Zoom Adds to UC Platform, Technologies at Zoomtopia

Written by Marco Attard
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The Zoomtopia 2019 conference has Zoom announce "major expansions" to the titular unified communications platform, with no less than 300 additional features all set to be available by end January 2020.

"We are proud that everything we've built at Zoom-- from our core video architecture to our UI-- is designed to make your meetings, as our customers say, "Just work,"" the company says. "But we're not stopping there. At Zoom, we are about empowering people to do more with video communications. Deploy intelligent Zoom Rooms quickly on purpose-built appliances, use Zoom Phone in new geographies and new use cases, and streamline laborious tasks such as creating and sharing meeting notes. It's all designed to remove friction and replace it with empowering communications experiences, so you can do more."

Zoom is pushing the idea of Zoom Room Appliances, purpose-built hardware devices the company describes as intimately compatible with Room solutions. It is even investing in Neat, a maker of such devices, with the partnership bringing the Neat Bar, an all-in-one system combining a speaker bar, mic-array and camera. Customers can pair the system with the Neat Board, a 65-inch touchscreen designed for collaboration purposes. In addition, Zoom has partnerships with Poly and DTEN in Rooms-compatible devices.

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On the Rooms user experience side the system gets features such as "Find a Room" on scheduling displays, the option to add a whiteboard companion in an existing Zoom Room, support for up to two room controllers and scheduling displays per room, audio-based speaker tracking, Zoom Room profiles and enhanced digital signage featuring split screens and widgets to display weather, date, time and Twitter and RSS feeds.

The Rooms controller natively supports customisable IP-based commands, allowing customers to manage lighting, window shades and any other IP-controlled devices directly from the controller. Admins can also remotely manage Rooms iOS, Mac OS and Windows deivces without a 3rd party MDM from the Zoom Admin Portal, simplifying ongoing management.

Initially available in the UK, US, Canada and Australia, the Zoom Phone is now available in Ireland, New Zealand and Puerto Rico. Zoom is also beta testing it in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland, and has added Citrix VDI support, global dial plans, location-based call routing and dynamic e911 support.

Zoom Meetings allow for simultaneous interpretation, with users bringing own interpreters and Zoom providing multiple audio channels mixing the original and interpreter audio at an optimal ratio. Thus, users can understand the interpreter and also hear the tone of the original speaker. Meanwhile Zoom Chats gets comments and reactions, allowing users to react to specific messages with emojis.

Zoomtopia has additions to the overall Zoom ecosystem. For instance, the Zoom Phone Bring Your Own Carrier (BYOC) program gets GTT and Voxbone as partners, while Genesys, NICE inContact and Talkdesk are now part of the Zoom Contact Center Partner Program. Zoom also has integrations with products from the AudioCodes session border controller (SBC) and desk phone portfolio, and supports Algo and Cyberdata overhead paging solutions.

Moving on to channel support, Zoom launches three partner programs. The Reseller Partners Marketing Development Funds (MDF) program helps key channel partners drive demand generation and go-to-market activities. The Zoom Certified Integrator program gets a recertification process and a tier system to ensure partners have the knowledge required to deploy Zoom Rooms, and updated Hardware Partner program allows partners to demonstrate

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interoperability to businesses and VARs.

Zoom has also added capabilities in AI, machine learning, location-based services, face detection and personalisation to the platform. An Otter.ai-powered capabity transcribes meetings in real-time before saving transcripts for future reference, and notes and AI-derived action-items are automatically available to participants via Meeting Timelines. Videos and PowerPoint files can be used as mixed-reality virtual backgrounds, in addition to existing JPEG support.

Finally, Zoom Rooms also gets virtual backgrounds, while AI-based face detection gives admins attendee counts from the Zoom Admin Dashboard.

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