

Increasing Connectedness and Productivity in the Perpetually Distributed Workforce

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Abstract

Work is spread across offices, regions, and time zones and is dictated by organizations' specific return-to-office policies. Video is what holds that together, and it's been doing that job with roughly the same toolkit for well over a decade. Much of the current investment conversation centers on AI and automation, but the people driving the business forward still spend a large share of their day meeting with colleagues in other locations, and video, for all it does well, still can't replicate what happens when people are in the same room.

This White Paper looks at what happens when that part of work changes. Google Beam enables true-to-life, 3D video communication without the friction of headsets or glasses. Brought to life through HP Dimension hardware, this breakthrough technology integrates directly into the familiar Zoom workflows that enterprise organizations rely on every day. The result feels less like a video call and more like being in the same room, with the personal connection and immersive experience a regular video call can't quite replicate.

Where work actually happens now

Return-to-office programs were designed, at least in part, to improve productivity by placing people near one another. In practice, policies land all over the map, from five days a week in the office to fully flexible, with most organizations sitting somewhere in between. Whatever the policy, though, any organization with more than one location has to contend with distributed teams. The New York office works with the Chicago office. The regional

office works with headquarters. The team that was just acquired works with the team that acquired them. Even within a given city, one organization might have several offices or campuses. In these environments, teams and their cross-functional partners end up spread across floors, buildings, or geographies, so being in the office doesn't always translate to being face to face with the people the work actually involves.

The reality is that any organization with a meaningful number of people working away from their colleagues needs a plan for them, and, in such cases, distributed work is the normal operating condition.

Video is the backbone of hybrid communications

To date, the biggest impact on communication among distributed teams or people has been made by video, and its role in this environment exploded almost overnight. Before 2020, plenty of remote meetings ran on a phone bridge and a shared screen. Video showed up for interviews and the occasional team meeting, and many people avoided it. With the COVID-19 pandemic, when people stopped sharing space, seeing each other turned out to be broadly useful, and it became almost mandatory. Today, video matters more to how work gets done than it did in 2019, and it's being used for more scenarios: team meetings, customer conversations, managing partner relationships, interviews, and mentoring.

Several years post-pandemic, though, most organizations are communicating and collaborating over video the same way they were in 2020. And while business as usual is comfortable, there are now platforms that use modern AI, compute, and camera technology to fundamentally change the experience of remote communication in ways that were difficult to imagine five or ten years ago.

Omdia research points to the physical workspace as the next area to see investment, especially as employees and organizations adopt return-to-office or hybrid work programs. Even today, with all the usage of video, just 28% of enterprise meeting rooms have any video capability at all, and even those are basic setups or rely on employees bringing their own devices.¹ Looking from the other direction, while there are 723 million UCaaS subscriptions globally, fewer than 3 million conference rooms with one-click join exist.

Given those numbers, it's no surprise that employees are voicing frustration when they come into the office. Research shows that employees' biggest frustrations when they come into the office include difficulty finding a free meeting room (42%), noisy office space

¹ Omdia Market Radar Research Report, [On the Radar: Zoom's AI strategy – enabling scalable, integrated collaboration spaces with Zoom Spaces](#), December 2025.

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(42%), and a lack of collaboration technology for in-office work (30%), and just 11% of IT leaders saying their employees have no frustrations at all.² And organizations appear to know it, since 82% have plans in place for equipping meeting rooms.³

The next step forward means changing the meeting itself

Most organizations are still running the collaboration stack they stood up in 2020, and that stack deserves a lot of credit for the amount of work that gets done with it. It held businesses together under unprecedented pressure, and it exists because vendors like Zoom saw the need for better video communication well before the pandemic and had a platform ready when everything changed at once.

Since then, the improvements have been steady but evolutionary: face tracking and speaker identification; room automation so a user doesn't have to know how the conference room works to start a meeting; cropping individual faces from a group shot into their own tiles in the name of meeting equity; AI capabilities that capture notes, summaries, and action items so people can focus on the meeting itself rather than documenting it. None of this is bad, and the hardware and software ecosystems have matured considerably along the way. But everybody still shows up as a rectangle. The experience of being in a meeting hasn't fundamentally changed, which is usually what happens when something is good enough and everyone is accustomed to it. After all, business as usual is a tough incumbent technology to unseat.

