

Five Steps for Getting the Most from your Videoconferencing
Investment Transcript of Video Recording
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Five Steps to Maximize the Value of Videoconferencing

Videoconferencing is seeing significant growth in the enterprise communications market, and for good reason. Especially during an economic downturn, companies that use the technology are realizing hard-dollar savings while maintaining all the productivity and decision-making benefits of face-to-face meetings. But simply deploying videoconferencing isn't enough to ensure successful use. Managers who want to get the most value out of their technology investments should take five steps to ensure success: Measure current adoption; understand how and when to use videoconferencing; overcome end user resistance; connect collaboration to corporate messaging; and expand the company's collaborative reach.

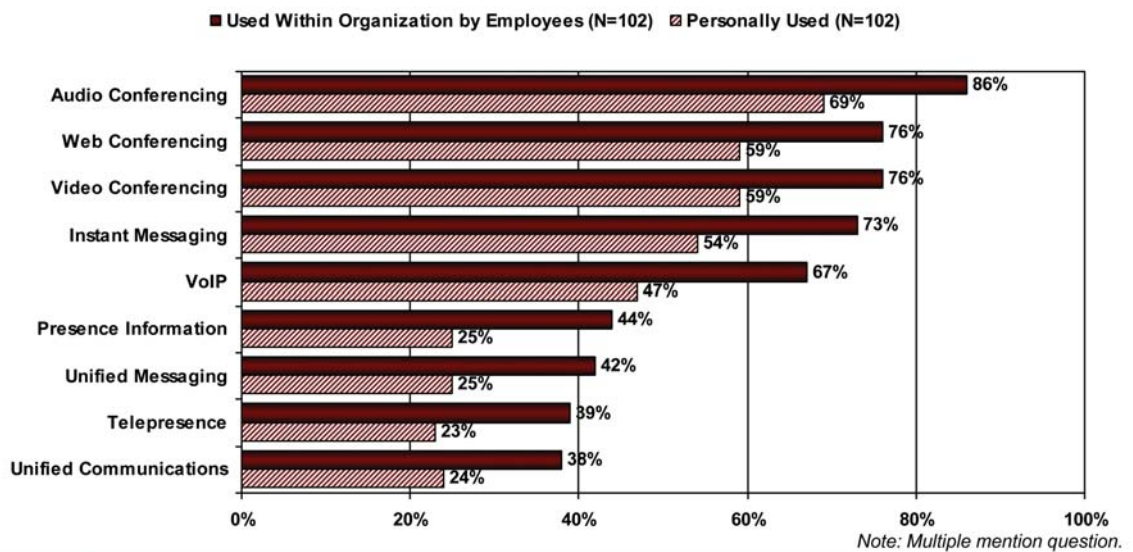
Measuring Adoption: How Do You Compare?

Let's look at the five steps to maximizing the benefits of videoconferencing. First up: Measuring adoption. Consider how your organization compares to the rest of the enterprise world. Videoconferencing is among the most widely used communications technologies in the enterprise, according to a recent Frost & Sullivan survey of 102 C-level executives: It's used by employees within 76% of organizations, and personally by 59% of the CXOs themselves.

That makes videoconferencing more popular than instant messaging, Voice over IP and unified messaging, and it suggests that companies are deploying videoconferencing in significant numbers. When asked, 81% of respondents said videoconferencing is "somewhat" or "very" important to the daily operations of their organization. Further, 71% said videoconferencing helps increase collaboration and productivity, and 76% said it helps reduce travel—more so than any other communications tool.

That said, in some organizations, only a small percentage of employees actually use the videoconferencing systems in place. Sometimes, videoconferencing isn't accessible to all employees because the systems are constantly booked; at other times, the systems are simply underutilized. Services can help IT managers benchmark utilization patterns and deliver advice on how to increase access to all employees. The goal is to ensure the technology is used by more people in the organization.

Communications and Collaboration Products and Services Currently Used



Q3: Which of the following communications and collaboration products or services are currently used within the listed situations?

"Source: Frost & Sullivan"

Use Cases for Videoconferencing

The best way to derive value from any technology is to use it in places where it will make the biggest difference within the organization. Videoconferencing is no exception. There are many key use cases for the technology—areas of business where using it will significantly reduce costs and/or increase productivity. Let's look at a few of them in step two of our five-step process:

