to rewatch or take notes.

Instead of email receipts, which clutter up your inbox and are often discarded, the Watch and Learn analytics tools show you exactly how many people have watched your voice note. By transforming your inbox into a more personable and scalable experience where you can watch videos, play voice notes and read messages, you can add a whole new dimension to the working day and your business.

As we all participate in the world's largest remote working experiment, video messages can help make colleagues feel more connected. Social distancing has got in the way of maintaining the more personal forms of communication, but a video-first approach, complemented with voice notes and real-time transcription can help recreate that sense of human connection.

Hiding behind email is not sustainable in the long run and colleagues need to start talking to each other in a more personal and effective way. Yes, Zoom calls have become popular when you are able to schedule a time to talk, but in times where a meeting is not necessary and an email just lacks personality, sending a video or voice note is the better option.

The impact of lockdown and social distancing has already presented numerous challenges to the business community, so let's not allow it to also become a barrier to being sociable, communicative and efficient while working from home.



Leadership and communication

With many companies now encouraging staff to work remotely because of the need to remain socially distant, this is the first time that a lot of people will be discovering the pros and cons of working from home.

When it comes to remote communication colleagues are doing one of two things: either attending a live meeting or phone call, or sending emails. This represents what I call the communication gap and while it presents a challenge to businesses, it also creates opportunity.

Both of these communications types have their advantages, but they can also create friction. With video and phone calls, you have the issue of managing conflicting schedules and time zones, which can mean that on many occasions more time is wasted on setting a date than on the meeting itself. With emails, there is a lack of emotion and quite often the message and tone can be misunderstood as a result.

One of the other challenges of working remotely is loneliness. The office environment can often prove a key part in peoples' social life and it can be hard for people to adjust to when it is taken away. Social interaction is significantly reduced when you remove the water cooler conversations, while chance meetings are where some of the best ideas surface.

The big opportunity that we have recognised is the whitespace between scheduled meetings and emails. In order to grasp this opportunity, managers and business owners need to change their habits. Colleagues have to stop scheduling unnecessary meetings and sending inappropriate emails, and instead adjust to a more productive method of home working.

Instead, colleagues need to continue to be able to use their voice and body language. The best type



of communication is face-to-face and with this no longer an option, video posts are the only solution.

Imagine your new inbox. Instead of reading countless emails, you could be watching videos and listening to voice notes. This is a less arduous experience and a good way to move away from the feeling of being snowed under by a stack of emails.

We have been running this type of communication internally at Webanywhere for the last two years and the results have been fascinating. Here are some of the insights and learnings from this experience:

- We have been able to see who is most engaged by analysing how much posting and listening occurs
- We have been able to spot future leaders by looking at who spark conversations and ideas
- We have been able to predict who might leave the organisation based on their lack of activity.

Overall, we have been able to hear more people, more often, which has created greater levels of inclusion in our business. This inclusion, in turn, has led to better engagement, with colleagues able to see managers listening to what they have to say. Long before computers existed communication was key in business, but the keyboard now seems to have got in the way.

Our goal is to get people talking again, even in these unprecedented times, with video chat at the forefront. After all, people remember 95% of what they watch, but just 10% of what they read. Finally, it's a lot quicker and more efficient to talk than to type, and many of us are no longer sitting in open offices where face-to-face communication is possible. A communication gap exists in business right now and to move forward, there need to be appropriate solutions put in place.



Management reporting

It is not uncommon for staff to have issues with getting into work. Just a couple of inches of snow can bring transport networks to a standstill, not to mention the impact of flooding and storm damage, which block roads and disrupt travel even more.

This is not just a winter problem either. In a heatwave, warped railway tracks and melted road surfaces can result in travel chaos. And then there are all those days when the bus was delayed, the train was cancelled, the car wouldn't start or the kids were ill, all of which can prevent colleagues making it to the office. Illness is a big problem too and if staff come into work when they are feeling rough, they won't perform as well as usual and risk spreading germs around the office.

