

Is Zoom ready for most of America to work online?

16 March 2020, by Dalvin Brown, Usa Today



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Coronavirus is putting remote work to the test.

Companies across sectors are implementing policies that encourage employees to work from home as the number of infections rises and sequestering spreads across the country.

Automakers such as Ford Motor and General Motors push more workers to stay away from the office, while [tech companies](#) such as Google and Amazon deploy similar strategies. Colleges and [school districts](#) across the country are shifting toward online instruction.

As the number of people depending on home internet connections rises, service reliability and download strength are more vital than ever. Can network providers keep up with the demand?

"This is very uncertain and untested," according to Dhiraj Sharma, CEO of the workplace communication platform Simplr.

At the office, companies typically have high-

bandwidth internet lines that can power large swaths of employees. "But with everyone working from home, it's uncertain if these companies will be able to keep up with the residential bandwidth demand," Sharma said.

For providers that can't support the immediate impact of a remote workforce, service disruptions or temporary outages could be imminent.

Power players such as Comcast and AT&T should be able to handle an influx of workers, according to Bobby Beckman, chief technology officer of the video conferencing platform LifeSize.

"If you look at what people do on the internet when they're not working, they're on YouTube, watching Netflix," Beckman said. "All those things are already using the pipe."

Thursday, Comcast and AT&T responded to the growing coronavirus threat by loosening restrictions and improving internet speeds as "social distancing" leads more people to videoconferences and communication software.

"As our country continues to manage the COVID-19 emergency, we recognize that our company plays an important role in helping our customers stay connected—to their families, their workplaces, their schools ... through the Internet," Comcast said in a statement.

Comcast is boosting broadband speeds for all customers and offers low-income customers 60 days free. AT&T is getting rid of home-internet data caps until further notice, Vice's Motherboard reported.

Comcast and AT&T are among many telecom providers that agreed not to [open access](#) to public Wi-Fi hot spots Friday as part of a request from the Federal Communications Commission. Verizon also signed the pledge.

What about Zoom?

The capability of remote work software platforms is being put to the test as COVID-19 disrupts [daily life](#)

The popular videoconferencing platform Zoom routes web traffic to 17 of its data centers sprinkled around the globe. The company said its service was built to withstand double its daily average of users, so it should be able to serve users without interruptions.

"In the case of an unprecedented, massive influx of demand, we have the ability to access and deploy tens of thousands of additional servers within hours," Zoom said in a statement.

Microsoft Teams told Vox's Recode it saw a 500% rise in meetings in China as usage rose in the U.S..

Google rolled out [free access](#) to its advanced Hangouts tools to help "businesses and schools stay connected in response to coronavirus." The enterprise upgrade is available only to customers.

Neither Zoom nor Teams have had sweeping outages during the outbreak.

The video collaboration platform LifeSize provided free browser-based conferencing to its clients. The service saw its users double over the past week.

"At a time like this, it helps people keep their business running without having to figure out how they're going to pay," Beckman said.

(c)2020 U.S. Today

Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

APA citation: Is Zoom ready for most of America to work online? (2020, March 16) retrieved 24 October 2021 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2020-03-ready-america-online.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.