

Seeing Is Believing: The Power of Video Collaboration

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"Video is the next voice." —John Chambers, chairman and CEO, Cisco

Video is changing how we work, live, play, and learn. For businesses, video presents both a major disruption and a significant opportunity; companies across all industries that use video to improve collaboration will be the winners in the next decade. This paper describes current trends, provides examples of how innovative companies are benefiting from video collaboration, and discusses how CIOs can use video to gain a competitive advantage.

Collaboration Trends

The environment in which companies operate has changed dramatically. The economic downturn has had a significant impact, forcing employees to change the way they work. Another source of this change is the advent of next-generation web tools (sometimes called Web 2.0), such as social networks and video sharing, which have made technology easier to use, more pervasive, and highly influential. This has had an impact on companies' workforces, customers, and technology-enabled ecosystems.

Workforces

Influenced by the consumer world, employees have changed the way they work. More and more, they are coming to work equipped with knowledge of how to use new collaboration tools from their experience with them in their personal lives. These employees expect to be able to use these new technologies at work. While some organizations are beginning to explore and understand the potential of these tools, few companies have a strategy to take full advantage of collaboration.

Customers

Customers are now in control and changing so radically that companies will be at a disadvantage if they don't keep up.

Embracing technology. Consumer technology adoption makes interacting with end users more complex. Customers are now in the driver's seat thanks to the power of Internet connectivity. Businesses are now dealing with a new generation of customers who have different skills, different expectations, and different needs.



Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group (IBSG)

Sharing thoughts. Customers have many options for sharing information, comparing prices, and writing and reading reviews. Peers have greatest influence over decisions, making the delivery of great customer experiences critical. Dissatisfied customers can actually tell millions of others about their bad experiences almost instantaneously.

Self-serving and co-creating. Customers want to be involved and take control. Inclusive or open innovation is resulting in new and better ideas.

Technology-Enabled Ecosystems

New video technologies such as telepresence, webcams, and ultra-portable camcorders are enabling people to work remotely, as well as with employees, customers, partners, and suppliers in different locations. Maximizing the effectiveness of employees means:

- Providing them with anywhere, anytime access
- Enabling flexibility to use different communication methods in different contexts
- Enabling sharing of relevant information both inside and outside the organization
- Enabling them to support teams in different locations and time zones with new processes as well as technologies

What Is Collaboration?

The fundamentals of collaboration have not changed. At the core, collaboration still means people working together to achieve a common goal. What has changed is that new tools and emerging technologies are allowing companies to greatly improve what is possible by:

- Using platforms to contribute knowledge and ideas
- Accessing real-time information
- Using shared workspaces
- Making decisions in real time
- Finding the right people at the right time

How Video Improves Collaboration

As humans, we want to view and consume content visually because it's the most interesting, stimulating, compelling, and engaging way for us to communicate. If a picture is worth a thousand words, then video is worth a thousand pictures. And now, with the proliferation of video cameras in most mobile phones and the rapidly growing market of ultra-portable video devices such as the Flip Video® camera, people expect to communicate using video in the work environment.

By enabling a live, "face-to-face" meeting experience for people who might be thousands of miles apart, telepresence has become one of the most effective ways to deliver the full benefits of collaboration. In fact, innovative companies are already using telepresence to improve collaboration, with significant business results.

Case Study:

Video Collaboration Helps Transform One of World's Largest Banks

Challenges

Financial institutions are finding that the fallout of the financial crisis continues to pressure their businesses. Strict cost-cutting measures have been widely implemented, and technology spending—previously justified as a means to increase efficiencies and gain competitive advantages—has been subject to intense scrutiny.

A leading financial institution was also dealing with a significantly larger global footprint due to acquisitions made during the downturn. Effectively coordinating, integrating, and collaborating with this newly expanded myriad of partners around the world, while heeding severe budget restrictions such as limiting internal travel spending, was proving a formidable task.

