



Revamping Communications *in a* Virtual World

A NEW MINDSET DEMANDS NEW TACTICS



Braithwaite Communications

Virtual Timeline

1972

The term 'telecommuting' is coined by physicist Jack Nilles who was working remotely for NASA.

1975

The first personal computers are invented.

1983

The internet is invented.

1997

Google launches.

1998

Wireless internet is invented.

2002

LinkedIn launches and connects professionals across the globe.

Virtual work is the new normal

We're all quickly coming to terms with a new reality when it comes to how – and where – businesses operate. It's a major mindset shift, and organizations across all industries are working quickly to revamp their communications strategies.

From sales and marketing to internal communications and culture, your company's virtual presence matters more than ever.

In many ways, this virtual revolution has been a long time coming. Technology has driven significant changes in how we work, communicate and connect in the past. From the printing press to the PC, companies have always had to adapt their offering and how they communicate to new business realities fueled by technology.

Coronavirus Accelerates the Virtual Era

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented urgency around understanding and implementing this new virtual mindset in all aspects of business.

Social distancing, Stay at Home and #FlattenTheCurve have made the ability to do business virtually an immediate requirement.

Ready or not, the safety precautions necessitated by coronavirus have launched us into a new era of remote work.

2004

Facebook is launched as a social networking site for Harvard students.

2005

70% of adults are using instant messaging and 26% are using it on the job.

2009

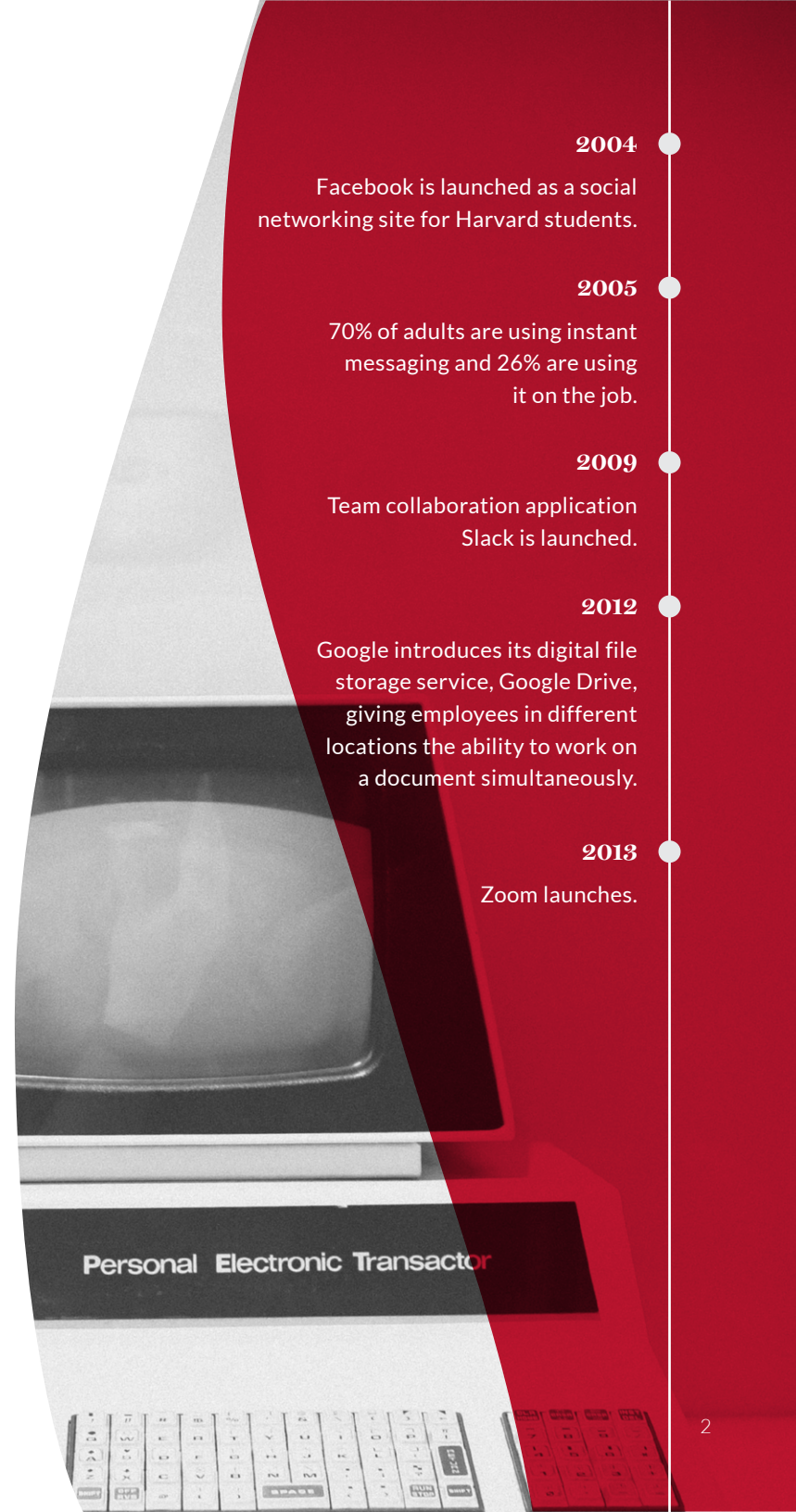
Team collaboration application Slack is launched.

