Pros and Cons to Video Conferencing

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2/28/2011

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Introduction

Information Technology is a rapidly changing field that is always introducing new technological advancements to the world. I.T. is without a doubt one of the most rapidly growing fields. Globally, there are many advancements in technology today that were not around forty years ago, let alone forty days ago. Video conferencing, or video chatting, is one of those technologies. Video conferencing is a somewhat old concept that has become extremely popular over the past years. It gives people everywhere the ability to have a face-to-face conference with friends, family, or clients all over the world without having to leave the comfort of their own bed.

The concept of video conferencing is simply to give a person the satisfaction of chatting with someone while being able to see his or her live face and actions and hear their voice. Video conferencing allows for more personal and interactive conversations by seeing the person, rather than just over the phone, through an e-mail message, or a generic instant message with “LOL” to imitate your laughing aloud on the computer.

But, just like everything in the world, nothing is perfect. Video conferencing has very positive features as well as the negatives effect things like the functionality. All technology, especially that of new inventions/advancements, has problems to troubleshoot and perfect. Although videoconferencing is extremely popular and convenient, there are issues that will constantly be found which will hinder the way we look at the system.

Background

Although video conferencing has become very popular within the last few years, it has been a work in progress for a lot longer than most people would believe. Believe it
Video conferencing technology was first introduced in New York at the 1964 World Fair (Nefsis, 2008). The National Aeronautics Space Administration, or N.A.S.A., was one of the first to use video conferencing when they installed it inside of their space shuttles (Mag, 2010). N.A.S.A. used this to allow for convenient communication between those in space and those on Earth. In order to do so, N.A.S.A. used very high frequency (VHF) and ultra high frequency (UHF) links.

Video conferencing was too expensive for the public when it was first available. When compression labs introduced their video conferencing system in 1982, the system was put on the market at $250,000, each of its lines were sold at $1,000 a piece. There was a major advancement in the quality of the video conferencing systems in the 1990’s. Starting with IBM in 1991, they introduced “PicTel” which was the first video conferencing system. Although this was a more advanced technology, the price was still high at $20,000. In addition to the price of purchase, it cost $30 per line per hour for use. Then in 1992, Apple started its own service called the CU-SeeMe. At the time, this video conferencing software was the best but it lacked audio. Windows followed up on that by introducing a version compatible with their computers and compatible with audio in 1995 (Nefsis, 2008). Just as the price of high speed Internet went down, the cost of video conferencing followed proportionally. After that, the video conferencing industry hit the ground running and now is currently available for use by everyone.

**Potential Benefits**

Video conferencing can benefit the office in many ways. Video conferencing devices allow for a more efficient office work environment (IVCi, 2010). Video
video conferencing not only gives you the information that a regular phone call does, but it also provides you with additional information on the customer. With this, we get a more personal feel to conference calls. In the article, “Reap the Benefits of Flexible Working”, Shillingford mentions how many technologies such as video conferencing allow for more happiness within the workplace because it provides for a more flexible working environment. A major benefit of video conferencing: it saves the company/business a lot of money (Spencer, 2005). Since video conferencing allows for face-to-face contact, it saves money by allowing for a virtual conference, rather than having to buy a plane ticket or a hotel room to travel all over. Not only does video conferencing save money, but it also saves time.

A major reason that video conferencing is ideal is because it saves companies the amount of money that would be spent on travel to acquire the face-to-face contact. Normally, a business manager in California would spend many hours and a lot of energy traveling all the way to China for a business conference. Instead, with video conferencing, he or she is able to save all that that time and have the conference in his or her own office (Shillingford, 2008, June). Senior industry analyst Claire Schooley says, “If we’re talking about conducting meetings where reading things like body language is a requirement, then these type of systems are ideal” (Bielski, 2008). Together, all of these benefits are what make video conferencing such a positive technology.

**Disadvantages & Further Research**

Even though video conferencing has many benefits, there are still many drawbacks to the system. A major disadvantage to video conferencing is that it is very costly and thus not commonly obtainable. Video conferencing is mainly obtainable to big,
multi-million dollar companies (Bielski, 2008). It is clear that a less expensive video conferencing system is necessary for use by all. The personal aspect is another aspect of video conferencing that must be improved upon. Many factors such as eye contact or body language cannot always be conveyed through video conferencing. The lack of conveyance can lead to a loss of communication: what the person was trying to say or the point they were trying to get across (Rojeev, 2010). Almost all the time, the many characteristics or gestures that give a person character or enhance the conversation can only be interpreted through physical presence.

By having an employee sent to a meeting through the Internet rather than being sent physically by a plane or car may end up giving the clients a wrong impression. The client may interpret this form of communication as a lack of interest or sheer laziness. The client may get the impression that if a person is not willing to meet in person and set up a meeting, then they are not worth the business. Thus, ruining a potential business deal. In addition to the interpretational problems, technical difficulties may prevent the conferences from happening. Examples of these technical difficulties are slow connection, delayed video/audio connectivity, or video or audio cutting out. With video conferencing comes negative aspects, but overall, the benefits tend to outweigh the disadvantages.

**Conclusion**

Through research and comparison, it is obvious to see that video conferencing is becoming a major way of businesses and how they operate daily. With the present economy, video conferencing is not only convenient but it is also starting to become necessary. Video conferencing saves business a lot of money in expenses that they would normally pay in travel, as well as time that would be spent driving, at the airports, or on a
plane. With this, video conferencing allows for higher morale in the workplace. Video conferencing saves time, money, and energy, which in turn bring happier workers. Happier workers work harder, thus bring more success to the company. Even though there are negative aspects of video conferencing, this technology brings great advantages to companies that outweigh the disadvantages. Due to the current economic health, companies are not as willing or able to fork out the money for extensive business trips. To this problem, video conferencing is the ideal solution. Although this technology of video conferencing is so great, there are always areas of it that need to be improved upon. Of course there is much room for improvement of video conferencing, but it is a very cost efficient method of communication. Currently, video conferencing is still an up and coming trend, but if the flaws keep getting worked out as the technology advances, video conferencing will be a major aspect of business and everyday life for many years.


Bielski talks about the benefits of video conferencing for a company and how costly it is. The author then explains that the price of the actual video conferencing system is nothing compared to the actual amount of money that will be saved by the user.


This website discusses how beneficial video conferencing is to both the employees and the company itself.


This website discusses the long history of video conferencing including where it began and how it has grown through time.


Nefsis provides for a timeline of the video conferencing technology. This gave a clear and in-depth indication of how video conferencing and the hopes for it in the future.

This article on Buzzle.com lists both advantages and disadvantages of video conferencing. Information on both the positive and negative sides are provided.


Shillingford gives information on the positive end of video conferencing.

Shillingford discusses how video conferences provide for a more flexible workplace environment.


Spencer describes the benefits of having technology in the workplace, specifically video conferencing.