IMPLEMENTING VIDEO THAT WORKS

Want to improve your B2B videoconferencing?

Consider the *Ballerina*

BY **REBEKAH ALLENDEVAUX**

The ballerina – the danseuse, the prima ballerina. To the audience, she is grace itself, flowing with seemingly effortless poise and practiced refinement. But behind each minute of flowing charm and striking beauty are hours of choreography, tedious planning, sweltering recitals, and plain hard work.

Developing a B2B service is a bit like that.

Teaching ballet is now 12+ years behind me, but as I help businesses design overall video programmes for best practises, the goal is the same: to create a superlative service that delights the eye through careful disciplines and process controls.

When you select a tried technology, you bring a sound solution to your enterprise users, right? Wrong. You can purchase a good technology and totally fail with your offering if you do not implement best practice controls. More about this shortly.

But first, consider this list of areas that comprise many enterprise video offerings today:

- network and security architecture;
- UC infrastructure and endpoints;
- mobility and groupware integration;
- control and monitoring systems;
- conference management & remediation processes;
- device on-boarding practices;
- scheduling and ad hoc, etc...

For each area, there are best industry practices, and these practices are called Playbooks. For example, there's a scheduling playbook, a meeting management & remediation playbook, a control and monitoring playbook, etc. The collection of these playbooks together comprise the over-arching video service programme.

It is the video services programme (sometimes called the vnoc services programme) that looks so innocent. But beware – the video services programme quickly becomes the deciding factor as to whether or not your service will be a smashing hit, or an échec – a failure.

Why? Your network can be clean, the infrastructure configured correctly, the groupware integrated properly; but without a video services programme, your service delivery will be unpredictable. It will disappoint users. Guaranteed. Toward this end, let's discuss the video services programme a little deeper, and then we can examine the playbook specifically for B2B and B2C activities.

The Video Services Programme

What does a video services programme do? It predefines the rules of engagement in any given circumstance, bringing predictability, continuity, and repeatability to your offering.

Without it, the only consistency will be inconsistency – your customers will receive superb service on one day and disappointing service on another. I've seen this happen again and again with both service providers and enterprises alike.

So what items are predefined? It depends on the area (network playbook, scheduling playbook, B2B playbook, etc.). But here are a few topics dealt with from a list of many hundred spanning multiple playbooks.

- call flows and prioritizations for answering the phone at the service desk;
- remediation flows between service desk levels and the information to record in help desks;
- predefined actions – what to do when certain things occur;
- predefined thresholds of acceptable and unacceptable quality;
- customized notification lists for escalations;
- backup plans for outages;
- contact information for third parties and ticketing;
- confirmation or ticket formats for message bodies; and
- VIP meeting framing when it involves telepresence vs. other configurations.

These are just a few examples. Essentially, the video service programme determines what should occur given any circumstance, and it should attempt to automate as much as possible depending on the technology being used.

Once each playbook is shaped, each becomes part of the overall video service programme; also the playbook make an excellent curricula for training new hires.

Focusing on B2B and B2C

Below is an excerpt of helpful tips from a B2B and B2C playbook. Feel free to use these tips to improve your service offering.

1 **Build a Staging Room for VIP Meetings.** For high profile meetings, one of the biggest disruptors of a professional meeting is the annoyance that participants create themselves. This can reflect badly on the managed services organization, even though the problem is created by the meeting participants. For example, it's astounding that some users dial into meetings as audio participants from their vehicles with radios playing loudly, sending disruptive noise into every telepresence and group system alike.

It is recommended that the service organization create a meeting room attended by a concierge to validate the qualities of the connection. In doing this, participants may be greeted and qualified; the attendant may recommend that the user mute one's mobile phone unless speaking into the meeting. Once the user is reminded of muting etiquette, the attendant should move the participant into the meeting seamlessly, minimizing any disruption that may have otherwise occurred.

2 **Use Multiplicity in Invites for Connection Details.** Different endpoints use different dialling patterns. When sending the invite, considering including several dialling structures per the example below:

Meeting Invite Connection Details
Depending on your endpoint and configuration, use one of the dialing patterns to connect to your meeting:

Video Dialing Instructions:
85001@acmeservices.com; or
85001@22.22.22.22; or
22.22.22.22##85001

Audio-only Dialing Instructions:
US +1 212 555 8179 PIN 432343#
UK +44 (0)77343 384 243 PIN 432343#

By providing multiple dialling strings, a service organization has likely avoided a technical support call that would have occurred, saving time and money. But more importantly, the organization has avoided frustration to a user, saving reputational currency.

3 **Include an International Technical Support Number.** Often missed by North American service organizations is an international phone number for users to call.

For example, a user in Korea might see this technical support number listed: 512-555-1212. Little do they know that this number is actually +1-512-555-1212. The +1 routes the call to North America by ITU PSTN format. Otherwise, the number used in this example could be misunderstood for the country code of Peru. Always format help desk numbers with an international string.

4 **Give Attention to the Call Speed.** One organization may be accustomed to launching calls at 2 Mbps and another at 0.5 Mbps. Agree in advance to the call speed along with a lower call speed should packet loss occur. Test the call speeds, especially if the connection is carried over the common Internet. Remember that a successful test at 8:00am may not yield the same results at 4:00pm. Have a backup plan should packet loss degrade the image. Down-speeding is often the first choice, and newer systems may do this automatically, but many algorithms slowly increase the bit rate until packet loss occurs again, creating oscillations throughout the meeting of good video, lossy video, and back to good video again – over and over. So sometimes manually setting the call speed at each end based on testing is the better approach.

