

LOGITECH SCRIBE: ENABLING WHITEBOARD COLLABORATION FOR THE HYBRID WORKPLACE

A SIMPLE AND ELEGANT SOLUTION TO A CHALLENGING PROBLEM

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INTRODUCTION

A new office model – the hybrid workplace – is here to stay. It's clear we're not going back to a model where virtually everyone worked in the office five days a week. But that doesn't mean there aren't challenges with the hybrid model and obstacles to overcome. A big question many businesses and IT organizations face now is how to support remote teams and enable collaboration to continue uninterrupted.

For dispersed teams, collaboration requires technology solutions. Webcams, conference cameras, and cloud video platforms like Zoom and Microsoft Teams enable people to meet face-to-face, wherever they happen to be. But effective collaboration requires other tools beyond video conferencing.

Whiteboarding is one of those tools. However, whiteboards are generally used only when people meet in person. And as analysts have noted¹, remote employees miss the ability to take advantage of whiteboarding for easy, impromptu collaboration.

But whiteboards don't have to disappear in a hybrid workplace. As we'll explore in this whitepaper, whiteboards are extremely useful to team collaboration. People have often resorted to both makeshift and pricey solutions to enable them to keep using whiteboards while meeting with remote colleagues. We will look at how people have addressed the challenge of using whiteboards in video meetings, why those approaches have come up short, and finally, how IT can solve the problem for good with one simple, elegant, and affordable solution.

THE POWER – AND LIMITATIONS – OF THE WHITEBOARD

There's a reason nearly every meeting room has its own whiteboard, and sometimes two. They're very functional. And people love to use them.

Whiteboards are ubiquitous in meetings because they clearly serve an important function, especially in brainstorming and ideation. Whiteboards are useful for diagramming, illustrating concepts, freeform note-taking, organizing thoughts with sticky notes, teaching, training employees, and so on. There are of course other tools in the collaboration toolbox, like PowerPoint, Google docs, Excel spreadsheets. But when people in a meeting want to communicate an idea quickly and simply, draw a concept, or do some fast brainstorming, they reach for a dry erase marker. A whiteboard is comfortable, familiar, and easy to use.

However, as meetings have become increasingly virtual, often with as many remote attendees as people in the room, whiteboards are not being utilized to the degree they were in the past. Meeting organizers have struggled – and largely failed – to successfully bring whiteboards into video meetings:

- The whiteboard may not be in the camera's field of view. As a result, anything written or drawn on it is not seen by remote participants or recorded in video.
- If the whiteboard is in the camera's field of view, the angle of the board relative to the camera and its distance from the lens will likely make any writing or illustration difficult to see for remote viewers.
- Glare on the whiteboard from lights in the room or sunlight through a window can exacerbate the problem.
- Even if the camera can pick up the whiteboard, the person writing at the whiteboard will likely obscure the camera's view some or most of the time.

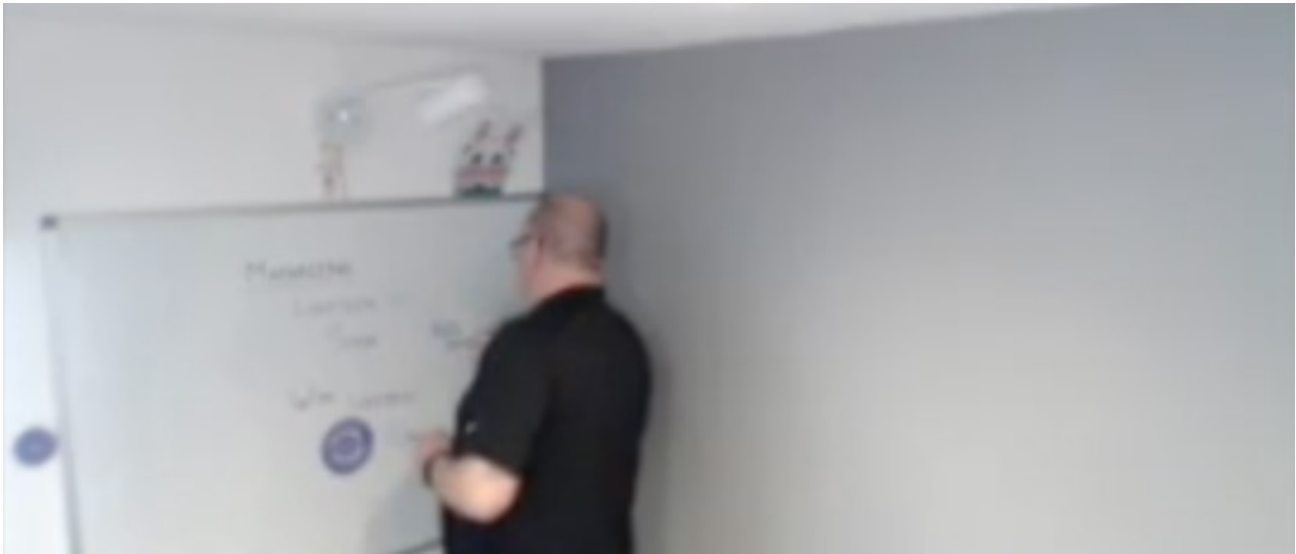
These are some of the issues that ultimately deter many colleagues from attempting to use a whiteboard in a video meeting while also discouraging participation from remote attendees.

