

Video conferencing



What to Look for in a Video Conferencing System

Video conferencing has become “ the next best thing to being there” for many businesses. Facilitating face-to-face collaboration for people who are in different locations, it can help businesses increase productivity while saving money on business travel expenses. With video conferencing, you can still have dynamic “ in-person meetings” and “ live” presentations and events – even if you’re on opposite ends of the country, or even in different countries.

Video conferencing is also considered a “ green” technology as it eliminates the carbon dioxide emissions that result from driving and air travel. But how do you know what to buy for your organization? The first step in determining this is to understand your main objectives for the system, including your usage requirements today and what they might be over the next 3-5 years. You don’t want to buy more than you need, but you do want a system that is going to scale with your business.

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Will attendees mostly watch from their desktops, on a lap top while traveling, on a mobile device, in the board room, in a conference hall, or all of the above? Having a very clear picture of how the system will be used will enable you to make the right decision. Personal, Group Conferencing, or Both? When it comes to group or personal videoconferencing, there is a difference in what you'll need. Essentially, all conferencing requires a camera, microphone, speaker, monitor, and a codec, which is a small "

compression-decompression" program that helps large files travel across the Internet quickly.

Personal videoconferencing systems are meant to work within an office or home environment and are designed for the personal computer, or now, increasingly, mobile devices. Speakers, microphones, and cameras are designed for close ups use and privacy. These systems now enable rich media collaboration, data sharing, and instant messaging. Group conferencing equipment is obviously more complicated, requiring cameras that “ pan,” “ tilt,” and “ zoom,” as well as projectors, large flat panel monitors and other displays, microphone pods, and a variety of speakers.

Key Features to Look for in a Video Conferencing System Easy Integration with Your Computer, Network, and Unified Communications Systems You’ll want to make sure that the system you buy easily integrates with your existing technologies, including your phone systems, the type of computers employees use, existing flat screen monitors, speakers, etc. You’ll want to check to see if the system complies with current standards or if they are proprietary technologies.

You want a system that will communicate freely with all other standards-based systems vs. only with products from the same manufacturer. You don’t want to invest in a system that will become obsolete within a short period of time . What to Look for in a Video Conferencing System Full Video and Audio Capabilities It may seem obvious, but make sure your system can play actual videos during the video conference, not just a PowerPoint presentation or other document. You’ll want high definition for best viewing quality.

In addition, many systems provide a variety of screen layouts, so that attendees can simultaneously watch a video in one section of the screen, the presenter in another, and attendees in another. The system should have a video gateway that performs the translation between various technology protocols, including audio and video encoding formats used by the other components. When it comes to audio capabilities, make sure the system is going to be versatile and loud enough for your audience to hear it, and that it complies with broad standards.

Recording of Audio, Video, and Data Your system should enable you to record the audio, video, and even data portions of your conference. It can be very useful to record important, interactive presentations to share with others, such as hosting on your company's website Intranet, or even YouTube for later viewing.

Flexible and Comprehensive Moderator and Presenter Controls Easy to use and comprehensive controls are essential, especially when it comes to live presentations and meetings.

Your conference moderator should be able to control who's presenting, what attendees can view and hear, screen resolution, bandwidth, phone call admission, call routing, and more. You'll also want a system that can pass control of the conference to other presenters to create a dynamic and interactive meeting. Controls should also include presentation mode, when the focus needs to be solely on the presentation and not interactive dialogue and desktop sharing for flexibility, for example going back and forth between presentation decks to a website to a video.

Customizable, Brand-able While you're buying this system from a vendor whose brand will undoubtedly be showing up on the equipment, you'll also

want to make sure your organization's branding appears for your conference - so you want a system that is customizable and flexible enough to display your company's look and feel in the presentation and visuals. What to Look for in a Video Conferencing System Easy to Install, Easy to Use, and Easy to Maintain in Check to make sure the system is not so complicated that it's unusable, or even that some of the key features are not usable.

It should have a clear, concise, and easy to use menu and an intuitive user interface. Many IT people have a knack for learning how to use new technologies. For this reason, have a few others in your organization try it out and use it before buying. Attentive, Accessible Customer Support When it comes to video conferencing, you cannot underestimate how important customer support is - including technical support - for your system. A video conference is a live event with a live, interactive audience.

When something goes wrong, and all too often with new technologies it will - it's like a dropped phone call during a critical business negotiation - but to the 1,000th degree. You want to make sure that you can access support and get solutions ASAP if you have any issues with your equipment or connection. Competitively Priced and Great Value Today, the popularity of video conferencing among businesses has skyrocketed, and hence there are many players who have entered the market.

This is good news for buyers because these companies are competing for your business. You want a company that has a good track record of success and one that can prove it with existing customers testimonials, case studies, and references. And as with other parts of your business, be clear about your

objectives first and what you aim to achieve with your video conferencing system, including your return on investment, before you open up your wallet.