HARVARD UNDERGRADUATE CBE

Productivity Technology and the COVID-19 Pandemic

Industry Report

Cassie Wang
Case Team Leader

Joshua Chiang
Associate

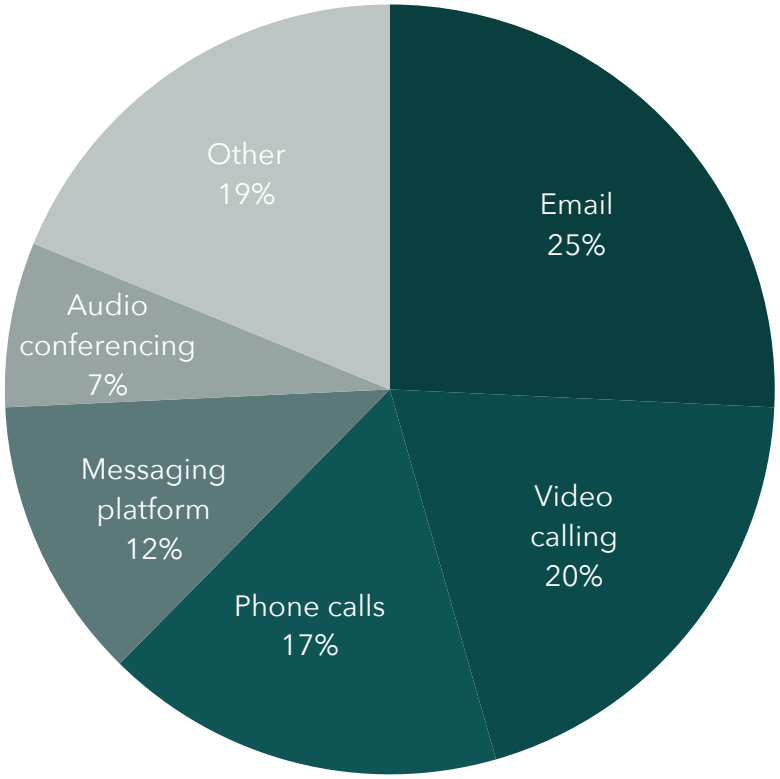
Key Productivity Tools

Technology and productivity tools have helped employees effectively work from home and cope with the disruption to the workplace caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Working From Home (WFH)

- A survey conducted by Splashtop in May 2020 suggests **75% of respondents used remote access solutions** and **80% of respondents were equally or more productive** while WFH.
- The following enable remote work:
  - **Communication methods**: video conferencing platforms, Voice over IP, messaging services, email, and phone calls
  - **Availability of devices**: laptops and smartphones
  - **Wi-Fi**: fast, reliable, home Wi-Fi
  - **Cloud-based productivity tools**
- However, many remote workers **feel lonely and less engaged** due to the lack of face-to-face interaction; a 2020 report from Buffer found collaboration, communication, and loneliness comprise 40% of employees' top struggles with WFH. Therefore, there will be **high demand for innovative products that connect employees** working from home.