When there are so many reasons that staff struggle to get to work, it is easy to think that this could cause major issues in terms of productivity. This does not need to be the case though and with the right technology, businesses can adapt to better meet the needs of their staff. With superfast internet now far more commonplace, there is no reason why staff cannot work from home on a more regular basis.

In my view, the bigger issues arise because many people continue to struggle with the disconnect from the workplace, which can lead to misunderstandings, demotivation and poor performance. To tackle this, the secret is communication.

In any business it is vital that workers can communicate with colleagues, teams and managers remotely as easily as they can in the workplace. Good communication between remote workers means teams can still collaborate, queries are dealt with quickly and staff feel connected and motivated, regardless of where they are located. There are plenty of communication tools available, but often staff resort to using one platform for chat, another for collaboration on documents, a third for video sharing and so on. This way of working is too often cumbersome and ineffective, and can degrade the quality of communication and leave staff feeling frustrated.

One way to overcome the issues associated with remote working is to use a platform such as Watch and Learn to bring staff together, wherever they may be. This multi-channel, multi-format communication tool provides your staff with the

tools to converse across video, audio and text, so they can share knowledge, work on projects together or just catch up for a chat. The asynchronous video, voice, text and screencast messaging allows for continuous, real-time conversations that support the workflow and enable employees to work together remotely as successfully as if they were in the same room.

Group channels mean teams can collaborate and exchange information relevant only to them rather than the whole workforce, and the private chat feature ensures one-to-one training, individual feedback and discussions can take place discreetly.

Watch and Learn brings together a range of tools so that staff will rarely need to open any other communication platform, leading to happier, better motivated people and improved productivity and performance – even when staff cannot make it into the office.



Sales

Modern sales teams need to promote a learning culture to advance their performance. Here are some practical tips on how to do this.

1. Run a marketing campaign

You might be confused by this first tip, but you need to think about it as a marketing campaign. To increase adoption in your sales team, they need to be sold to. Think about the personas of your team, what they like and dislike, how they learn currently, and what is in it for them. For example, often it can be difficult to ask the high performing sales professionals to coach those who are lower down the food chain. You might consider promotional opportunities for the high performers if they contribute or perhaps access to an accredited learning course.

2. Explain the benefits of sharing

As the sales leader, you need to think about how you promote a culture of sharing. If sales professionals feel secure and comfortable – they will likely share their knowledge. If the messaging

is clear, for example ‘Sharing our war stories and client questions across regions will enable us all to learn and improve’, this could be one strategy you adopt.

3. Onboard your team

It is important you don't forget to explain the new methods for training and coaching within your team. Sales professionals are extremely busy a lot of the time, therefore, you need to ensure they know how to access the tools you provide. Think about how-to guides and access to help information.



Marketing

The way we do business is changing. Phones are becoming redundant and fewer people commuting to the office as home-working becomes more accepted. In marketing, conventional wisdom used to focus on position, placement and price. However, it is now more focused around building community, collaboration and creating content conversations.

With this in mind, the business tools we use on a daily basis must measure up to these changing needs. Employees need to start creating content in communities with customers. The lower value information can be gained on-demand at the point of need. Live video calls can then be used for higher-value interactions.

Watch and Learn is a catalyst for all this. Meeting face-to-face is important but too often the real opportunities that arise are wasted in the weeks and months that follow. Take an annual event when there is a spike of interest in the immediate aftermath before the conversations die down. People might connect on LinkedIn or email and arrange to follow up meetings. However, this is only a small fraction of the total potential when it comes to these conversations. Indeed at these

events, there is rarely smart matching of individuals to enable the building of partnerships or customer transactions.

Watch and Learn builds rich communities that harvest peoples' voices and allow the creation of that videos that make interactions more human. The platform moves interactions away from impersonal emails that fail to build lasting relationships. Private groups, timelines, playlists, profiles and direct messages allow for content creation, collaboration and conversations. Building community is the new smartest way to do business. It is more targeted, convenient and a richer experience.

Watch and Learn is one platform where you can build a community just in time or in real-time. Using the platform, colleagues can communicate using their preferred method of contact, be it text messages, voice messages, video calls, screencasts or live video calls. Activating all of this leads to more enjoyable and memorable business culture. Everything is transparent and relationships are built with full accountability and responsibility. Conversations are documented and with the transcription tool, the arduous task of creating minutes and agendas becomes simple.



