



Case Study

In Disaster Prevention, Education, Agriculture, and Tourism, Oita Prefecture Uses Zoom to Expand Communication Both Within and Outside the Prefecture, Even Under the Covid-19 Pandemic

Initially, Oita Prefecture had been verifying and partially introducing work from home arrangements, web conferencing, and video conferencing as it promoted work style reforms from around 2018. In the meantime, in early 2020, after the discovery of a case of COVID-19 infection overseas, the disease gradually spread to Tokyo and other prefectures and the prefecture shifted its consideration to the use of web conferencing services, including not only remote working but also the establishment of an external online consultation service. Subsequently, from the end of February, they started verifying various web conference services.

Challenge

At the end of March, they began testing Zoom. When the state of emergency was declared, their priority was to hold briefings on support systems related to COVID-19 countermeasures and set up a consultation service. At the end of April, they started having briefing sessions on support systems while using the trial account. Also, they began preparations for using the account at inbound tourism business meetings and joint briefing sessions for companies in the prefecture to verify the use of the account while responding to the spread of the coronavirus infection.

Mr. Yuji Mutoh, Senior Manager of the Regional Informatization Promotion Group, Information Policy Division, Commerce, Tourism, and Labor Department, Oita Prefecture, said, "At the time, we chose Zoom because it could run on the official computers in the prefectural office, which used virtual browsers. Another reason was that it did not require prior user registration and was widely used for external consultation.

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Oita Prefectural Government

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Oita Prefectural Government

Location: Oita City, Oita Prefecture

Industry: Government

Challenges: Establish a consultation service for residents and businesses in the COVID-19 disaster, expand opportunities to collect information, and accelerate efforts with a view to post-corona.

Solutions: Zoom Meetings, Zoom Video Webinars, Zoom Rooms

Business benefits: Oita prefecture to be the first company in Japan to sign a comprehensive cooperation agreement with Zoom to expand communication with residents and companies in and outside of the prefecture in areas such as disaster prevention, education, agriculture, and tourism. Besides, it will contribute to the reform of the way people work in the prefecture.

“By concluding a comprehensive cooperation agreement with Zoom and its utilization, we are expanding opportunities to collect information on the COVID-19 disaster. We are also accelerating our efforts for the post-corona period.”

We chose Zoom for its convenience. Since it can be used from one's seat, someone has a web conference in the workplace even today. We also had some security concerns, but around the end of May, when we were about to start full-scale implementation, Zoom provided us with information that they had upgraded their security measures and could control unauthorized participation. Major Japanese companies are also introducing this technology, so we decided to promote its use."

Solution

The system was fully introduced in June and started to be used at the prefectural government. Specifically, with an eye on the after-corona, constructed a web conference environment that is not restricted by time or place for joint information sessions that connect companies and students in the prefecture to expand recruitment and business meetings for tourism and products. By doing so, they could expand opportunities for information gathering even amid the declared state of emergency.

He added, "For consultations on corona countermeasures, it was more important for us to be able to see each other's facial expressions than to talk on the phone. This enabled us to communicate with the citizens of the prefecture in a way that could not be conveyed by voice alone, such as through facial expressions, and we were able to deliver information with a greater sense of trust."

It can also be a smooth means of communication when communicating with overseas, so they will continue to accelerate our after-coronas efforts by strengthening the contact for dialogue, even amid a mood of self-restraint. Web conferencing is currently being used more frequently than expected, probably due to its prefecture penetration. And to establish a new way of life using web conferencing, they became the first

municipality in Japan to sign a comprehensive collaboration agreement with Zoom in October 2020 and use Zoom in various fields.

Initiatives for Comprehensive Collaboration Agreement

Disaster prevention

In disaster prevention, they used it for collaboration between medical institutions and local health centers for corona countermeasures. Using Zoom, they immediately held countermeasure meetings regardless of the time, such as the early morning or late at night. Besides, they used Zoom extensively during the heavy rains in July. Mutoh said, "The Disaster Relief Volunteer Center worked in each affected area. We collaborated with the Council of Social Welfare, which was in charge of the field, to gather information on the damage. These were information such as how muddy the buildings were, how far the cleanup was progressing, and how many workers needed to be secured. Zoom was useful for gathering such information. Also, we used it to follow up with residents."