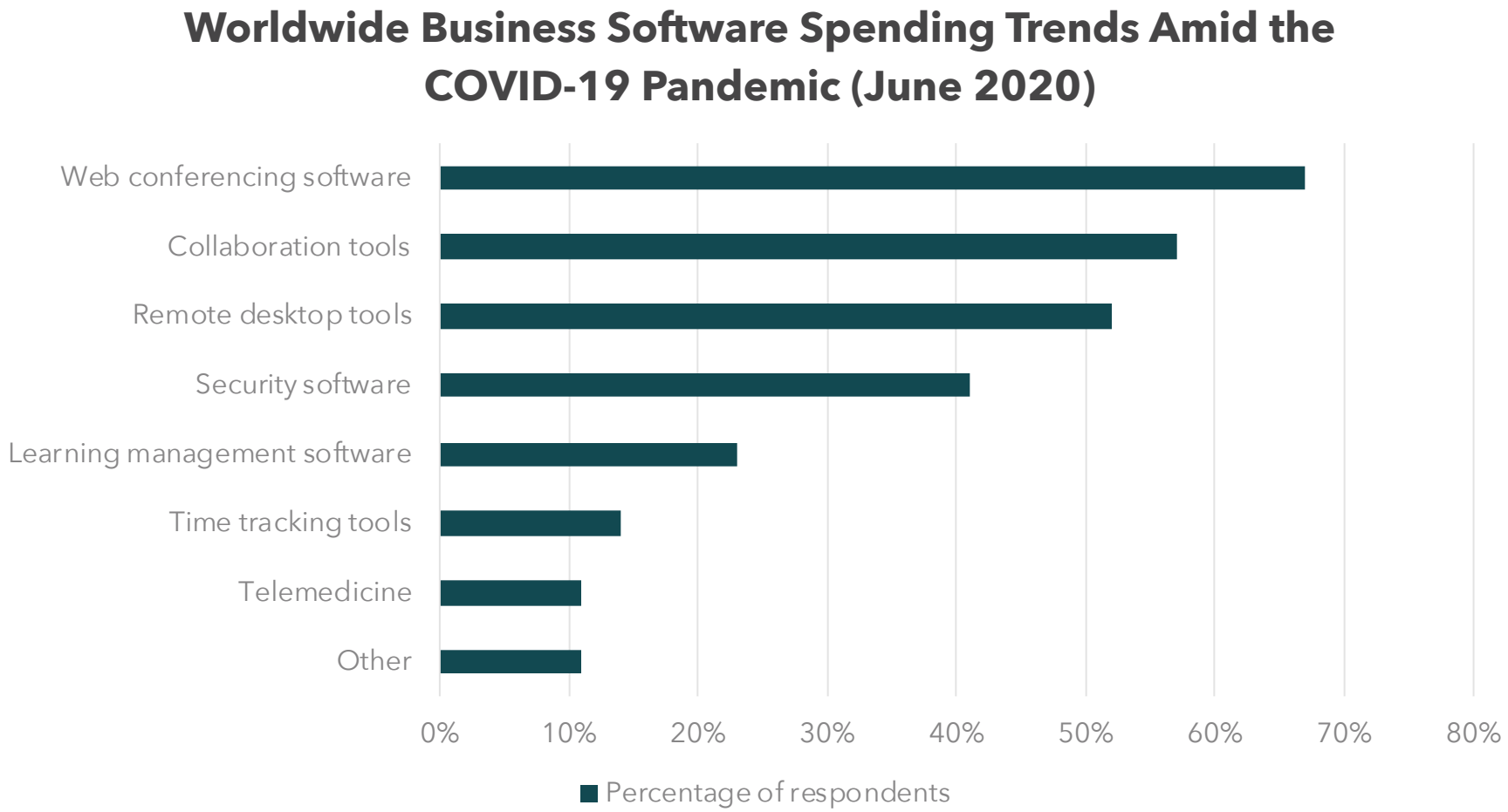
Popularity of Employee Communication Platforms



Statista, *Splashtop*, *Carnegie Technologies*, *Zoho*, *HBR*, *Buffer*

Increased Spending on Technology for WFH

There is high growth potential for technologies that facilitate remote work because COVID-19 has contributed to increased business spending on productivity technology.



Statista

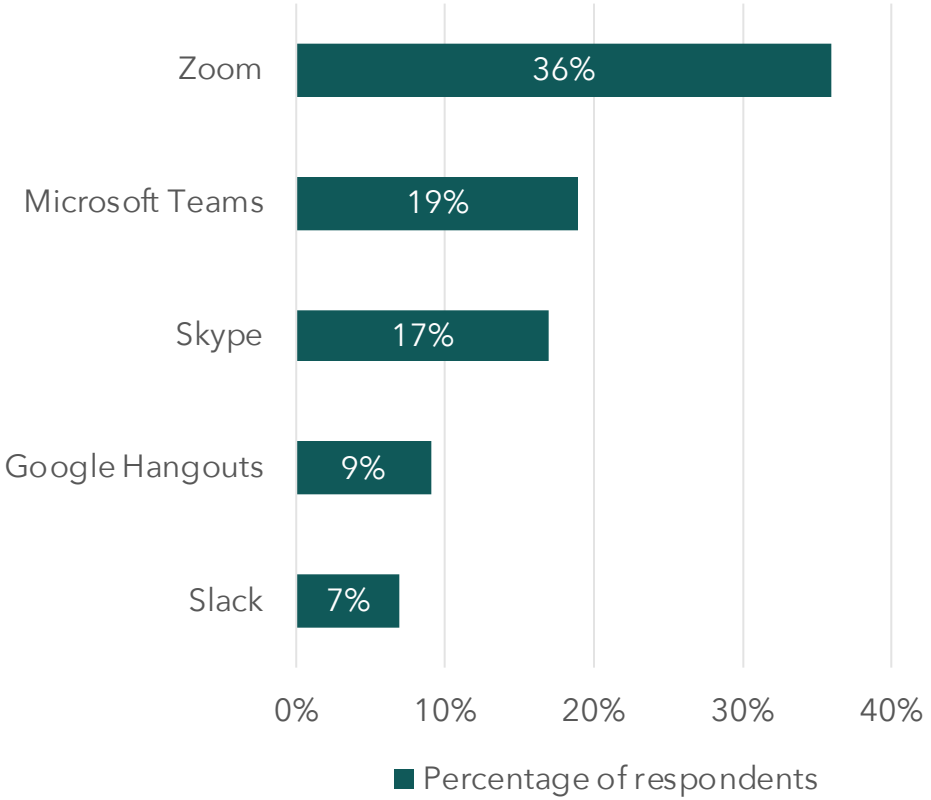
Communication Tools

Video conferencing and messaging tools such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Skype are essential to facilitating meetings and employee communication during WFH.