- Training is a clear case where videoconferencing can save companies money, and their employees times and energy. By using video to train everyone from salespeople to support staff to every employee who needs information on benefits and enrollment, companies can save money on travel and facilities costs for the attendees and trainers. They can also limit the time people spend in training to the event itself, meaning that a three-hour training session will take three hours, not 12 (or more, if flying is involved). That, of course, allows attendees to go back to their day jobs that much sooner. Using videoconferencing for training also allows benefits the trainers, who no longer need to fly around the country (or the globe) to teach. That ensures they can spend more time on prep and follow-up, and reach more people in the same amount of time. With videoconferencing, who gets trained doesn't have to be determined by location and costs; now, everyone who could benefit from training can get it, without leaving the office.
- Employee and recruiting interviews can be held via videoconferencing, allowing companies to reach out to more candidates, since location no longer matters. Also, those candidates can speak with more people within the organization, without incurring travel costs for them or the interviewers.
- Product development teams benefit from videoconferencing in two ways: The technology allows them to communicate and collaborate better, since video lets participants read body language and facial expressions; and it allows them to show team members parts, components, materials and other physical objects that relate to the particular product in development—something that would otherwise require an in-person meeting.
- There's a reason high-level managers and executives spend so much time traveling: Strategic planning and budget creation require open discussion and trust—two things that are best done when you can see the faces and body language of the people you are working with. But with videoconferencing, they can achieve the same level of intimacy without having to leave their offices, reducing the wear and tear that comes from extensive travel, freeing up time for more productive activities when they're not in meetings and, of course, saving even more money on travel than the average employee.
- The increasingly virtual workplace offers any number of benefits, but one thing gets lost in the translation: Team building. It's tough for employees to develop deep and lasting relationships when they rarely see each other and communicate mainly via phone, e-mail and chat. But videoconferencing can change that, by making it possible for team members to see each other on a daily or weekly basis. Simply making that visual connection makes contact more personal—and that makes it easier for people to work together, because they feel like they actually know the people they are working with. That, in turn, makes it more likely that they will share information and skills, supporting each other throughout the work day and for the overall benefit of the business.
- Finally, while some customer and partner engagements require a live, in-person meeting, many don't—but they will benefit from the visual connection videoconferencing enables. Just as employee relationships are deepened by videoconferencing, so, too, are those with customers and business partners.

If you're looking for best practices suggestions for your specific organization, your videoconferencing provider can serve as a partner in that quest; ask them for services help in tying the technology to your business.

Overcoming Resistance: Key Factors for Success

Clearly, executives and their employees are using and benefiting from videoconferencing. But most companies could do more than they are to leverage the full value of the technology—and that forms the basis for the third step in our process. The goal with any technology deployment is to get people to use it. But many employees still express reservations about videoconferencing, and for these people, launching a video call or meeting is anything but automatic. Managers must find ways to overcome this resistance if the videoconferencing in their own organizations is to live up to its promise. To do that, companies should make sure they train all end users on the technology—people can only use it if they know how to do so, and although today's videoconferencing systems are much simpler than those of earlier generations, many tech-phobic employees may be averse to trying them for the first time. Services can help ensure such training is accurate and effective for employees and IT staff.

Of course, training is only valuable if the technology works for everyone, every time they go to use it—so IT managers must ensure they deploy best-of-breed systems. One of the best ways to get assurance that the technology will work every time for every user is through services and ongoing support.

Once employees know how to use videoconferencing and it's deployed to ensure successful service, people need to use it—and the best way to get them to do that is to make it standard operating procedure for all meetings, conferences and strategy sessions. This message must come from the top down: Managers and executives should schedule all their own calls and meetings as videoconferences whenever it makes sense.

Finally, companies should give all employees access to videoconferencing. That will enable more users to reap the cost savings and productivity benefits, and that will drive more value to the company's bottom line. Here again, services can play a key role in helping companies evaluate their communications needs and deploy the right mix of technology to the right employees.

Tying Collaboration to Corporate Messaging

Most organizations are trying to develop a clear, sound message around what their company stands for and how they want to do business. By using videoconferencing, companies can tie collaboration to those broader corporate goals: Clearly, the technology supports globalization, reducing travel costs, green initiatives, and the need for teamwork across geographic and cultural boundaries. It also helps companies stay more productive and competitive even in the face of a global recession; it allows them to support a younger generation of employees who are used to using video on a regular basis; and it is a great entry point to a broader unified communications deployment.



Source: Frost & Sullivan

Extending Videoconferencing's Reach

As with most technologies, proliferation is a key driver to maximizing adoption of videoconferencing. Employees often avoid launching a videoconference if even just one attendee is unable to connect via video. To avoid this, companies should deploy desktop videoconferencing to remote and home-based employees; integrate all endpoints, so everyone who needs to can participate in any given videoconference; integrate video with broader unified communications deployments; extend access to customers and partners; open room-based systems to all comers; and work with vendors to ensure Quality of Service across all systems and devices. For many companies, the only way to support all those efforts is through services—a good provider will help with systems assessment and integration, extension, availability and QoS.

Getting There from Here: Services Make it Happen

Any organization that uses or is considering videoconferencing can take the five steps discussed here, and in doing so they will increase the value derived from the technology. When it becomes impractical to implement these steps with internal resources, IT managers should partner with their conferencing vendors and providers. Services—when delivered by the right company, with a long history in the market and experience working with a wide variety of industries—can ensure success across the board. For starters, IT managers can engage services providers to benchmark their existing videoconferencing systems. That will help them understand where the gaps lie, where redundancies may exist, and how best to deploy the technology for the future.

Then, service providers can help with integration—for everything from connecting the new technology to the old, to integrating it with other forms of communication. They can help ensure quality of service across all devices, as well as network management and performance. And they can help identify and enable business process integration.

Finally, IT can rely on services and support contracts to provide maximum uptime, investment protection and future-proofing with software upgrades, as well as training services to increase adoption and expand internal expertise.

Although videoconferencing is a cost-effective technology that delivers savings and productivity benefits right out of the box, in this increasingly complex communications environment, smart companies will take advantage of partner expertise to ensure they see maximum value from their videoconferencing investments.

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