Education

In education, Zoom has been introduced simultaneously to all 70 public schools to prepare to maintain teaching in the Corona disaster. Zoom has also been introduced to all universities in the prefecture. In addition, Oita Prefecture has been offering distance learning courses between high schools in the prefecture and Stanford University in the U.S. since 2019. This year, they used Zoom for these classes. Thirty selected students participated in 10 consecutive interactive courses on topics such as "Global Issues (SDGs)" and "Silicon Valley and Entrepreneurship." Besides, a "UIJ Turn Job Fair" was held via Zoom, connecting the prefectural office with the Fukuoka counseling office base while keeping travel in the Corona disaster under control.

Agriculture

They conducted remote inspections in the agricultural field to share real-time images taken by drones with participating



companies outside the prefecture via Zoom. For example, Mutoh said, "A confectionery manufacturer in Nagano wants to produce lemons as an ingredient for their confectionery, so they have rented farmland in Saiki City and are developing the land for a lemon farm. Naturally, we need to keep track of the progress, but since the site is so large, it takes a long time to walk around, and there are concerns about the Corona disaster. So we solved this problem by using Zoom and a drone. We can approach areas of concern with the drone and view the site with Zoom. In the future, we will be able to use this system not only in the agricultural field but also for events that require a large area, such as sports camps."

Tourism and Sports

In the field of tourism, they have already held five to six online business meetings for inbound visitors since July, using the Zoom breakout room in anticipation of the end of Corona. "Our staff is familiar with the Zoom system, and we have been holding breakout rooms for about 15 pairs of people, switching people in turn to conduct business negotiations. We also use Zoom's screen-sharing function to display tourist materials such as photos and pamphlets so that we can communicate visually and effectively."

In addition to this proactive communication with the rest of the prefecture, Zoom is also helping to change the way people work in the prefecture. Mutoh said, "There is an island called Himejima Village, and it takes about two hours to get there from the prefectural office so that we can use the travel time for other work. Because the online conference eliminates the need to prepare materials and set up the venue, what used to take an hour can be completed in 30 minutes. This changes our working style." As for the security aspect, which was a concern before the introduction of Zoom, he said, "Since we are holding a web conference

hosted by the prefectural government, we need to consider security, but we receive regular security updates from Zoom. We have received satisfactory answers to our requests from Zoom on a case-by-case basis, and we feel safe using it."

Results

In the future, we aim to steadily implement projects based on the comprehensive cooperation agreement with Zoom. For example, "In the field of welfare, we are considering the use of Zoom for 'online salons to prevent the decline of motor functions. The elderly have been doing exercises at the local community center. Still, due to the effects of COVID-19, it has become difficult for them to get together or for the instructor to visit. We want to make it possible for people to do the exercises at home by doing it online. Of course, there are literacy issues, so we are planning to hold training sessions before implementation. As a development of these examples, we would also like to use Zoom for health consultation, telemedicine, and safety confirmation in disaster times. We believe that by setting up an online consultation service with family doctors, we can expand the frequency of traveling medical care in areas where there are no hospitals, such as mountainous areas", he said. Furthermore, Oita prefecture aims to promote the system's use in the prefectural government and municipalities in the prefecture.

In Oita Prefecture, they are trying out devices such as the DTEN and the Neat Bar at the prefectural office to realize Zoom Rooms. Mutoh said, "These products are well received because they make it easy to share documents, open a meeting room anywhere, and have excellent voice pickup. I think it would be interesting to go one step further and use Zoom with wearable devices such as eyewear. I also look forward to the evolution of features such as automatic transcription for taking minutes of meetings and discussions."

They are also looking forward to the more advanced use of



Zoom. “Zoom is a communication tool. So if it can be used as a multi-language communication tool for people whose native language is not Japanese, or for people who cannot communicate by words or sounds, for example, if it can be used for multi-language support, sign language, and simultaneous interpretation, then I think it will be possible to expand the possibilities of individuals. It will be easier to realize new projects that transcend national boundaries and expand the possibilities of individuals wherever they are”, Mutoh said.

Zoom helps businesses and organizations bring their teams together in a frictionless cloud environment to get more done. Our easy, reliable, video- first unified communications platform for video, voice, content sharing, and chat runs across mobile devices, desktops, telephones, and room systems. Founded in 2011, Zoom is a publicly traded company on Nasdaq (ticker: ZM) and headquartered in San Jose, California.

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