



GoToMeeting v3.0

By Robert P. Lipschutz

Physical meetings have a lot of downsides, such as the time and money lost traveling to them. Stop the waste—start GoToMeeting, one of the most effective ways to get things done in a group. I use the service for presenting pitches to clients, to go over documents with colleagues, and even to confer with my attorney and review QuickBooks transactions with my accountant. These cyber-conferences let me get on the same page with business associates quickly and make things happen.

Unlike many software products, which suffer from feature bloat, this one is elegant in its simplicity. From starting and participating in meetings to sharing your screen and applications to changing presenters, every part of the process is easy—even when setting up and running your first virtual meeting. After that, using the service becomes routine.

Audio recording, support for Macintosh attendees, and integration with more applications make version 3.0 even better for getting things done. And since you're using a Web service, if you have an Internet connection and a Web browser with Java support, you can download the client portion of the app and meet.

Once you register, the application downloads in less than a minute over a broadband connection. The latest release integrates with Microsoft Office 2007, Google Talk, Skype, Windows Live Messenger, and Yahoo! Messenger, so in addition to starting a meeting by clicking on the orange asterisk in your system tray, you can instantly kick off a get-together from within any of those applications. Attendees join the meeting by navigating to a URL that you can give them

through e-mail, IM, or over the phone.

Citrix Online provides voice conferencing at no additional cost, but the meeting organizer can choose to provide a third-party call-in number. GoToMeeting Corporate extends the number of attendees to 25 from 10 (plus the meeting organizer), allows more than one organizer, offers additional reporting capabilities, gives access to the GoToMeeting API, and integrates with a product for hosting seminars. Citrix prices the Corporate Edition on a per-organizer basis. You can get information by sending an e-mail to gotomeetingsales@citrixonline.com.

The presenter control panel in version 3 remains unchanged from that of its predecessor. Screen sharing, the attendee list, a chat window, invitation options, meeting info, and the recording capability reside in separate panes of the control panel. Users can use drag-and-drop to rearrange panes and can hide them or the entire panel. An area with a drag-and-drop handle houses drawing tools, all of the tools in the screen-sharing pane, and a button for hiding the entire control panel.

From the control panel, the organizer orchestrates the meeting and assigns privileges for presenting, drawing, and keyboard and mouse control. Managing meetings is a flexible and efficient process that enables real-time sharing of information and granting control to participants with a single mouse click. The organizer can also dismiss unruly or absent participants.

The drawing function has better real-time capabilities than Adobe Acrobat Connect. Any user with permission can annotate the shared content in real time, whereas Connect requires pausing the presentation by bringing up a frozen

BOTTOM LINE:

Still a great tool for scheduled and ad hoc Web-based meetings, and it lets users easily share applications and information.

PROS:

Easily managed interface. Allows private and group chat, screen and application-sharing, and changing of presenters.

CONS:

Macintosh users can't initiate meetings. Drawing feature needs improvement.

annotation view of the shared screen. Disappointingly, though, GoToMeeting erases portions of drawings that scroll off the screen, limits what participants can add to handwritten notes and highlighting, and offers no integrated print-screen capability for capturing drawings. To be useful as a whiteboard, the feature needs improvement.

The biggest change with this release is the colaunch and integration of the GoToMeeting Corporate edition and GoToWebinar, an extension of GoToMeeting that adds features for hosting online seminars with up to 1,000 participants.

GoToMeeting has held our Editors' Choice for some time, and it's an elegant product that continues to add features that enable users to get together quickly at any time from anywhere they have Internet connections. That keeps it in the running for a new Editors' Choice, but until we've examined the other players in the space, we're withholding the award. Stay tuned as we continue to review products in this space.

Reprinted from PC Magazine, July 2, 2007 with permission from Ziff Davis Media Inc.
©2007 Ziff Davis Publishing Holdings Inc. All rights reserved.