Recruitment

Increasingly, in-house HR teams and recruitment agencies are leveraging video for interview screening. Both can still save time with simple improvements though, replacing time-consuming phone calls with on-demand video interviews that allow staff to screen three times as many candidates per day.

However, lots of these video interviewing apps are not that flexible. Often platforms lock a candidate into pre-selected interview questions which lack a personal touch, while some candidates don't like using video. Response times tend to be slow as candidates prepare themselves for video capture with the right setting and correct attire.

Watch and Learn solves these problems by offering video, voice notes and text-based

messaging for recruiter-to-candidate communications. This means that a candidate conversation starts off with text messages or voice notes before video requests are made. Candidates post videos and you can schedule a live video call within Watch and Learn with no extra software or download required.

This multi-channel approach leads to better conversion with candidates and better response rates. All this leads to improved times to hire. There is nothing wrong with video recruitment but video only recruitment is quite inflexible. Watch and Learn offers a dynamic and flexible experience for candidates and is available via the web and mobile apps. Our web platform and apps can be branded up with your corporate identity.

You can contact candidates directly for one-to-one conversations or set up private groups for online assessment centres. All videos are transcribed, increasing accessibility, you can also search for them easily. Sentiment analysis also allows you to understand the emotions in conversations to get greater insights into a candidate's soft skill set. Finally, using Watch and Learn you can host screencasts to help coach candidates about your company and the role on offer.

Once candidates are brought on-board, Watch and Learn can also prove a useful tool during the remote training and onboarding process. Senior staff or coaches can either go live with video or they can post videos in a chat interface, allowing for both short form and long form coaching sessions. The video chat and video posts are stored for reflections and playback, while trainers can access past sessions to help prepare in the future.



Employee engagement

As a child, I remember watching films and cartoons showing characters beamed onto their TV screens for a video chat. This was a futuristic concept back then, but in the modern world it is an everyday occurrence with a host of platforms available.

The problem now is that video calls are an interruption and people often aren't prepared to have a video chat at short notice. This leads to the issue of arranging video calls – with busy or conflicting schedules, which can be a pain. This problem existed with phones initially, prompting the introduction of the voicemail system and the future of video communication should replicate this too, through asynchronous video messaging. This is still in the early stages of use, with Snapchat being a prime example. However, it is only a matter of time before businesses start to realise the benefits and make this the professional norm.

Asynchronous video is a message sent ad hoc, usually as part of a conversation or message chain. In our view, asynchronous video is the new alternative to face-to-face communication and will only become more useful as technology improves. The rapid development in smartphone cameras and microphones make it possible to record and send high-quality videos without any extra equipment, and coupled with the right software, it is a trend that should become commonplace.

The main technology shift that supports this though, is artificial intelligence. Live transcription increases accessibility to your messages, while removing the work of typing out a long email. Sentiment analysis helps show how a message is being presented, allowing users to understand the emotions involved in video. Along with the time reduction from live transcriptions, there is a lot to be gained from switching from emails to asynchronous videos. Emails aren't personable and are quite often misunderstood, creating extra work. In the near future, we can expect to see video messages surpass emails as the main form of communication in offices.

Clearly the video revolution has started, with companies like Zoom experiencing a huge spike in popularity. To go one better though is to offer asynchronous video, which is what Watch and Learn has. On Watch and Learn you can send video messages on the mobile app or via the web with full transcription automated. This gives the recipient the ability to watch when they want, and the function to reply with video, voice or text.



Learning and development

An important part of growing your business and exhibiting best practice is understanding what others are doing well. One firm that has seen rapid growth in recent months is TikTok, which now has approximately 500 million active users and is growing fast. So what if we took the strengths of TikTok and applied it to providing education to the professional learner.

In the 1980s and 1990s before Netflix arrived, if your family was like mine you would've fought over the remote control for the TV. Often members of the household would channel flick continuously from one channel to the next until they discovered something which captured their interest. Channel flicking when there were just five channels wasn't much fun but with the arrival of Sky and Virgin Media, flicking gave you an idea of the immense range of options on offer.

