



Video and Data Conferencing

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In the past, video conferencing was mainly used by larger businesses and International organisations.

As the costs have come down, our E-Business Advisers discuss how your firm could benefit:

1. What is video and data conferencing?

With the advancements of the Internet, video software, hardware and communications systems, video and data conferencing is now much more of an affordable business resource.

Video conferencing allows users to speak and see each other, to share data, documents, images and sound when they are not physically present in the same location.

With a wide range of video conferencing equipment available today, even the smallest business could afford to invest in this versatile technology which enables you to meet, talk, work collaboratively and fully participate with colleagues - without moving from your desk!

From small one-to-one site conferences, through to multi-point sites with perhaps several different groups of people at each site - there is a system to suit the majority of business needs.

2. What are the Business Benefits?

When video conferencing first emerged, many found the main benefit was the saving on travel costs.

As the use of this technology has matured, users regularly attend meetings across the world, review multi-media presentations, product

designs, reports and participate in business events without leaving their business premises.

The main benefits:

- Savings on travel costs
- Savings on time taken to get to meetings
- Getting people together where diary time is a problem
- Being able to access expert advice for part of a meeting or conference
- Making collaborative working more manageable
- Sharing of information, data, audio and video
- More time to concentrate on your business

Video conferencing offers the user the opportunity to see each other, speak and share information.

The ability to share information is called "Data conferencing", and this allows you to share your data files with remote users - e.g. databases, video, audio, graphics, presentations, documents, spreadsheets, photographs.

Most conferencing systems give users the facility for working together collaboratively to:

- update documents,
- write or draw using a single shared 'whiteboard',



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- attach a camera to view pictures and images,
- share applications and data files not available on your own PC.

3. The Technology

There are several key elements which make up a Video Conferencing system.

Dependant upon your choice of system, they will vary in price, size and functionality.

The key elements are you need to consider are:

- Camera / Videoconferencing camera
- Microphone, loudspeakers, headphones.
- Communication (telephone line, ISDN line or Local Area Network)
- Software to enable the technologies to communicate with each other

4. Understanding the systems

There are six main video conferencing methods:

- Video Phone. They use specially made telephones to allow video and audio communication, and are really designed for one to one users. Video phones are found in some business and conference centres
- Desktop. This is usually done between two users with suitable hardware and video conferencing software installed on their PCs.

- Compact Systems. These are portable systems that connect to an existing TV set or PC monitor.

They allow one-to-many conference meetings, and are sometimes referred to as set top boxes. They offer additional features such as file transfer and external device inputs, e.g. whiteboards.

- Roll Around. These are more suitable for larger meetings. They often have a “roaming” camera, allowing high quality conferencing with the same file transfer and external device features.
- Studio. These are purpose built centres with all the features you could ever need, often with on-site support and technicians to manage the technology. The advantage is participants in the conference can concentrate on the subject matter, and not have to think about the technology.
- Internet. This is excellent for one-to-one conferencing. Suitable software is needed on each PC, with a high speed broadband connection to ensure the audio and video quality is good.

5. Useful Links

Entering video conferencing into www.google.co.uk will also return a listing of many facilities

www.videoconferencing.co.uk -
Video conferencing newsletter web site

www.questmark.co.uk -
East Midlands based company specialising in video conferencing



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www.eyenetwork.co.uk -
Bureau offering world wide video conferencing
room bookings

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