

Business Video: Coming to a Desktop Near You

Not so long ago, choosing a video technology for your agency was as momentous as choosing a PC operating system. Your decision defined to some extent who you could and could not collaborate with. "Agencies that invested in a video conferencing system couldn't include people in another building or agency that had videophones, for example," explains Russ Plain, federal government product specialist for Cisco.

Today's business video is much more flexible. Agencies of all sizes are mixing and matching video solutions ranging from Skype to Secure Type 1 encrypted video, and from personal desktop videophones to Cisco TelePresence technology, which provides a near in-person experience.

What's behind the accelerated adoption of business video in government? One reason is government's emphasis on collaboration, within and between agencies. Compared to voice alone, video can provide a clearer understanding and give people confidence that others are paying attention. And compared to in-person meetings, video is more cost effective, saves travel time and costs, and lessens government's carbon footprint. "Agencies also recognize that Web 2.0 technologies like video help them attract a new generation of workers that have grown up with these tools," Plain says

Plays Well with Others

The main types of video used in government today include:

- Videotelephony
- Video Teleconferencing
- Desktop Video
- Cisco TelePresence Solutions
- Video Surveillance

None of these tools are new. What is new is that people can join video sessions using any tool. During crisis response, agency executives in two locations might join a meeting with Cisco TelePresence, while staff in another location join the call with a video conferencing solution, and still others join from home using a personal desktop videophone like the Cisco Unified IP Phone 7985G. Other authorized employees can view the meeting on their PCs in real time, or after the fact, using the Cisco Digital Media System desktop video application.

Business video is transforming government, as illustrated by the following real-life examples.

Less Travel Time for Employees in Large Agency Campuses

A large civilian agency with a campus spread across the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area uses videotelephony to minimize the time, cost, and environmental impact of driving. A person who needs to meet with someone in another building dials the other person exactly as if placing a standard voice call. Video appears automatically if both people have videophones. Something new: if the two participants decide they want to add someone else, they can escalate to a multipoint call by simply clicking a button.

Less Flying, Too

Another civilian agency with offices and contractors on both coasts is using Cisco TelePresence to nearly eliminate air travel. Both offices have Cisco TelePresence rooms, as do their major contractors. Employees can initiate a meeting with people in other locations by touching a button on a Cisco Unified IP phone in the meeting room, without any involvement by IT. "Employees certainly don't miss traveling, and say the experience rivals a face-to-face meeting, with full-size images and very high quality audio and video," Plain says.

Remote Operations

Several Department of Defense agencies have enabled remote operations using Cisco Unified Videoconferencing and Cisco TelePresence. Some have begun using the Cisco Digital Media System desktop video application to view streaming video on a secure web portal. "Video is an enabler whenever decision makers are in different geographical areas," Plain says. Today, the U.S. National Guard in 25 states use Cisco Unified Videoconferencing, and many are adding Cisco TelePresence. Personnel can join collaboration sessions using either video solution.

Physical Security: Observe from Anywhere

Other agencies transmit surveillance video over an IP network. "With yesterday's proprietary video surveillance networks, you could only view video from a monitor on site," Plain says. "When video is integrated with the IP network, authorized personnel can view real-time or archived video from any location with a connection. Someone in D.C. can see an event at the border."

To watch a video of Cisco chairman John Chambers discussing the impact of business video, visit: www.cisco.com/go/video




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