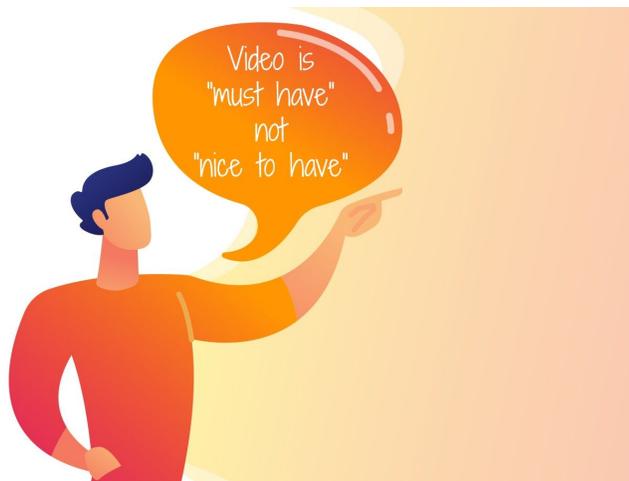
If we apply this habit to the modern age, everyone has a remote control in the form of a smartphone, and we have a lot more screens than we did in the past. Now everyone can channel flick and for those under the age of 30, the way to do this is TikTok.

A little bit like Tinder, the dating app where you can swipe left or right on other people's profile in order to form matches, TikTok instead displays auto-playing user-made content. Some of the videos are very entertaining and the swiping up and down becomes addictive over time as an artificial intelligence algorithm learns your preferences. The more you use TikTok the better it becomes at learning what you are interested in.

There have also been controversies about TikTok's use of data. Initially the result of a merger between Musical.ly, an American born social media app, and Bytedance, one of the leading internet companies in China, concerns over how content is controlled and freedom of speech have arisen. Like any platform, inappropriate content should always be removed but there have been reported instances of unfair practice on TikTok.

Irrespective of the content, one undeniable fact is TikTok's growth in terms of active users and revenue. This phenomenon can be applied to both personal and professional education. This is the opportunity which we have grasped in the Ventures Anywhere team with Watch and Learn.

Watch and Learn combines the best features of TikTok, Slack, Whatsapp and Zoom to bring a new learning experience to individuals. Businesses and brands can apply their own look and feel to both apps and websites to provide a new social learning community. Most addictions are seen as a negative habit for a person but becoming addicted to learning is healthy. If Watch and Learn fulfils its mission and vision, then we will have a new platform as popular as TikTok and Netflix with a new genre of content being applied for workplace learning, collaboration and much more.



Software and testing

Webanywhere was recently engaged with a global technology rollout for one of the top language learning companies in the world. It was a complex enterprise IT project and involved numerous stakeholders and teams around the world.

One of the difficulties with such a project is the delay that results from imperfect communication solutions, where missed deadlines and over-complicated email chains are common. Our solution was to use screencast posts for every change request and iteration during the software development life-cycle, whether it is project initiation, project retrospectives, new release or user acceptance testing.

Senior stakeholders and budget holders were able to view these screencasts to evaluate the project and could intervene when necessary. The key message was transparency, which helped drive accountability through shared ownership and everyone understanding their contribution and part to play. Screencasts significantly reduce the number of email chains and meetings needed, as well as increasing net promoter scores and customer satisfaction through scheduled updates throughout the project.



Project management

As a business owner it is difficult to find a balance between listening to your employees and learning from their feedback, and also finding the time to meet all your daily responsibilities.

But if you had access to a timeline where you can listen to debriefs on a daily basis, this task would be far easier. Not only would you get to find out how someone's day has gone, but you could also take appropriate action to rectify issues and concerns quickly.

In an engaged workforce, people want appreciation and they want to be listened to. However, listening to people at scale is difficult in the world where emails and text messages rule. Whether it is listening to bad news delivered early or understanding small wins, leadership and management can get close to ground zero.

Understanding customers and they are serviced, being customer-focused and adapting to these customers needs gives you the edge in a competitive market. Listening to your staff in a remote-first world is tricky, but technology can help.

