

The Next Generation of Corporate Communications

Videoconferencing White Paper

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Webcast-enabled videoconferencing systems
deliver new, more cost effective
one-to-many events

Corporate Communications Will Never Be the Same

Just as voice mail and e-mail have forever changed the face of how business teams communicate and collaborate, video is now poised to provide another revolutionary communication tool that will transform business communications processes.

Videoconferencing systems are now being integrated with streaming video servers to combine the power of video within the remarkable reach of IP networks. Corporations can now leverage their investments in their Intranets, their Extranets and the Internet to create interactive video events, training sessions and marketing presentations.

The result is the ability to produce “webcasts” with a minimum of time and expense. By eliminating much of the complexity, these new easier-to-produce webcasts are significantly lower in cost than any other previous form of video production. And, these events also present a new dynamic communication and presentation channel for business leaders, executives and managers. In fact, because video can be used to create a more personal and a more dynamic communication connection with team and staff members, business leaders who use these new technologies will be perceived as more pro-active and more forward thinking.

Furthermore, because these systems utilize video streaming, they are a step beyond traditional video conferencing. Because they are so easy to use, they are capable of producing one-to-many webcast events on a relatively spontaneous basis. Perhaps most importantly, because of streaming’s capability to deliver events on an archived or on-demand basis, participants no longer have to be present in real time in order to participate.

These video sessions enable:

- Clearer, more powerful and more personal articulations of management's vision and the status of projects
- Faster and more frequent opportunities for visual communication
- New forms of virtual gatherings and presentations including ad hoc meetings, executive briefing sessions and personalized training
- Webcast events that are available both in real-time and on-demand

Before these systems combined video conferencing with video streaming, video-enhanced communications used to be much more expensive and were much more complex to stage. Videoconferences, for example, used to require viewers to gain access to special "video enabled" rooms; and those rooms required special networking installations (such as ISDN).

Now, because these new technologies have integrated industry-standard streaming systems and utilize widely available high bandwidth networks, video communications can be delivered more easily, more quickly, more creatively and more cost effectively than ever before. They also have a vastly improved reach because they can now be delivered to desktops and laptops anywhere and at anytime.

The result is a new leading edge electronic medium for more powerful team building, improved productivity, enhanced employee empowerment and increased profitability.

Meeting the Challenges of Today's Changing Business Environments

As the financial world has recognized through its use of streaming video webcasts to improve coverage of earnings reports and analyst updates, the rapid changes in today's business world require new, forwarding thinking solutions.

The problems and challenges seem to be accelerating. They include:

- Increasing time pressures caused by the frequently changing schedules, organization structures and workloads
- The glut of information pouring onto every business person's desktop including e-mail spam, trade publications and inter-office mail
- The complex corporate cultural impact of mergers and acquisitions Including the increased acceptability of allowing employees not to relocate when organizations reorganize and/or merge
- The increased decentralization and globalization of organizations including the use of team members who telecommute

- Personnel's need to learn new skills quickly by gaining more convenient access to training programs

Now, more than ever, managers need new ways to communicate visually with their teams. It's common knowledge that to be successful, management must be more pro-active. And, then, in order to be effective, management frequently needs to add a more personal touch. While face-to-face contact may not always be possible, "video face time" is now much more accessible.

Meanwhile, training has become an increasingly important component of many corporate strategies, and the pace of change has created important new concepts like on-demand and "just-in-time" training. By creating a new form of extremely cost effective virtual classroom, these new kinds of webcasts can also deliver real-time and on-demand one-to-many presentations — an important new channel and distribution medium for training.

Reducing Resource Requirements

Video is a proven communication tool because of the dynamic power of moving images and the intimacy created by the visual presence of an on-screen presenter. Among other applications, corporations frequently use video (or would like to use video):

- To brief staff or employees on news or recent company changes
- To train staff or employees in new skills or procedures
- To orient vendors or sales channels regarding new product announcements or systems
- To report new corporate developments or earnings to industry analysts and/or the media

However, costs have frequently discouraged the use of video. Now, the key to accessibility has become simplicity. A key value that's offered by videoconferencing products that enable streaming over IP networks is that they eliminate many of the barriers — such as production costs and technical complexities — that have previously reduced the use of video in corporate communications.

*Barriers that have
previously reduced the use of video
have been removed.*

For companies who have already invested in videoconferencing systems, this opportunity to reduce costs and to enhance communications is particularly

accessible. These organizations can easily differentiate themselves by taking the next step of putting their video systems “online” with video streaming.