But people are resourceful. And given the usefulness of whiteboards, employees are often willing to try creative approaches to solve the problem.

CREATIVE APPROACHES FOR ADDING A WHITEBOARD TO A VIDEO MEETING

Pointing the Conference Camera

The simplest solution is to point the video conferencing camera at the whiteboard. While this has the advantage of bringing the whiteboard into the meeting in real time, it's nearly always ineffective for the reasons described above: the angle and distance of the lens, glare on the whiteboard, obscured view. In addition, by pointing the camera at the whiteboard, you have also pointed it away from the people in the room, which is after all the primary reason for using a conferencing camera. People want to see each other.



Pointing a conference camera at the whiteboard is rarely an effective way to show its content.

Taking Photos of the Whiteboard

Another common approach is to take photos of the whiteboard and share them with all the meeting participants, usually after the meeting. The obvious problem here is that this isn't real time for anyone who is not in the room. And if you try to take photos and send them while the whiteboarding is happening, it can be disruptive for the meeting flow.

With either approach, remote attendees usually feel left out of any discussion that is going on while someone is writing or drawing on a whiteboard. If you've ever had that experience as a remote participant in a video meeting, you know exactly what we mean. It's like watching other people collaborate – without being able to contribute. That can be frustrating for remote attendees. Worse, it means their insights and ideas are not included in the discussion.

Adding a Dedicated Webcam

Finally, a less common solution that organizations occasionally try is adding a dedicated webcam to the room, usually mounted to the ceiling with a specially designed bracket and aimed directly at the whiteboard. Once installed, these dedicated webcams do a reasonably good job of capturing content on the whiteboard.

Ignoring the poor aesthetics of a camera hanging from the ceiling, their drawback is the installation itself. Ceiling mounts are never easy to begin with due to the way ceilings and acoustical tiles are designed. And installing one of these cameras in just the right location and orientation relative to the whiteboard can be tricky. Now multiply that a few dozen or even a few hundred for every meeting room in your organization.

WHAT ABOUT INTERACTIVE WHITEBOARDS?

Given the usefulness of whiteboards and the lack of good solutions for bringing whiteboards into video meetings, it's not surprising that a few tech companies have taken a different approach to this problem.

Interactive whiteboards are large digital screens that can be drawn on with special pens to create the effect of a traditional whiteboard but in a digital format. They offer a number of great features and functionality that you don't get with a traditional whiteboard. One feature often cited is the ability to offer two-way interaction. While one person is standing at the digital whiteboard drawing or taking notes, other people in the meeting can also add notes or illustrations using an app on their laptop.

As promising as this solution is, it also has limitations:

- **Complexity.** Using a digital whiteboard requires learning a new technology. That's not necessarily a problem; it just means that someone has to spend time with it. By contrast, people are already very familiar with physical whiteboards; everyone knows intuitively how to use them.
- **Price.** The cost can be prohibitive when organizations think about adding an interactive whiteboard to every meeting space in every office.

Because of cost and complexity, organizations may purchase only a limited number of interactive whiteboards and place them strategically around the office. Because interactive whiteboards address a different need than traditional whiteboards, they are more likely to be used for structured, pre-planned collaboration where the primary users are already trained on the technology.

