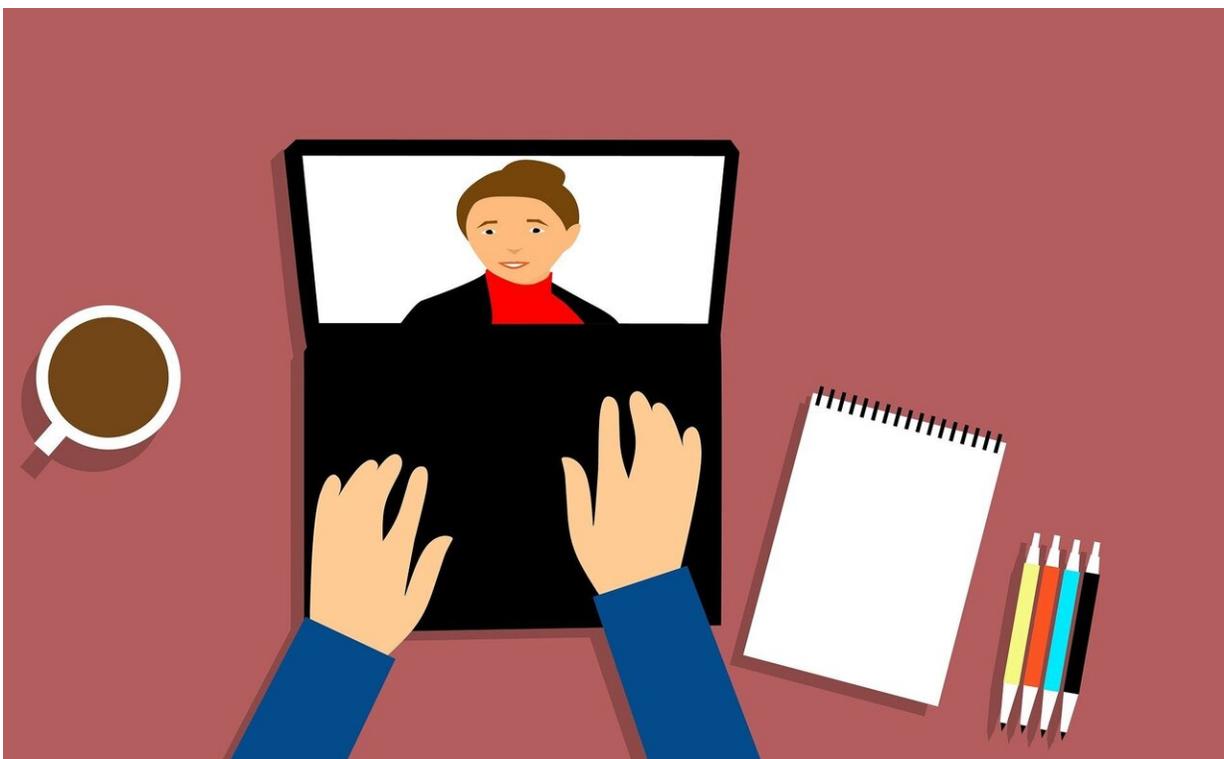


Zoom to focus on security, privacy, CEO says, as usage booms during coronavirus crisis

April 6 2020, by Mike Snider



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Zoom CEO Eric Yuan says the video conferencing service will forgo work on any new features over the next 90 days to focus on upgrading and bolstering the online platform's security and privacy protections.

The San Jose, California-headquartered online video provider has seen usage skyrocket as tens of millions across the globe have used Zoom to connect with co-workers, family and friends during the coronavirus crisis.

However, the video conferencing tool has faced some challenges with interlopers "[zoom-bombing](#)" other users' online meetings and computer security experts have found flaws in the software.

"We have strived to provide you with uninterrupted service and the same user-friendly experience that has made Zoom the video-conferencing platform of choice for enterprises around the world, while also ensuring platform safety, privacy, and security," Yuan said in a post on the Zoom blog late Wednesday. "However, we recognize that we have fallen short of the community's—and our own—privacy and security expectations."

Over the next 90 days Yuan said the company would enact a "feature freeze" and shift "all our engineering resources to focus on our biggest trust, safety, and privacy issues."

"We are committed to dedicating the resources needed to better identify, address, and fix issues proactively," he said. "We are also committed to being transparent throughout this process. We want to do what it takes to maintain your trust."

Zoom had released fixes for many of the issues brought to its attention including flaws that could be used to hijack a user's Mac computer and access the webcam and microphone, Yuan said.

Also on Thursday, Zoom said it would remove a feature in the software identified and analyzed by The New York Times that data-mined user names and email addresses and matched them with their LinkedIn profiles.

Zoom usage has, in Yuan's words, "ballooned," with more than 200 million daily meeting participants on its free and paid versions in March, compared to a high in 2019 of 10 million. "We now have a much broader set of users who are utilizing our product in a myriad of unexpected ways, presenting us with challenges we did not anticipate when the platform was conceived," he said.

More than 90,000 schools in 20 countries are using Zoom for online education, he says. In mid-March, Yuan lifted time limits on Zoom sessions for all K-12 schools in the U.S., Italy and Japan.

"We have been working around the clock to ensure that all of our users—new and old, large and small—can stay in touch and operational," Yuan said.

Also in March, Zoom published guidelines on how to prevent "zoom-bombing" interruptions. In one notable case an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting in New York was interrupted by a man hollering misogynistic and anti-Semitic slurs and saying, "Alcohol is soooo good," Business Insider reported.

Tips on how to Zoom safely

—Don't make meetings or classes public. You can require participants to use a password, or the meeting manager can make participants first appear in the waiting room and be admitted individually.

—Invite with care. Do not share links to your meeting on social media. Email or text them directly to participants.

—Limit screen sharing. Hosts can prevent others from posting video by changing the screen sharing options to "Host Only."

—Lock the door. You can close your meeting to newcomers once everyone has arrived. Hosts can click the Participants tab at the bottom of the Zoom window to get a pop-up menu, then choose the Lock Meeting option.

—Use your silencer features. You can disable video for participants and mute an individual or all attendees.

—Cut out the chatter. The host can disable the ability to text chat during the session to prevent the delivery of unwanted messages.

—Boot the uninvited. Hosts can remove a participant by putting the mouse over that name and choosing the Remove option. Allen says you can block people from rejoining meetings if they were removed.

—Preparation. Make sure participants have the latest version of Zoom's software, which was updated in January. That update added meeting passwords by default and disabled a feature allowing users to randomly scan for meetings to join.

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Citation: Zoom to focus on security, privacy, CEO says, as usage booms during coronavirus crisis (2020, April 6) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2020-04-focus-privacy-ceo-usage-booms.html>

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