Be prepared to move the call to another room in the same building should a problem occur with equipment or the connection. And always have a "last resort" plan (audio-only) to offer the user should an unavoidable problem surface.

5 **Establish Primary & Secondary Endpoint Contacts.** What happens when there's no response from the far end? It is important to have at least two contacts associated with each group room system should a problem arise. If there's a database, populate the database with a primary contact and a secondary contact, including both office and mobile phone numbers. Always collect email addresses and presence information for real-time communication. You'll be glad you did when an endpoint or a monitor is mistakenly "off" and the meeting is in the setup window.

6 **Create a Call Setup Window Based on Endpoint Quantity.** Some meetings may not be able to have any call setup window, and the 2:00pm meeting gets

launched exactly at 2:00pm. In this dynamic, when a problem occurs, it's often visible because people are already "in the meeting" and troubleshooting starts with everyone watching. But when possible (especially for VIP B2B meetings), it is recommended that a setup window be included to minimise distraction and ensure a meeting is setup on-time for the meeting's start time.

7 **Remove MCU and Endpoint Timers.** Often an endpoint or MCU has a maxCallTime setting that limits the length of a call. If an endpoint reaches this limit, the site will disconnect itself usually by logging a normal call clearing procedure or unspecified Q931, giving the impression that someone intended to disconnect the call. Worse yet is when a bridge has this setting in place at the conference level or the bridge level, and the entire meeting is unexpectedly torn down. Ensure the endpoints are not set to maxCallTime=90 or some other setting that will not survive the meeting length (normally part of the on-boarding playbook). Similarly ensure the video bridge does not have a conference room or meeting room that expires prior to the length of the conference.

8 **Will Mobile Video Users Be Participating?** The base of mobile video users is rapidly growing with increasingly equipped smartphones and tablets. These devices appear convenient and seemingly innocent, but beware! An iPad or Android can be powerful if managed well, but humbling if not.

Here's why: Packet loss and audio challenges may pervade these wireless devices more so than other video systems depending on the user's fluctuating environment. If numerous users join meetings in this manner, are they participants or observers? If observers, consider creating a secondary meeting room just for mobile users, and cascade the mobile meet-me room into the primary meeting. By doing this, it is easy to block audio from the mobile users from entering the primary meeting.

As a disclaimer, I am not saying that mobile users should be treated as second class video citizens, but the mobile user may inherently exit and return to the same meeting far more frequently than traditional video users depending on wireless packet loss. This can be extremely distracting. These policies are set to help the meeting maintain order. If a mobile user is a primary participant, make an exception for that participant to call into the primary meeting.

9 **Profile and Certify B2B Endpoints.** Profiling is the act of building a database record for a video user or an endpoint, containing all relevant information to successfully connect to the user/endpoint.

Certifying is the act of connecting to a user or endpoint and validating the qualities of the service both qualitatively and quantitatively. There's a few chapters of information relevant to doing this correctly, but be certain to do it. If you need help, let me know. Whatever database one use, be certain to have full access to that information, and be certain to profile and certify B2B endpoints, especially those used by a VIP.

10 **Coordinate Service Desk Coverage.** The nature of B2B conferencing can mean that more than one service desk may be involved with a single conference. Company X may have its service desk in place, providing coverage to their users; likewise Company Y may do the same. Be certain both service desks are aware of a conference that employs resources from each.

11 **Deem One Organization as Primary.** When B2B conferences are launched, there may be two vnoc managed service entities involved; deem one organization as primary (if possible) with the responsibility to manage most aspects of the conference. Usually the entity with the most endpoints should take that role, or perhaps the entity managing the bridge should be that primary organization.

Avoid cascading bridges if possible, especially between organizations, unless it is purposefully done as in the case of building a mobile meet-me room. If this cannot be done, follow some simple rules that both organizations agree to test and follow in advance **TPO**

Summary
Once you determine the B2B playbook (the rules of engagement) that your service organization will systematically follow, ensure everyone has read the playbook and is trained in these processes. Defining these processes up front will provide elegance and predictability to your service, and it will give users confidence in your service offering.

I hope this section helps you improve the B2B & B2C offering of your visual collaboration service.

If you haven't created an overall video service programme for your entire UC offering, that is a must that should get full attention. Call or write if you need help with any part of it.

I wish you the best with your B2B programme. Like we say before the live ballet performance is underway – *mérde*! **TPO**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Rebekah AllendeVaux is a consultant with the Human Productivity Lab specializing in helping organizations to build Video Network Operations Centers (VNOCs), develop their VNOC personnel, generate specific playbook workflow processes, manage RFP generation and bid management, and provide VNOC service curriculum and training. Ms. AllendeVaux was founder and president of Iformata Communications, a leading VNOC managed service provider that was acquired by Silver Lake Sumeru's AVI-SPL in 2012. Ms AllendeVaux has built scalable VNOC offerings for both mainline service providers as well as many Fortune 1000 enterprises, memorializing these into video service programmes for process control, automation and measurement.

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