On the other hand, when teams want to spontaneously launch a brainstorming session or visualize ideas in a current meeting, they're unlikely to go find an interactive whiteboard, bring it into the room, figure out how to incorporate it into the meeting, and make sure someone knows how to use it. And that's assuming a digital whiteboard is available and hasn't been reserved. In these situations, people aren't asking for fancy technology. They just want to grab a marker and start drawing.



INTRODUCING LOGITECH SCRIBE

When we set out to create a way to bring whiteboards in video meetings, simplicity was a primary objective. Understanding that people love how easy and simple it is to use a whiteboard, we wanted to replicate that experience to enable fast, easy collaboration for distributed teams. The result is Logitech Scribe.



Logitech Scribe is a whiteboard camera for the modern workplace. With one simple tap of its wireless share button or the meeting room controller (such as [Logitech Tap](#)), Scribe instantly broadcasts whiteboard content into video meetings with outstanding clarity. Behind the scenes, built-in artificial intelligence enhances the image to adjust the perspective, eliminate glare, brighten illustrations and writing, and magically “remove” the person at the board. Scribe works with Microsoft Teams Rooms, Zoom Rooms, and other leading video conferencing services to seamlessly include whiteboard content within the meeting.

HOW SCRIBE BRINGS ANALOG WHITEBOARDS INTO DIGITAL MEETINGS

Logitech Scribe is a whiteboard-specific camera with built-in AI designed to clearly capture and share analog whiteboard content through leading video conferencing services such as Microsoft Teams Rooms and Zoom Rooms. Let's break that down.

1. WHITEBOARD-SPECIFIC CAMERA

Above we discussed the "dedicated webcam" approach to incorporating whiteboards into meetings. Scribe isn't an adaptation of a different product. In every way, Scribe is purpose-built for whiteboards, from its lens to the design of the brace and base. Even its color.

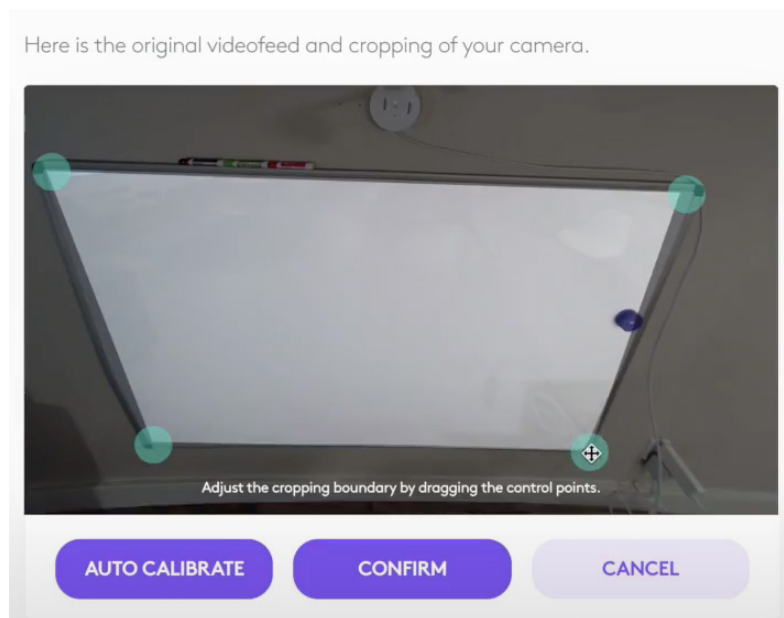
Scribe works with all whiteboard surfaces, capturing up to 6' W by 4' H, and any set of dry erase markers.

2. BUILT-IN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Unlike other approaches, such as the dedicated webcam, Scribe has a built-in computer chip whose job is to enhance the whiteboard image using artificial intelligence. Scribe doesn't rely on a separate compute device or use another device's computing power for this function.