2012

Google introduces its digital file storage service, Google Drive, giving employees in different locations the ability to work on a document simultaneously.

2013

Zoom launches.



● **December 16, 2019**

First coronavirus patient admitted to the hospital in China.

● **January 19, 2020**

First U.S. patient infected with coronavirus seen at urgent care facility in Washington state.

● **March 6, 2020**

Microsoft, Google, Amazon and others ask U.S. employees to work from home.

● **March 27, 2020**

An estimated 60 to 70 million Americans are now working remotely due to concerns about the coronavirus.

The Increasing Value of Compelling Content

As technology has driven more of the customer and employee experience online, the value of content has never been higher. With each new advancement, the demand for content has increased. As a result, brands are creating more content than ever before.

Most of it falls short. The challenge in today's reality is creating content people actually want to consume. Making sure your audience can access your content in a way that is easily consumable is becoming increasingly critical.

If there's a silver lining, it's that there's a tremendous appetite for virtual content, events and experiences.

In the absence of professional sports, nightlife, concerts and live events and new TV seasons, everyone's looking for new ways to have great experiences in a virtual format.

At the same time, every industry is experiencing unprecedented turmoil. Employees at all levels are eager for insights and experiences that will help them navigate the new realities of virtual work in their industries.





Public Relations *and* Marketing *to the* Masses *in a* Virtual World

“We all live every day in virtual environments, defined by our ideas.”

— MICHAEL CRICHTON, AUTHOR

Established and Emerging Virtual Marketing Tactics

Today, tools and platforms for creating content are inexpensive and widely accessible. They are also broadly accepted and used by nearly all demographics. The challenge that remains for marketers is leveraging these tools to create smart and insightful content that resonates with their customers, key stakeholders and the media. Here are a few ideas:

Zoomcasts

Organizations looking to deliver timely and insightful content can leverage the same technology they're using on a daily basis for client meetings and internal get-togethers to develop and deliver content to their markets.

Zoom and other similar technologies have functions that allow meeting leaders to record audio and video and export it. Using that technology, organizations can have key individuals give presentations on an issue of particular relevance, record it and distribute it through their website, email blasts and social channels.

Industry media outlets hungry for video content may also show interest if the substance is insightful and offers a unique perspective. Beyond presentations, organizations can have team members conduct and record interviews with industry partners, pundits or anyone they think would be of interest to their customers. It might not have the highest production value, but it can be a timely touchpoint to stay in front of customers and prospects.

Zoomcast tips:

Develop a branded background

People are using Zoom for all kinds of interactions these days. Create a custom background that sets your Zoom presence apart. Use a green screen or a solid background to ensure the background image projects correctly.

Utilize feedback tools

Zoom has a number of tools to connect with participants, including reactions, polls and the chat feature. These features can help gauge interest in different topics and generate media-friendly content, poll results and insights.

Use Breakout rooms

Breakout rooms allow hosts to create smaller groups within a larger meeting. Use these rooms to break up larger meetings and dig into the most relevant content and topics.





Podcasts

Podcasts have become a defining feature of today's media landscape. Remote work means the lines between work life and home life are blurred. Audiences are craving content in formats that match their new lifestyles. That means listening to B2B podcasts while washing the dishes or getting in a home workout.

Podcasts offer a great deal of flexibility in how they're positioned. From interviews to news recaps to deep dives on the most important topics of your industry, a podcast can be formatted to match your goals, budget and areas of expertise.

One of the most effective formats is to act as convener – a CEO or other prominent company representative hosts thought leaders and luminaries and interviews them on relevant topics. With just a few smart questions and a little production value, your brand has become a key voice on what's happening in your industry.

