

## INSIGHT BRIEFING:

# "People share a lot more on Zoom"

## Technology and the pandemic



From the folk we've spoken to over the past few months, one thing has been abundantly clear: our relationship with technology throughout the pandemic is complicated to say the least. This insight briefing explores people's stories, experiences and emotions connected to all things tech over the last year.

### "You can sometimes get meeting-itis"

*The good, the bad, and the ugly of digital connections*

Folk recognise that there are several up-sides to our increased communication tech use, but also several downsides with a need to find balance. For instance, Brett shares how he travelled to Berlin on a break from work and is currently there because travel restrictions make it hard for him to return home. He's a university teacher and has been able to take jobs - thanks to remote possibilities - which wouldn't have been open to him if everywhere was teaching in person. Carole tells a similar story of inclusion. In her case, she has mobility issues which, in the past, have prevented her from participating in events as much as she'd like. For instance, travelling by train to Manchester to take part in Community Reporter activities would be too challenging for her. "I haven't been able to go to most of the Newsrooms because they're always putting them in the middle of Manchester, but with Zoom I've been able to participate. ... I think for people who have the digital know-how and who have disabilities it can actually be quite an empowering thing." Candice also discovered additional benefits to increased technology use during the pandemic, in her conversations with groups, finding the barrier of a screen actually allowed some people to open up more: "I got to know them in a way that I wouldn't have sat in a community hall. People share a lot more on Zoom." Isaac, meanwhile, has found himself pushed out of his comfort zone, although not necessarily in a negative way: "I was never into connecting virtually at all. So, it's kind of pushed me forward by years because I never did Zoom, FaceTime, nothing. ... So, it's really made me, kind of, connect with people." These positive viewpoints of tech in the pandemic have shown that there can be unexpected positives to come out of such a dire situation. People are connecting more in general, while folk with accessibility issues are finding inclusion easier.



*Click on the TV to listen to some of this topic's stories*

However, our increased use of tech has happened so quickly – almost overnight – that there are problems that people have been confronted with as well. One is the much-discussed Zoom fatigue stemming from hugely increased screen-time. Where meetings would normally be a screen break, now they signify much more intense screen use. Of this, David says, "To be honest, I find some of it does my head in. For example, you can sometimes get meeting-itis. In other words, 'oh God, not another one.'" While he says he doesn't mind a mix of face-to-face and digital meetings, he says, "I'd love to go face-to-face but I can't, which is annoying. So, I've just adapted to using technology where appropriate." But adapting is something we've had to do so quickly, it's maybe not been considered as carefully as it normally would have done, meaning proper boundaries aren't in place. Yvonne discusses this: "In particular I'm thinking of my son, who found the whole concept of suddenly not being in his normal place [college] very difficult to manage. And then having to do that remotely when he didn't like the thought of college almost entering his home, because it was across a screen. He didn't like the thought of that. So, that made life here really quite difficult." This idea of outside institutions (work, education etc.) invading our homes has become a very real issue during the last year, with debates around the need for cameras in all meetings and privacy just one of the many that have sprung up. While maintaining human connections by whatever means we can is important, folk also need safe, personal spaces that feel private and secure, and what they feel comfortable with needs to be respected.



***Click on the TV to listen to all of the stories from the movement gathered so far***

***"I've just adapted to using technology where appropriate."***

***What we've learned from the stories***

The stories have shown us that our already complicated relationship with technology has become even more complex during COVID-19 as our reliance on it has increased:

- Digital connectivity has really been pushed forwards, actually improving accessibility and inclusion for many. We should embrace this.
- However, we need better boundaries to prevent technology becoming an intrusion into our home lives, and it can't always be relied on to do everything we can do in the offline world.
- Digital isn't always to answer and isn't always good for everyone – issues like digital inclusion still need to be addressed so that access to technology and the Internet is fair.
- Perhaps a pause is needed for us to assess how we are using tech use so that balances can be struck.

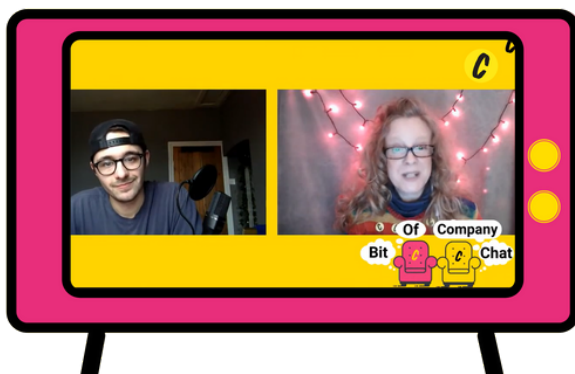
## ***A #BitOfAction***

Here's what we can do to have a better relationship with technology:

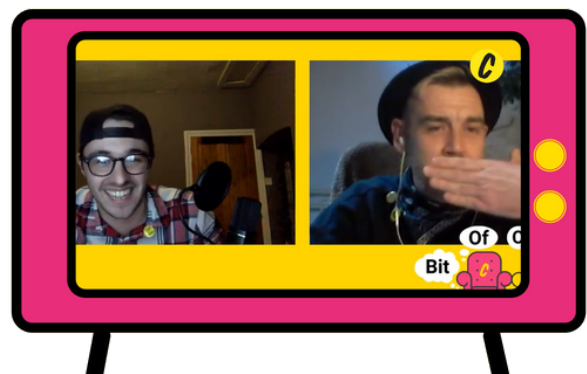
1. Have a bit more fun, silliness and chit chat in online meetings – make sure you are creating a space for this to happen.
2. Check in on people to see if home working is working for them – taking time to have these conversations makes it easier for people to chat about things that might not be so great that they would otherwise not have shared.
3. Find other ways to connect with people who aren't online – pick-up the phone, send a text, or knock on their door.

***You can watch A #BitOfCompany Chat episodes that explore these topics more on YouTube***

**Click on the TVs below to view the shows!**



***EPISODE 7***



***EPISODE 8***



## About The Project

Camerados is a growing global movement of people who get through tough times by looking out for each other. The movement's Public Living Rooms are a space for people to chat and be alongside one another and, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, they've created virtual Public Living Room spaces known as the #SpoonRoom that keep these connections and conversations going.

People's Voice Media meanwhile, is committed to supporting folk to bring about positive social change through the Community Reporter movement. Community Reporting is a form of digital storytelling that focuses on the gathering and sharing of lived experiences, and using these stories to start conversations of change between different people, groups and organisations.

Thanks to the Emerging Futures Fund from the National Lottery Community Fund, the Association of Camerados and People's Voice Media have come together to look at people's experiences of the pandemic, and create spaces in which different voices could be heard. Over 65 stories have been gathered and we've produced five insight briefings summarising what we've learned from listening to folk. We also created an online chat show – #BitOfCompanyChat – where we've talked about some of the themes in the stories a bit more and thought of bits of action we can take to overcome them together.

Find out more at <https://www.camerados.org> and <https://peoplesvoicemedia.co.uk>

The logo for Camerados, featuring the word "CAMERADOS" in a bold, black, hand-drawn, slightly slanted font.