What would actually clear the revolutionary bar is taking the thing the pandemic proved—that the visual channel carries an enormous amount of information nobody expressly speaks—and rebuilding the meeting around it with today's AI and high-performance computing. That's a job for companies that are each genuinely great at their own piece, rather than one vendor trying to be excellent at all of it.

Google has accomplished this with Google Beam, which delivers a seamless, immersive, 3D meeting experience that begins by simply entering a room and sitting down at a table. Users experience a life-size, three-dimensional video conversation that requires nothing

² Ibid.

³ Source: Omdia Research Report, [2026 Trends to Watch: Unified Communications and Collaboration](#), December 2025.

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from participants other than to sit at a table and look at a screen. No headset, no glasses. The person on the other end appears at actual size, with real depth, sitting across the table. Eye contact works similar to how it would in a shared room, and voices come from where each person sits rather than from a speaker somewhere off to the side.

Google Beam was seen as so transformational that Zoom has partnered with Google to integrate the technology with the Zoom platform. They both have a shared commitment to redefining human connection at work by combining Google's 3D spatial computing with Zoom's enterprise meeting platform. That says two things: First, Beam is impactful enough that a company in Zoom's position wants to co-innovate on it rather than watch it happen. Second, Google and Zoom are both committed to delivering an experience that feels fluid and familiar to users.

This isn't simply a new video conferencing feature, and it's certainly not telepresence 2.0 or someone's face plastered on a tablet on a mobile stick. It's the very latest in collaboration from two leaders in the space.

What Google and Zoom built

To understand the collaboration between Google and Zoom, it's worth spending a moment talking about the key to making it happen: Zoom Rooms.

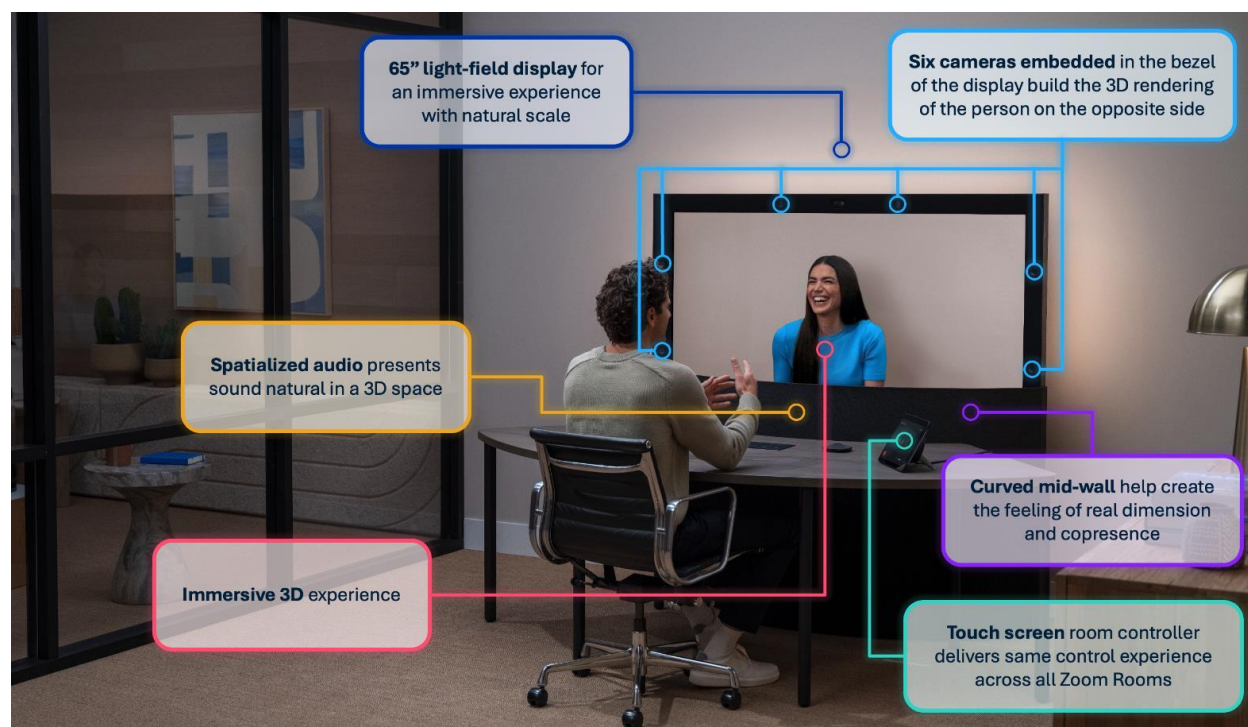
Zoom Rooms runs in physical spaces, anything from a huddle room to a boardroom. In the room itself is the meeting equipment: cameras, microphones, speakers, and displays running on dedicated hardware, with a touch controller on the table. Users walk in, tap the controller, and the meeting starts, with the same interface in every room and centralized management for IT. Zoom Rooms are how organizations use the Zoom platform in physical spaces versus on their desktop. Google Beam for Zoom includes the familiarity of Zoom Rooms and also adds Beam's life-size, 3D experience. The system delivering all of this today is HP Dimension, built by HP as Google's first OEM hardware partner for Beam.