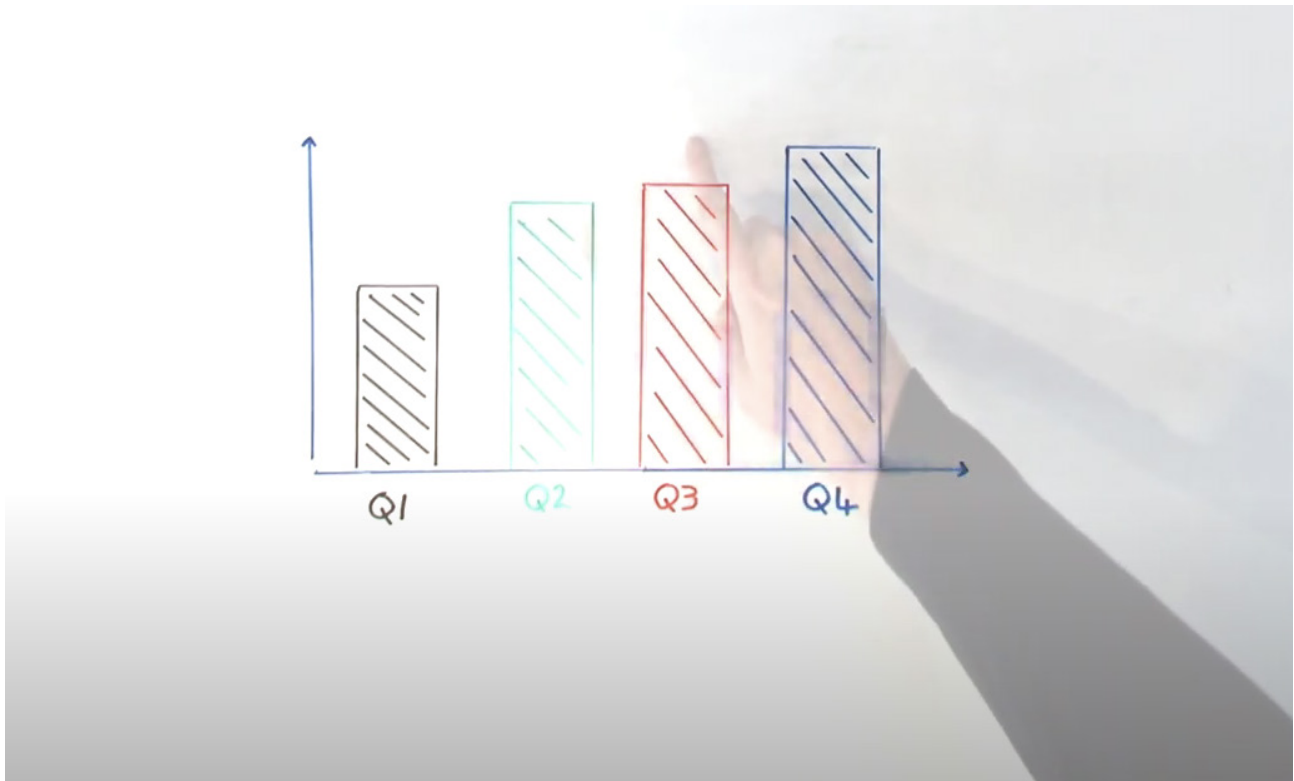
The built-in AI takes several steps to enhance the image:

- **Adjusts the perspective.** When you install Scribe, it looks for the whiteboard and automatically calibrates itself to the four corners of the board. (You can also manually modify the calibration.) Once calibrated, Scribe then adjusts the image to appear flat, without skewing or other distortions. For anyone in the video meeting, it seems as if you're looking at the whiteboard from directly in front of it.
- **Accentuates illustrations and writing.** As you're writing or drawing on the whiteboard, Scribe automatically detects and brightens the lines made by dry-erase markers. This ensures that notes and sketches are legible for everyone.



Scribe automatically calibrates itself to the size of your whiteboard.

- **“Ghosts” the person at the whiteboard.** Scribe’s AI identifies the presenter and creates a CGI transparency effect, allowing meeting participants to see “through” the presenter for an unobstructed view of the whiteboard. This ensures that even people in the room can see all of the content at all times.



Scribe’s AI capability makes the presenter transparent to provide an unobstructed view of the whiteboard at all times.

- **Detects sticky notes.** Scribe’s AI can even detect and clearly show other forms of content, such as sticky notes, that are commonly used when collaborating with a whiteboard.

3. ONE TOUCH TO SHARE

One of Scribe’s novel inventions is its wireless share button, which attaches to the wall near the whiteboard. A simple tap of the button makes sharing whiteboards into video meetings quick and easy.² People instinctively get it, which eliminates the need for training. In addition, meeting attendees can also initiate sharing with a meeting room touch controller, like Logitech Tap.

