

VIDEOCONFERENCING GOES VIRAL

Video shines the more people use it. So move it onto the desktop and mobile devices—and watch it become a star.



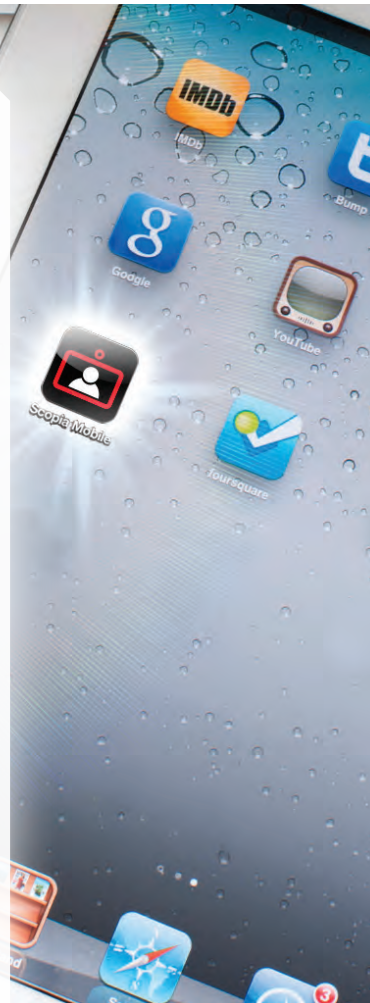
By Moshe Machline,
Vice President of Marketing, Radvision, an Avaya Company

For the South African Post Office, standard weekly meetings got a first-class upgrade when they moved to videoconferences. Joining the meeting from desktops or gathering in the auditorium or board rooms, executives and managers hammer out holiday schedules, new budgets, and hiring while talking face to face. And like a sportscaster at a football match, speakers can share spreadsheets, schedules, resumes, and other useful visuals to add color and details.

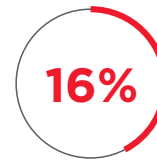
The HR group, among all the agency's departments, has put videoconferencing front and center, using it for recruiting new talent and training employees.

By getting buy-in from such a visible group, adoption and acceptance has rippled across the agency. New employees become comfortable with it from the get-go, and current employees earn a first taste during training.

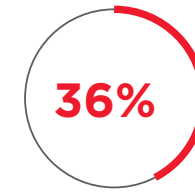
The South African Post Office, without knowing it, followed the strategies that the Aberdeen Group has identified to make business videoconferencing successful:



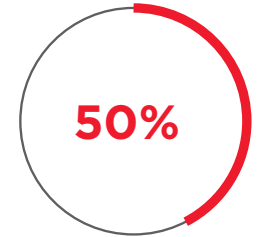
Mobile Videoconferencing Goes to Work



engage in mobile videoconferencing.



have deployed videoconferencing-ready tablets.



plan to test or deploy within a year.

Source: Wainhouse Research, 2012.

- Support multiple forms of video.
- Create a corporate-wide culture of using video to collaborate.
- Provide universal access to video collaboration to employees.

Take Two

Once confined to the conference room or auditorium, video is moving to PCs and mobile devices, making it much more egalitarian. What had been reserved for executive management is now accessible to all. In this more democratic form, videoconferencing will go viral.

As a result, videoconferencing is growing inside businesses at an incredible rate. According to a 2012 survey by Frost & Sullivan, 89 percent of North American companies plan to use videoconferencing more extensively or at some capacity during the next 12 months.

There are huge benefits now that videoconferencing is escaping the boardroom. Sure, telepresence, with its multiple displays, high-definition video and sound, and collaboration tools is highly effective for company-wide meetings, sales calls, and cross-department meetings. The problem? Such boardroom-based

meetings can make employees feel more like passive viewers than actual participants.

Video on Every Desktop

Mobile and desktop videoconferencing is much more personal, allowing—requiring!—people to participate actively. Employees can meet anytime, anywhere—useful for one-to-one or small group activities. The conferences are no more disruptive than a typical phone call, yet usually much more productive.

People are often initially resistant, though, so plan carefully if you want to make clicking on a videoconference as popular as picking up the phone. Forrester Research analyst TJ Keitt says that “tracking how employees use desktop video in the pilot is essential to gaining buy-in for expansion of the initiative.” Also, a well-connected early adopter like the Human Resources department can be a powerful agent for enabling the spread of videoconferencing, as the South African Post Office discovered.

Tiny Screen, Huge Benefits

BYOD has made employee smartphones and tablets as common as Swingline staplers. >>

The South African Post Office uses videoconferencing to make meetings and training more effective, translating to better customer service at its branches.

According to a 2012 Wainhouse Research study, mobile videoconferencing ranks first in customer interest—a clear winner ahead of managed videoconferencing services, integration of videoconferencing with telephony platforms, and even integration of Skype and videoconferencing.

Just because you're using a consumer mobile device doesn't mean that you should limit yourself to consumer apps like Skype or FaceTime. Business-grade apps provide better quality, interconnect with existing enterprise videoconferencing systems, offer high security, and add rich non-video collaboration tools such as document sharing.

Crowdsourced Collaboration

Think of all the places your company could use personal video to make communication more intimate and effective: executive meetings, distance learning and training, customer meetings, brainstorming sessions, partner meetings, collaboration with remote workers, R&D activities, and performance reviews.

Connecting with field service workers is an especially ripe area. Technicians are sharing live visuals and video chatting with operators to fix

equipment at customers' sites, such as electricity and gas units, cable boxes, and gym equipment. That's helping them improve their ability to fix equipment the first time, says John Ragsdale, an analyst with the Technology Services Industry Association.

"It's time [for field service organizations] to get over their paranoia about video and start to bring it into their support operation," Ragsdale says.

In another case, medical manufacturers are using video to troubleshoot and fix critical health systems. A nonworking surgical microscope in a remote area of Montana can be fixed by a technician in San Jose, California, by discussing the problem live with whoever's present, examining the scope using HD video, and even sharing fix-it tutorials.

Ensuring Success

The single best way to ensure that personal videoconferencing takes off is to put it in employees' hands. It can be that habit-forming. Here are some other steps you can take:

- **Provide training.** Some employees, especially those over 35 years old, will instinctively find video invasive or uncomfortable. Provide training,



ease their fears, and remind them that video's personal touch is as close as you can get to a live, in-person meeting.

- **Gather feedback to create best practices.** Survey users each quarter to understand how they are using video. Use what you learn to remind staff about certain features, share successes, and improve overall usage.
- **Make it high-def.** The gap between room and personal videoconferencing is fast disappearing. Our Scopia® and Avaya Flare® Experience apps for PC and mobile can both support up to 720p video.
- **Be open.** Don't lose your investment in your legacy videoconferencing equipment. Open and interoperable solutions allow you to merge the new and the old.

- **Protect and secure.** Don't get lazy. Videoconferencing systems can be hacked, allowing people to listen to and see confidential discussions. No system should automatically answer incoming calls, nor operate without a strong firewall.

With videoconferencing in place, your business will be two to five years ahead of the competition, according to Melanie Turek, a Frost & Sullivan analyst. "Forward-thinking organizations are seeing measurable value in advanced communications solutions that allow for true collaboration, leading to enhanced thought leadership, customer support, and productivity." •

Moshe Machline is Vice President of Marketing for Radvision, an Avaya company. He has 15 years of technology management and go-to-market experience at the IT and telecommunications industry level.