Videoconferencing systems that integrate video steaming represent a new generation of business communication tool that is remarkably simple to implement. The bottom line benefits of these systems include:

- Significantly lower price points
- Vastly improved ease-of-use
- Opportunities for enterprise-wide deployment

They achieve these economies because they no longer require expensive, specialized personnel like video producers, web masters and IT professionals. Essentially, executives can now produce real-time, networked video events on their own or with the support of a single staff member. As a result, this new technology turns any conference room into a flexible webcasting studio.

Furthermore, unlike traditional videoconferences, because these systems can use desktop computers as “receivers,” they also eliminate the need for every event participant to be present in a conference room or similar facility. Because these new videoconferencing networks incorporate streaming, video conferencing is no longer limited to only real-time events. Team members can participate in these events via streaming video’s inherent store-and-forward, on-demand access (either from your company’s servers or directly from the videoconferencing systems themselves.)

An Easier, More Cost Effective Approach to Video Streaming

In addition to a dramatic simplification of the hardware and software requirements as compared with first generation video streaming set-ups, all-in-one configurations that combine videoconferencing with video streaming deliver a pre-configured consistency and repeatability.

Because executives can produce events solo or with a minimum of support, the paradigm of corporate video production has changed. Previously, if executives wanted to communicate using video, there were two options. Either the video would have to be produced utilizing expensive in-house resources; or, a contract would have to be developed with an independent producer or vendor. Now, there is an important and valuable third option, the streaming videoconference.

OLD VIDEO PRODUCTION & WEBCASTING PARADIGM	NEW VIDEOCONFERENCING SYSTEMS WITH STREAMING
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Required specialized production personnel either in-house or vendor• Expensive video production equipment including cameras, lights, microphones as well as qualified personnel to operate such equipment• Computer hardware including a computer with a video digitizing card, capture and editing software, video compression software and knowledge of video compression techniques• Networking expertise including the ability to configure and navigate network protocols, knowledge of proper video file transfer and a streaming video server configuration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete hardware systems provided including integrated high-quality cameras and microphones• Pre-configured software that automates the process of video capture and encoding (compression) for network distribution• Built-in servers that can distribute streaming video live while also automatically archiving it for on-demand access

The result is a price-performance breakthrough. Compared with the cost of producing face-to-face meetings, events, training sessions or roadshows, the investment is small. And, when compared with the expense of producing a professional video presentation, ad hoc video conferences with video streaming are far more cost effective and easier to produce than any other form of video. In fact, the cost of a single event produced live or on videotape could offset the entire investment in a streaming videoconferencing system that can be used over and over again.

Creating Effective One-to-Many Webcasts

The best example of the new breed of videoconferencing/Web-casting systems described above, is the Polycom Streamstation. Because these systems minimize the hardware requirements for ad hoc webcasting events by integrating video streaming servers with videoconferencing units, the only other requirements are bandwidth, the installation of desktop streaming players and, in some cases, an enterprise scale streaming server architecture.

With the Polycom Streamstation, for example, participants who access meetings via streaming can either connect directly to the built-in 40-stream server; or, alternately, the videoconference can be transmitted and then “re-webcast” from any other server. Servers external to the StreamStation can be either on the corporate Intranet or accessed globally via the Internet.

For corporate use, it is essential that each desktop client has installed a compatible streaming media player in order to view webcasts. Polycom’s StreamStation currently supports the industry-leading RealNetworks RealPlayer G2 and will soon support the Windows Media Player. Windows Media Player is now an automatically installed component of both Windows 98 and will also be part of Windows 2000. The RealPlayer G2 is also widely distributed and is currently the most popular streaming video format.

In addition, enterprises wishing to make webcast events available to larger audiences can easily extend the reach of these systems with industry-standard streaming media servers. In this way, events produced with the StreamStation are scalable. They can be distributed via enterprise systems, through the Internet, or both.

The Opportunity

For managers who are looking for new ways to communicate and new ways to motivate their teams, departments and divisions, now there is a new, low-cost platform that enables dynamic, electronic, one-to-many video webcast events.

Bottom line:

- The power of video communications is now more accessible and more cost effective than ever before.
- Video production is vastly simplified through the integration of high-quality cameras and microphones that are built into videoconferencing systems like Polycom’s ViewStations.

- The reach of the Internet and streaming video is dramatically extended by easy and automatic encoding as well as through integration with industry standard streaming systems.

In the information age, better communications is the ultimate solution. Use of these new streaming videoconferencing systems will create a clear differentiator for organizations who take the initiative to integrate them into their corporate communication programs. As a result, these companies will produce management briefings, training sessions, marketing presentations and other business processes that will be both more powerful and more cost effective than ever before.

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