4. INTEGRATION WITH LEADING VIDEO CONFERENCING SERVICES

Scribe is integrated with Microsoft Teams Rooms on Windows and Zoom Rooms on Windows or Mac, with more video conferencing services coming soon (see footnote below). Logitech engineers worked with counterparts at Microsoft and Zoom to ensure seamless compatibility with their video conferencing services. Scribe is also compatible with virtually any video conferencing application as a USB-connected camera.

5. SIMPLE DESIGN AND INSTALLATION

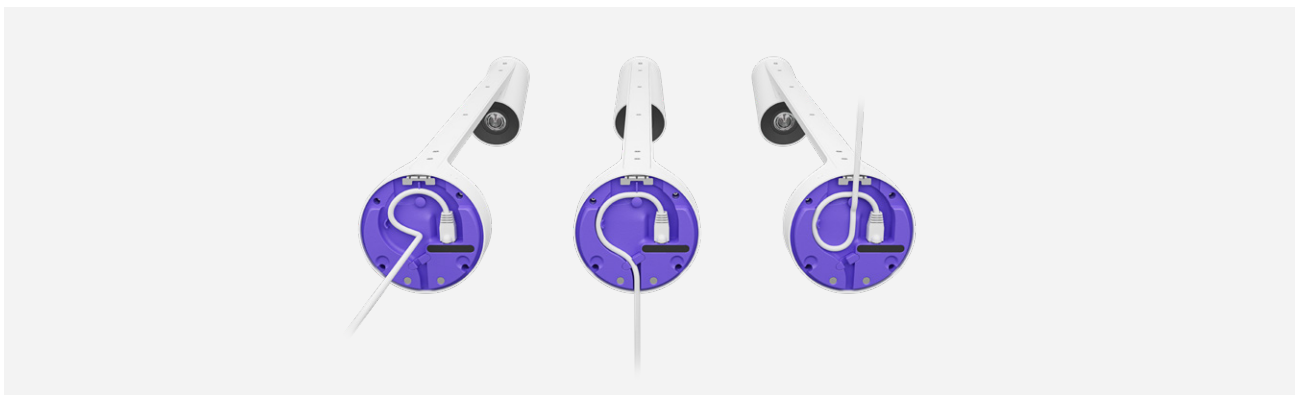
In every feature and detail, Scribe is designed to be simple, elegant, and unobtrusive.

For example, by wall-mounting the camera we ensure the camera placement and angle are optimized for capturing 6' x 4' whiteboards. And the all-inclusive installation kit includes a paper template that eliminates the guesswork for where to wall-mount the camera. Scribe's built-in level also makes perfect wall-mounting even easier.



Everything you need to install Scribe is included in the box.

Cabling has been carefully thought out. Two Cat 5 Ethernet cables are included in the package, which should suffice for most rooms. Customers can also supply their own Cat 5 cables at precise lengths, which allows the flexibility to install Scribe in rooms of any size. You can route the cable above or below the camera or behind the wall to keep meeting rooms free of clutter. Two included cable clips allow you to cleanly run the cable in 90° angles around the whiteboard if you choose not to route cabling behind the wall.



The Cat 5 Ethernet cable can be routed through the wall, below the camera, or above the camera.

Once mounted, the auto-calibration makes setup quick and easy.

