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Overcoming Barriers to Video Adoption in the Workplace



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OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO VIDEO ADOPTION IN THE WORKPLACE

Video conferencing offers clear benefits to business users, including better collaboration, faster decision-making, lower times to market and cost-effective, face-to-face meetings. But many managers have a hard time getting employees to warm up to video technology at the office. Although many employees are familiar with video in their personal lives—making ready use of video recording capabilities on smart phones, as well as consumer video applications such as Skype for personal communications with family and friends—they often resist using the technology for workplace meetings and collaboration.

In the past, employees have expressed frustration with video conferencing tools, citing fear over whether the technology will let them down at a crucial discussion point; uncertainty about basic conferencing dos and don'ts; and concerns over their ability to master the technology. They are often uncomfortable using business-grade video conferencing systems due to the misconception that the technology is much more complex and cumbersome than its consumer counterparts. This is a common myth, despite the fact that the technology on the market today is much more user-friendly than what many organizations may have deployed even just a few years ago.

Overcoming these barriers is critical for companies that want to reap the benefits of video conferencing and maximize their return on investment (ROI). This paper will identify the primary barriers to adoption and highlight best practices for overcoming resistance, including what role superior design and ease of use can play in achieving mass acceptance of video conferencing as a business tool.

TODAY'S VIDEO CONFERENCING: BETTER THAN EVER

Video conferencing delivers significant benefits, but it hasn't always been easy to use or manage. As a result, many employees have a negative impression of the technology—even though they may use video applications at home and on their mobile devices. They expect business systems to be hard to use and difficult to embrace. Their concerns are not unjustified; in the past, images were often grainy, sound quality was poor, and getting a conference up and running required input from IT—if it worked at all. As a result, end users were reluctant to take advantage of video conferencing, even when it was made available to them.

Today's video conferencing technology is very different, offering high-definition picture and audio at reduced bandwidth, eliminating concerns over calls being dropped due to network overload. The technology has become remarkably easy to use, thanks to widespread unified communications (UC) solutions that natively integrate video into popular desktop business applications. Employees can now launch impromptu video sessions with the simple click of a button. And while traditional video conferencing systems were designed around a many-to-many model (several people in a conference room in one location meeting with a group of people in a conference room in another location), today's technology supports many-to-one, one-to-many, and one-to-one interactions. The flexibility of solutions lets

employees use video in new and productive ways, adopting usage based on their specific business and communications needs, with easy-to-use applications that don't require advanced planning or involvement from IT.

Rules of the Road for External Video Conferencing Calls

- Confirm times and send out invitations in advance.
- Dress for success—wear what you would to an in-person meeting with the participants.
- Offer quick tips for using the system to ensure your guests are comfortable with the technology.
- Emphasize your readiness to be on camera—but don't assume theirs.
- Use online collaboration tools such as content sharing and annotation capabilities to drive home your points.
- Assume that some attendees will need to step away from the screen from time to time, especially during longer meetings—and invite them to do so as needed.
- Pay attention to your surroundings; a professional background speaks volumes.
- Whenever possible, use a high-definition (HD) system for increased quality and performance.

Rules of the Road for Internal Video Conferencing Calls

- Limit video calls to short, interactive meetings—the goal is to increase engagement and remove distractions.
- Use desktop or mobile systems to include remote and home-based employees.
- Enable the technology for ad-hoc collaboration.
- Assume participants will be office casual, wearing their regular work clothes and able to engage one another on personal as well as business matters.
- Let people know it's OK to answer critical messages or step away from their desks if needed.
- Insist on action items at the end of the call and then follow up to ensure they get done.
- Record meetings for future use, especially by those who couldn't attend the first time around.

BARRIERS TO ADOPTION: OVERCOMING EMPLOYEE RESISTANCE

The success of any video deployment can only be measured in the productivity outcomes realized by uptake and usage across all levels of the organization. Despite these advances, when it comes to using video conferencing in the workplace, employees voice a number of concerns that often prevent them from embracing the technology. It's critical that organizations acknowledge and address these issues in order to capitalize on gains from the solution's ROI.

Below, we identify the leading concerns that have typically been expressed by end users and offer suggestions for overcoming them.

Problem: Difficulty of use: All too often, employees tell us they are not sure how to launch a video conference, whether on a room-based system or on their desktop. While today's conferencing systems are easier to operate than ever, they may still require training—and not just for older, less tech-savvy users. Even power users of consumer services like Skype may not identify or take advantage of all the capabilities a business-grade system has to offer, which will often include the ability to dial out to multiple parties, incorporate documentation and Web collaboration capabilities, record and store sessions for future use, and manage the conference from a master account.