BENEFITS OF A PODCAST:

- **Easy to execute.** It's possible to achieve high-quality production value with minimal investment. In a pinch, a decent smartphone is enough to create a professional finished product.
- **Editable.** Podcasts aren't live, which means you can spend more time refining a script – or to reiterate a key point.
- **Economical.** Podcasts are a versatile component of any good content marketing strategy. They can be shared directly with the media, can be repurposed as written content, and more.

PRO TIP:

Listeners crave consistency on podcasts. A consistent host, familiar tone, consistent length and even the same music across episodes makes a huge difference.



Surveys

Surveys are always great tools for gathering insights and information on industry trends, emerging pains and opportunities to add insight on a hot topic. But good surveys need good sample sizes.

With trade shows shifting to virtual formats, many organizations are struggling to get the same level of engagement or value from these events in the remote world. Surveys may be a great way to stand out in the new dynamic. While other virtual exhibitors are sending brochures and sales messaging that gets lost in the clutter, forward-thinking organizations can leverage conference attendees to conduct short surveys and gather relevant insights. A survey provides timely, quantifiable data that can lead to content, drive media outreach and inform marketing campaigns.

SURVEYS BY THE NUMBERS:

- For surveys targeted at specific groups, the media looks for sample sizes of at least **70-100 people** to be worth covering. For a broader survey, sample sizes should be **250 people or more.**
- Expect a survey response rate of **15-35%.**
- Your survey should not take more than **10 minutes to complete.**

PRO TIP:

For media-friendly surveys, think in headlines first. If you were writing a news story on your survey results, what would the headline be? Once you've arrived at that, you can write questions that may just deliver results that make that headline a reality. Remember, you're not scientist, you're a content creator.





Virtual Panel

While trade shows give organizations the opportunity to connect with clients, prospects and partners in one place, they are also highly crowded and competitive environments. Not to mention, they're not going to be happening for a while. In the new remote working world, businesses may have the opportunity to supplement their trade show interactions and actually create deeper more meaningful connections by convening virtual panels.

These can be small panels conducted through video conferencing technology that focus on a specific, timely topic. Make it an honor to be invited. Position it as a meeting of industry leaders and have your organization be the convener. It's a great way to connect, be seen as a leader and create compelling content when others are sitting on the sidelines wondering what to do.

There's a built-in media draw as well. Outlets can play a part in organizing the event, direct their viewers to it or cover it after the fact.

PRO TIP:

The topic should be as much a draw as the panelists themselves. Focus on a current industry challenge or emerging trend that will spark dialogue and create debate. Differing opinions increase energy, drive engagement and often lead to new ideas that make panels more compelling – just make sure you have a moderator who can keep the panel moving and make sure spirited discussions don't cross the line.

Virtual Pledge

Change.org, Kickstarter, Patreon and Gofundme have changed the way we raise money and fight for a good cause, using the power of online sharing to raise dollars and drive awareness for issues big and small. Companies can leverage similar tools in their own efforts to tell their stories and build community in the Virtual Era.

In the broader sense, a cause is a commitment to a principle or movement that people are prepared to advocate for. Whether that's a call for greater transparency in the financial services industry, increased idea sharing in the technology industry or the produce industry calling for a shift to greener growing practices, an organization can be the one to take the lead and transform an idea or issue into an industry movement.

Asking people to formally pledge their support is a symbolic gesture that helps build community while cementing an organization's leadership position. Creating a landing page with insightful content related to the issue and giving people a place to virtually sign to show their support makes it all tangible.

PRO TIP:

Getting someone to pledge their commitment requires a compelling cause. Make sure your cause relates to a real industry issue that demands change and drives solidarity. Authenticity drives action and that creates community.





Finding Connections in the Virtual Era

We're living through difficult times with tremendous amounts of uncertainty as to what the future looks like. But physical connection isn't going away forever. In fact, the demand for emotional and in-person interactions will be greater than ever as society emerges from this crisis and returns to a sense of normalcy.

Make no mistake: We have entered a new era of marketing and communications, and there's no going back.

We're all learning new tools for communicating, connecting with each other and marketing to customers. Every brand must find its place in this new era.

Let Us Help Tell Your Story

JASON ROCKER

215.564.3200 x110

jason@gobraithwaite.com



Braithwaite Communications

*“Remote work
is the future
of work.”*

— ALEXIS OHANIAN, REDDIT