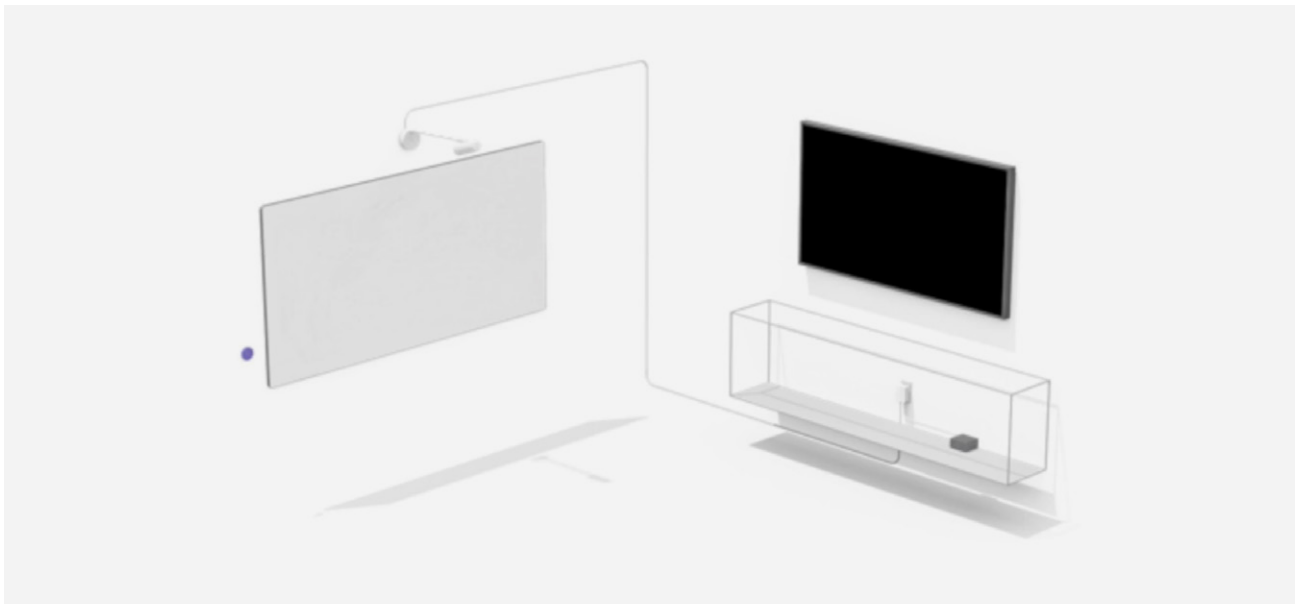


Illustration showing placement of the Scribe camera, share button, and cabling.

6. REMOTE DEVICE MANAGEMENT FOR IT ADMINS

As with other Logitech video conferencing devices, Scribe can be managed with Logitech Sync, including the ability to toggle the “Presenter Removal” setting and customize the “ghosting” effect, making the presenter fully or partially transparent. Sync allows IT admins to remotely monitor Scribe along with other devices in the room, check for firmware or software updates, and verify that the camera is still running smoothly. This capability is particularly important for organizations that deploy Scribe at scale.

A PERFECT SOLUTION FOR HYBRID TEAM COLLABORATION

A simple and elegant solution to a challenging problem, Logitech Scribe was designed to do one thing very well: enable whiteboard collaboration for the hybrid workplace. In meeting that goal, it provides a number of advantages:

Simple, Intuitive User Experience

Scribe requires zero training for employees and takes advantage of their familiarity with traditional whiteboards. Meeting attendees simply tap the share button to start whiteboarding within the video application. When done, they just tap the share button to stop sharing. There is nothing else users ever need to do.

Unlike digital whiteboards, Scribe doesn't require employees to learn a new technology or take any additional steps to begin whiteboarding. Instead, Scribe takes advantage of the physical whiteboard and dry-erase markers that people are already familiar with and comfortable with.

Real-Time Display of Whiteboard Content

Scribe encourages full participation of **all** meeting attendees, both in the room and remote. As opposed to sending photos of the whiteboard to people on the call, Scribe supports real-time collaboration.

Clear, Uninterrupted View of the Whiteboard

Unlike pointing a conference camera at the whiteboard, Scribe provides a clear, high-quality image for everyone to see. AI “removes” the person at the whiteboard, adjusts for skewing and lighting, and provides every attendee with the best seat in the room.

Simple Installation and Management

The all-inclusive packaging provides all necessary parts and components, including installation template, wall anchors and screws, Cat 5 cables, international power adapters, and so on. It’s thoughtfully designed to minimize setup time for IT or service providers. And with [Logitech Sync](#), it’s easy to manage Scribe along your other meeting room devices.

LEARN MORE

To learn more about Logitech Scribe, contact your sales representative to schedule a demo.



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¹ According to Forrester analyst Andrew Hewitt, leaders have learned that they “can’t just rely on video conferencing and file sharing... There’s also a component of being in the office of drawing on whiteboards and collaborating together that a lot of employees and organizations frankly are missing out on right now.” See <https://www.cio Dive.com/news/salesforce-hybrid-work-model/594898/>

² Support may vary by video conferencing service provider. For the latest information, see www.logitech.com/support/scribe-compatibility.

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