Solution: Choose easy-to-use technology—and offer training and support. The importance of intuitive, easy-to-use interfaces can't be overstated in video conferencing or any other kind of communications technology. Even as the general population has grown more tech-savvy, the tools they use on a regular basis are cleverly designed for novices to be able to pick them up immediately, without having to read cumbersome manuals or search a long list of FAQs. Business-grade solutions typically include the ability to dial out to multiple parties, share documentation, extend live collaboration capabilities, record and store sessions for future use, and monitor presence and provisioning. Although these advanced features make for a rich collaboration experience, the technology benefits can sometimes be hidden, overshadowed by unfamiliar initiation. To address these shortcomings, companies should choose solutions that combine usability with familiar interfaces that mimic existing technologies like touch and swipe interfaces, smart dialing and customizable APIs. Of course, even when video conferencing solutions are simple to use, not everyone will be willing or able to jump right in. So Frost & Sullivan recommends that organizations have a formalized training program as part of an adoption methodology to train and provide ongoing support to end users and IT support staff during the roll-out phase. This will not only make employees more comfortable using the technology today and into the future, it will also help users take full advantage of all the advanced capabilities the technology can offer.

Problem: Reluctance to be “on screen.” This is especially so for home-based and other remote workers, who often have grown accustomed to the seclusion of their solitary work spaces. For people who may start and end the work day in their pajamas, video conferencing feels like an intrusion, not a benefit. But even employees who spend their day surrounded by other people in a traditional office environment may not feel inherently comfortable with being on camera, which in their view makes for a different experience than speaking with someone in person.

Solution: Familiarity breeds comfort. The reality is, the more people use video conferencing, the more comfortable they become with it—until, eventually, they hardly notice it's there. Frost & Sullivan recommends that when companies deploy a new video solution, they have a formal policy that mandates its use for all employees whenever feasible. Obviously, the amount of use and access will depend on the solution and the location of end users. But for ICT departments to truly realize the full benefit of their investment, it is critical that video collaboration becomes part of the organizational culture of how you communicate. We have witnessed how companies can achieve a successful roll-out just by applying simple policies such as mandating that all group meetings be held on video during the first month of implementation. After that, most employees will be so enamored with the technology, they will continue to use it by default as just another communication tool readily available at their fingertips.

Problem: Fear that video will prevent multi-tasking. It's the untold secret of almost every office, but everyone does it. When on an audio-only conference call, employees will spend at least some of the time doing other things—answering e-mail, responding to IMs, surfing the Web, even wandering around the office. One of the benefits of video is that it forces participants to focus on the meeting at hand; since they are on screen, and visible to every participant all the time, it's much harder to disengage from the discussion. But that is a double-edged sword, since not all meetings require 100 percent participation from all attendees 100 percent of the time; the very fact that they *can't* look away from the action will prevent some employees from using the technology at all.

Solution: Outline the dos and don'ts around participation. One of the best ways to get employees on board with video conferencing is to make sure that everyone understands the basic behavioral rules of conducting a video-enabled meeting. For example, having similar housekeeping rules to in-person meetings—such as always having a meeting agenda, along with instructing users to ensure video meetings last no more than 30 minutes—are some of the best practices used by organizations with a pervasive video culture. This keeps the meeting focused and on point, often eliminating the need or desire for multi-tasking in the first place. For calls that must run to an hour or more, acknowledge that some participants may need to step away from the camera at some point during the discussion and assure them that it is OK to do so. Just as people who participate in in-person meetings may need to step outside to take a phone call or visit the restroom, video conferencing attendees need the freedom to take care of business outside the line of sight.

Problem: Remote workers don't have access to room-based and telepresence systems. In today's increasingly virtual workplace, where more and more employees are working regularly from home offices, client sites and the road, it's not always possible for meeting participants to gather in a single conference room to attend a video meeting. When they aren't given other options, these users will write off the value of video-enabled meetings in favor of the convenience and availability of face-to-face meetings or audio-only conference calls.

Solution: Adopt video systems that can integrate with the widest selection of desktop and mobile devices. Frost & Sullivan recommends that organizations with a growing user base of remote workers deploy a mix of video conferencing software and endpoints, allowing

employees to use video from anywhere and on any device. As part of a flexibly deployed solution, IT managers should enable individuals to dial in via audio-only as needed, since not all workers will be able to leverage video capabilities all the time. These users still need to be able to participate in meetings on their own, less-visible terms. Video collaboration should, where possible, integrate seamlessly with prevalent UC applications already deployed on employee devices for greater acceptance by users. This will ensure all employees have access to the technology to encourage usage and adoption throughout the organization.

CONCLUSION

Frost & Sullivan research shows that video conferencing is making a splash in the workplace, but many employees continue to resist using it, even when familiar with the technology in their personal lives. Fears over their competence, user etiquette, privacy concerns and perceived ease of use—along with legacy quality and management issues left over from the days when enterprise video conferencing was difficult to use—keep people from embracing the technology. Today's video conferencing solutions deliver an engaging, easy-to-use, quality experience. Companies that want their employees to reap the benefits of this collaborative technology must acknowledge and address user concerns by offering training, establishing best-usage practices, and deploying best-of-breed solutions to ensure adoption and regular use.

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