The issue for this company was “How to imbue transformative technology into business operations in order to effectively—and cost-efficiently—operate in the “new normal” global economy?”

Solution

Cisco TelePresence™ is allowing this leading financial institution to optimize business processes and maximize productivity by transforming and extending the concept and benefits of in-person interactions.

To make this happen, Cisco IBSG assembled a working team with representation from key stakeholder communities, including Corporate Workplace, Finance, HR, Learning and Leadership Development, Travel, Business Continuity and Sustainability, Associate Services, and Enterprise Technology and Delivery. The team assessed cost and productivity challenges, compared utilization of Cisco TelePresence (11 units were already in use) with that of traditional video conferencing, and reviewed Cisco TelePresence case studies from other large institutions, including Cisco.

Next, Cisco IBSG identified multiple use cases with high potential for driving productivity, process improvement, and cost reduction through increased utilization of Cisco TelePresence. These use cases highlighted several opportunities to expand collaboration value beyond travel replacement:

- Establish the priority and collaborative focus of projects or processes with “in-person” appearance of key executives
- Improve client management for corporate banking
- Increase collaboration and project management
- Accelerate product and service development and innovation
- Streamline merger integration
- Transform education, training, and policy communication to associates
- Enhance HR hiring and retention processes
- Strengthen business continuity crisis management and enterprise resiliency
- Uphold environmental commitments

Perhaps most important, by exploring the impact of emerging collaboration technologies on business operations, Cisco IBSG demonstrated that it is essential to take a “transformation approach” to these types of opportunities rather than focusing solely on the ROI calculations of “hard savings.”

Results

Based upon its existing base of 20+ rooms, the company is already realizing some of its anticipated benefits, with room utilization in the 40 percent to 60 percent range—compared to the 10 percent utilization level it experienced with traditional video-conferencing installations.

As Cisco partners with this financial leader to deploy its extensive network of Cisco TelePresence rooms over the next three years, Cisco IBSG is working closely with the bank to track performance against estimated benefits and continue to drive use cases that will redefine the operating model and create new business opportunities. In the end, Cisco plans to help the company transform its operating model so that over the coming years, it can “do more with less.”

Other Video Platforms for Collaboration

In addition to telepresence, several other forms of video help companies improve collaboration, including ultra-portable video cameras, web-based video, and mobile video.

Ultra-portable video cameras. As the cost and quality of ultra-portable video cameras continue to improve, companies can use devices like Cisco’s Flip Video camera or the Apple iPhone with FaceTime to improve collaboration. These devices are especially good at improving collaboration by streamlining business processes and improving communication among team members.

For example, the Cisco IBSG Advanced Technologies (AT) Group follows an eight-phase, structured waterfall process to develop demonstrations and pilots that showcase technology in action. A recent innovation to the process was the use of Flip Video cameras to keep remote teams and stakeholders up to date. As projects evolve, an AT Group member takes a Flip Video of the laboratory setting, showing the critical components of the project, and giving a detailed description of progress made and any challenges that need to be resolved. The clip is then sent to the extended team members.

This simple step, which takes approximately three to five minutes, has greatly improved communication and collaboration among the groups and individuals involved in a given project. “Since everyone can ‘see’ exactly how things are progressing, the use of Flip Video cameras has also helped increase trust and understanding as projects move forward,” commented one AT Group member.

Web-based video. Improvements in bandwidth have made web-based video an effective way for people to collaborate over the Internet. Cisco WebEx™, for example, has added video capabilities that let participants with webcams see each other during meetings. This feature is particularly powerful for presenters, since they can see how the audience is reacting in real time. This allows presenters to ask questions if the material isn’t clear, or to shift focus if it is not capturing their attention.

Cisco also offers Show and Share™, a social video system similar to YouTube that helps enterprise organizations create highly secure video communities to share ideas and expertise. With Cisco Show and Share, companies can optimize global collaboration through simple creation of videos, and personalize connections between customers and employees through user-generated video content.