Support and training

Your brand is not just a logo on a free pen, it is in the walls, in the photos that are shared and in the DNA. To be successful, we have to find a way to submerge our audience into our brand and show them how we can make them feel.

Every business should have a site for videos. These play a similar role to blogs but with a much richer experience for customers. Whether it's the launch of a new product or customer support, video can enhance your customer experience.

Using Watch and Learn, customers can launch branded video calls directly from your video site and there is no software to install. Alternatively,

customers can post videos or voice notes via direct messages or in private groups. Most brands have YouTube channels but they're not interactive. Watch and Learn takes video to a new level by allowing your customers to have synchronous and asynchronous video experiences. Whether you want to interact live or on-demand Watch and Learn enables this to happen.

**GIVE
YOUR INBOX
A VIDEO
EXPERIENCE**



Conclusion

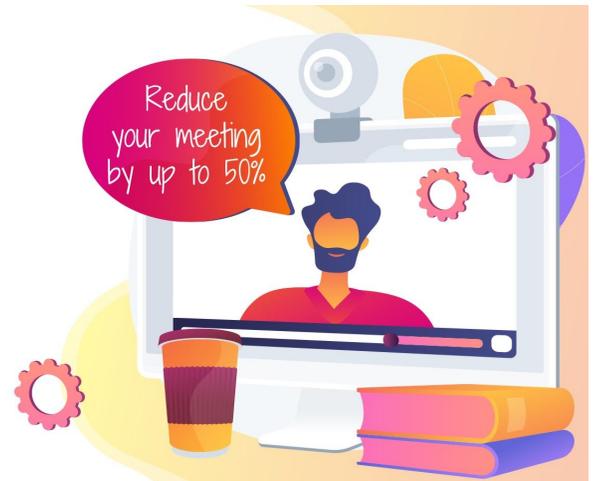
Going beyond plain text, recording a video and capturing your screen brings a new richness to your communication. With Watch and Learn, once you have recorded yourself and your screen, you can instantly share with a link.

Sharing videos allow you to show and tell, whether it's a project management update, a product review or walking through an internal slide deck. Video notes can avoid the pain of round-robin emails and countless threads, and is the next best thing to live meetings. Rather than broadcasting our message at the point of conception we often wait to schedule a meeting. This means we wait for a conversation to happen and the moment has passed. If we do communicate thoughts immediately via email authenticity and meaning is lost. Already we see people using video conferencing as a new way to communicate more effectively. Video calls also combat global warming and reducing our carbon footprint can only be a good thing.

Conference calls quite often are recorded and sometimes without the knowledge of the participants. In a webinar, recording is accepted but often run of the mill meetings are recorded too. The benefit of recording is a searchable archive that helps us to recall and remember prior conversations. Lots of households have Alexa and Google Home devices are listening in and while there are privacy concerns, most people have come to accept these devices.

Scheduled video calls are so often a huge drain on time, with cancellations and lateness to common.

When they finally begin, they tend to last at least half an hour and often up to an hour. This doesn't mean that the conversation isn't important and that you shouldn't have one-hour video conferences, but there will be times when a half an hour video call can be replaced with something more time efficient.



Combining asynchronous communication with video allows for more personable communication that doesn't need to be scheduled. While these videos are not live the recipient gets to choose when they play the video allowing for greater flexibility around conflicting schedules. Asynchronous video helps keep relationships and conversations going in a remote environment, when email simply cannot.

When you look at the most popular platforms, video is a common ingredient. Amazon Prime, Netflix, YouTube, TikTok and Instagram have all seen dramatic increases in interest and the corporate world needs to follow suit. When it comes to business communications there will always be face-to-face communications for building relationships. But video messages are there to supplement communications for between times to improve your productivity and to increase the richness of communication. With more people working from home and becoming increasingly conscious of their carbon footprint, video might just be the answer. Less scheduling, less travel and greater productivity, without compromising relationships.

I hope you find this new approach to video interesting.

Many thanks,

Sean

Sean Gilligan, Founder & CEO, Webanywhere