Communication during WFH

- In addition to email and phone calls, the following communication platforms are used by many companies to enable employees to work from home during the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - **Zoom**: Ranked first in customer reviews, powerful meeting security with AES 256-bit GCM encryption
  - **Microsoft Teams**: Easily access, share, and edit Word docs, PowerPoint, and Excel files in real time
  - **Skype**: Frictionless meeting hosting with no sign ups or downloads required, live subtitles during audio and video calls.
  - **Google Hangouts**: Send text messages with your Google Voice or Google Fi phone number, syncing across devices.
  - **Slack**: Communication platform with various app integrations. Helps bring companies together with shared channels

Collaboration tools most used for remote work in the US (April 2020)



Statista, Zoom, Microsoft, Skype, Google, Slack

Document Collaboration and File Sharing

Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive and SharePoint, and Dropbox take up 70% of market share for online collaboration tools. The remaining 30% consists of smaller players.

Google Drive

Online collaboration is made simple with Google Drive, which integrates with Gmail, Google Suite, and Google Photos. Users get **15GB of free cloud storage** with a Google Account. Most file types can be stored in Drive. Files are **private** until shared. Collaborators can view, comment, and edit files and folders.

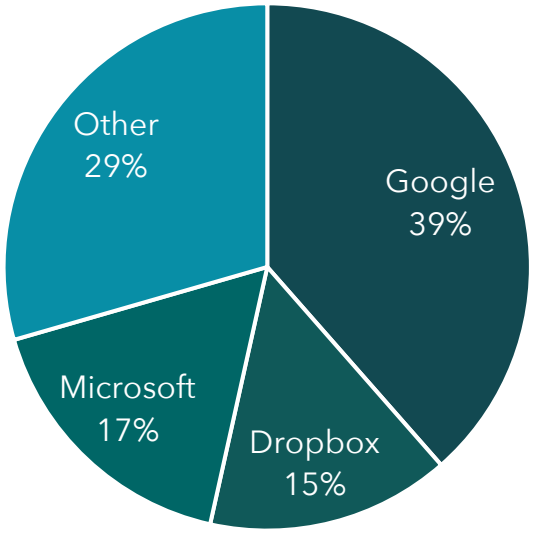
Microsoft OneDrive and SharePoint

Files, data, news, and resources can be shared via SharePoint. OneDrive provides cloud storage, **offline collaboration.** and file sharing, access, and backup. Furthermore, Microsoft Teams **integrates with Word documents, PowerPoint, and Excel files**, enabling real time access, sharing, and editing.

Dropbox

Dropbox offers **2GB of storage** with the free plan. Users can collaborate in real time with Dropbox Paper and on the web or via mobile devices. Dropbox allows for easy file backup and sharing for **seamless collaboration.**

File Sharing Market Share



Key Takeaway

The three main players in the file sharing space have their own real time collaboration tools that are seamlessly integrated within their respective ecosystems.

Datanyze, *Microsoft*, *Google*, *Dropbox*

Project Management Tools

Atlassian, Airtable, Notion, and Coda each offer unique solutions to help teams manage projects and track progress in centralized applications.

Atlassian

- Atlassian offers a selection of tools:
  - **Jira Software** for project and issue tracking
  - **Jira Align** for enterprise agile planning
  - **Confluence** for document collaboration
  - **Trello** for project and team management
- Atlassian products are used by Pfizer, Walmart, Toyota, Samsung, and Zendesk to **manage teams efficiently**.

Airtable

- Airtable boasts a spreadsheet and database fusion with **customizable views** to break free from the standard spreadsheet grid view.
- Airtable's robust API **integrates with all major apps** and allows for **seamless real time collaboration.**
- Users include Expedia, Buzzfeed, Medium, Shopify, and more.

Notion

- Notion is the missing half of Slack that assists with team **documentation** and establishes **long-term memory**.
- Users can easily create pages with **pre-built templates** and embed third-party tools.
- Notion's **user-friendly UI/UX** and drag and drop features offer more features to users of Evernote, Trello, and Airtable, **increasing efficiency.**

Coda

- Coda helps **centralize** documents, spreadsheets, and applications into **one flexible surface** and streamlines user workflows.
- There are **customizable views** for each user, and users can easily build a page with **pre-built templates**.
- Coda is used by teams at companies such as Figma, Uber, Spotify, The New York Times, and Square.

Atlassian, *Airtable*, *Notion*, *Coda*

Major Takeaway

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent increase in working from home, there has been an increased demand for communication and collaboration tools. Along with growth in the productivity tools industry, expect to see innovations in artificial intelligence and products that will help employees work from home even more efficiently and securely.