Mobile video. Almost every new device—from tablet PCs to iPhones—now comes equipped with a camera. In addition, new applications such as Apple's FaceTime, which makes it easy to conduct video conferences on the iPhone, are allowing more and more people to participate in video collaboration. This is important because companies can now cost-effectively expand the number of people who can collaborate both within and outside of their organizations.

Mobile video devices can also be plugged into telepresence and web-based video sessions. This means that people no longer need to be in a specific location, such as a telepresence room, to participate via video in a collaboration session.

Business Benefits of Video Collaboration

In addition to the benefits already described, Cisco IBSG believes video collaboration will be one of the key drivers of future revenue and profitability. By implementing video successfully, businesses can:

Create a borderless enterprise that includes all stakeholders. Video collaboration enables a “borderless enterprise” that maximizes the power of people working together across the entire ecosystem.

Empower the ecosystem at reduced costs. In this era of globalization, outsourcing, and tightly linked supply chains, companies cannot continue to go it alone if they want to maintain a competitive advantage. As companies become more serious about partnering, best practices are still being defined. Despite the uncertainties, organizations that network with other organizations, companies, and partners in a collaborative fashion, can increase their competitiveness while, at the same time, lowering their costs.

Transform organizational models to improve speed, scale, and relevance. Organizations (including Cisco) are finding ways to support video collaboration by enhancing organizational structures. For example, using video collaboration, Cisco's boards and councils enable the expansion of cross-company priorities to enhance decision making without increasing executive work time. Collaboration can also be used to build communities with groups that have similar goals to improve knowledge sharing, decision making, operational efficiencies, and innovation.

Improve customer experiences to increase loyalty. Customers want to interact differently with organizations, yet many companies are still in the early stages of customer video collaboration. Knowing your customers can lead to creation of new products, increased loyalty, and acquisition of new customers.

Optimize stakeholder involvement to improve speed, efficiency, and quality. There are several benefits of using video collaboration to involve target audiences in the development of new products and services: richer idea generation, shorter time from concept to cash, customer satisfaction, faster adoption, and greater market differentiation.

Next Steps

To take advantage of video collaboration's benefits, CIOs should follow three steps:

1. **Develop a strategy and multidirectional approach.** To realize the full benefits of video collaboration, organizations should develop a business-led strategy. This begins with evaluating and documenting overall goals and objectives to provide the baseline for rationalizing a set of video-collaboration-enabled capabilities. A viable strategy should include an understanding of:
 - The business needs to meet the objectives, such as stronger innovation processes, improved workforce productivity, stronger external partnerships, growth in emerging markets, and global expansion
 - The changing nature of work, and where there is an increased emphasis on knowledge generation
 - Changing demographic needs and how people interact
 - Emerging technologies
2. **Measure collaborative readiness and effectiveness.** For video collaboration to succeed, four areas must be in place:
 - **Leadership:** Establish a culture and top-down organizational structure to support a collaborative work environment
 - **Competency:** Educate and motivate stakeholders to work collaboratively
 - **Governance:** Implement processes and metrics that engender and sustain optimal collaboration
 - **Technology:** Provide the collaborative platform and tools to connect and empower all stakeholders

Most companies start by deploying technology. For video collaboration to have a positive impact, however, all four areas need to be considered and addressed; collaboration must also be embraced from an enterprise-wide perspective.

3. **Build a video collaboration architecture.** According to Cisco, 92 percent of Internet traffic will be from rich media (much of it video) by 2010. Because of this, it is important for companies to have an IT architecture that can support video for collaboration. The good news is that a common core architecture for video collaboration can be implemented in phases to achieve immediate value and increase returns on collaboration investments over time, while keeping costs manageable. The network as the platform, combined with collaborative applications, enables a seamless collaboration experience.

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More Information

Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group (IBSG), the company's global consultancy, helps CXOs from the world's largest public and private organizations solve critical business challenges. By connecting strategy, process, and technology, Cisco IBSG industry experts enable customers to turn visionary ideas into value.

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