Anatomy of a Google Beam for Zoom

Google Beam for Zoom combines state-of-the-art technology to deliver its unparalleled experience:

- Cameras built into the display's bezel capture the person from several angles at the same time.
- A light field display presents the result at life size, with real depth to it.
- Spatial audio places each voice where the person is sitting, backed by a microphone array and speakers.
- Lighting built into the unit adapts to the room, so as to accurately make it feel like a person, rather than a rendering in a video feed..
- The curved mid-wall behind the seat extends the sense that both participants are sharing one space.

Figure 1: Anatomy of Google Beam for Zoom with HP Dimension



Source: Omdia, Google, Zoom

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On the platform side, the Zoom Rooms interface operates using a touch controller and display, so a Zoom Room with Google Beam for Zoom behaves like the other Zoom Rooms teams are already used to. People book the room through Outlook or Google Calendar just like they book any other Zoom meeting, and IT manages it in the Zoom Web Portal alongside the rest of the Zoom Rooms.

The same hardware handles standard 2D meetings over Zoom, Google Meet, and other platforms, including meetings where the far side isn't connecting from a Beam-equipped room. Whether a meeting runs in 3D or as a regular 2D call resolves automatically based on the invite, so nobody has to pick a mode. A one-on-one meeting booked between two Beam rooms is a 3D meeting; a multi-person meeting or one where only one end has Beam is a traditional Zoom Meeting.

Finally, Presentation Mode is expected to bring screen sharing into the 3D meeting, with shared content appearing right next to the presenter, almost like a news broadcast, while the presenter stays life-sized.

What it's like to use Beam

The Google Beam for Zoom experience runs between two Beam endpoints on the same platform (e.g. to use Google Beam for Zoom, both ends need to be Zoom Rooms with Google Beam hardware). Today, the 3D experience is one-to-one. However, group meetings still benefit from the room, with life-size rendering and spatial audio for a small number of remote participants. Immersive group meetings are on the roadmap, extending the same lifelike quality to the small-team conversations that make up so much of distributed work.

A first-person experience

I have had the opportunity to use Google Beam and was initially dismissive of the idea, perhaps like you are reading this now.

At first, I was surprised by how it "felt." My mind was aware that this was completely new, and that, while I was looking at a display, it felt more like a window. And on the other side of that window was another person, with depth and clarity that felt completely natural. After a few minutes, the technology disappeared from the meeting and it felt like a genuine, in-person, conversation.

Gabe Knuth, Principal Analyst, Omdia

Where it's showing up first

It's early in the adoption process, so today's customers are early adopters with specific use cases in mind, along with an expanding network of global partners and integrators. What stands out among early adopters is that the same handful of scenarios keeps coming up across organizations that have nothing in common:

- **Interviews and recruiting**, especially when a candidate is onsite in one office and an interviewer is in another. In Google's own research (which was conducted on an early round of test users and employees using real and test scenarios), 93% of interviewers rated their ability to read a candidate's non-verbal cues as superior to typical video, and 86% rated cultural fit and personality assessment as more effective.⁴ In a hiring scenario where the cost of making a mistake can be quite high, these things can have real value.
- **High-stakes conversations** like performance reviews, compensation discussions, negotiations, and the executive one-on-ones where a sensitive update or major decision is on the table. These are the meetings organizations currently justify a flight for, and the lifelike experience adds a depth that was previously only attainable by meeting in person. Once again, Google's early data backs this up. In its survey of 250 US enterprise executives, the two outcomes most often selected as justifying the purchase of Beam were successful resolution of high-stakes calls (67%) and faster decision making (63%).⁵
- **Standing connections between distributed teammates**, including the manager and report who ended up in different cities. In Google's eight-week study of its own employees, distributed pairs reported feeling closer, understanding feedback better, and finding it easier to raise difficult issues,⁶ and those are the conversations that decide whether a remote relationship works.
- **Mentoring, early-career development, and employee training**, where the person who needs the most support is often the one furthest from the room. Coaching works when the coach can see what they're coaching, and some training is entirely about presence; media training is a good example, where reading a trainee's composure under a hard question is the whole exercise. That kind of development is expensive to deliver in person and loses fine details over standard video.

⁴ Source: Google, *Long-Term Effects of Beam on Coworker Relationships*.

⁵ Source: Google, *Beam Executive Use Case Research*.

⁶ Source: Google, *Long-Term Effects of Beam on Coworker Relationships*.

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The common thread is that every one of these is enhanced by being able to read the other person's natural mannerisms, and that's precisely what a standard video call flattens.

“Historically we’ve tended to go to a couple of core schools and recruit in person, but as we continue to expand the places we go looking for talent, we can’t be everywhere at once. We’re looking for technology and innovations that help us do that. Google Beam allows me to substitute a flight with literally a Google Beam call.”

- Keith Bevans, EVP and Partner, Bain & Company

Return-to-office programs get a positive boost, too. Many people who are required back in the office report an experience that doesn't match the reasons driving the mandate in the first place. They commute in and then take the same calls they were taking at home, now from a louder room, with the same distributed teammates and customers. An office where the meetings are noticeably better is a different proposition for the employee and the organization alike.

“Hybrid and distributed work is the future of work, and we absolutely believe that you have to earn the commute. You have to create a differentiated experience for your employees and for our members in order to make it worth the gas, the time, the getting ready, the whole effort.”

- Jessica Martinez, EVP of People and Organizational Effectiveness, Industrious

Whether all of this makes anybody measurably more productive is, at this stage, still an open question. But the signs of where the value will come from are already visible. In Google's behavioral research comparing the experience against traditional video conferencing in the same one-on-one format, conducted during the prototype phase, participants recalled more of their conversations, took turns speaking more often, and reported less meeting fatigue.⁷ And though the study was preliminary, it's easy to see how something that closely resembles an eye-to-eye, in-person conversation results in more engagement and less multitasking.

While the downstream effects of these intangible value props are difficult to quantify at this stage since there simply cannot be any multi-year studies, there are some potential areas where the value is a bit more concrete, like reduced T&E due to fewer trips, better success rate for new hires, and a better in-office experience that aligns with objectives many organizations have in common. With greater adoption—something that's likely to happen now that Zoom is also on board—more real-world data will become available.

⁷ Source: Google Research blog, *How Project Starline improves remote communication*, April 2023.



Where this goes

The organizations getting the most out of Beam so far started from a different question than most buyers do. Rather than asking what belongs in every room, they asked which conversations need to go differently. Where aren't things working? Where has traditional video conferencing been a limiting factor in the success or efficiency of a project, a relationship, or a hire? The answers to these justify the investment and point to where the rooms should go.

The most useful takeaway, though, might be the simplest one: Find a Google Beam for Zoom demo and try it. That experience is what convinced Google's and Zoom's first customers, and it convinced me. Something that changes how a conversation feels doesn't come along very often. This one is worth paying attention to.

Appendix

Methodology

This paper reflects Omdia's independent analyst perspective, informed by briefings with Google and Zoom, a firsthand demonstration of Google Beam for Zoom, a review of Google's customer and behavioral research, public statements from early customers, and Omdia's syndicated Digital Workplace research. Google's research is reported with its population, date, and method named; Omdia reviewed it but did not independently replicate it. Customer perspectives are drawn from on-the-record public sources.

Further reading

"On the Radar: Zoom Spaces" (Omdia, December 2025)

"2026 Trends to Watch: Unified Communications and Collaboration" (Omdia, December 2025)

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