

# Extending Telepresence Beyond the Boardroom





Born through a financial merger, Mega International Commercial Bank Co., was faced with the challenge of unifying two company cultures. With the successful implementation and adoption of telepresence, Mega Bank was able to unify two organizations to form a culturally strong and competitive bank. Its staff could exchange and discuss issues, make quality business decisions and communicate visually with their colleagues around the world in real time.

The business world is changing. Today's workforce is more global than ever before. Not only are teams spread out around the world, but also people are working from a greater variety of places – workstation, home office, coffee shop and anywhere in between.

Business moves more quickly these days, too. Scheduling a large group meeting is often too slow for fast-paced projects and industries. Today, meetings occur spontaneously when they are needed, wherever they are needed.

## Making the Transition

Traditionally, organizations have started telepresence programs in their meeting rooms. This limited installation is an easy way to try telepresence. A room-based system requires usage to be prearranged and managed; sometimes access is reserved for upper management. As telepresence adoption grows, however, these organizations often find that telepresence meeting rooms are increasingly booked and that users do not want to wait to schedule a meeting. That is when they turn to personal telepresence.

More and more, companies are choosing to combine room-based and desktop systems from the start. As long as the products you choose are standards based, everyone from desktop users to room-based groups can be part of the same conversation.

By extending your telepresence program to the desktop level, you can “personalize” the experience for your end users. Employees stay connected—and enjoy the power of visual communication—regardless of location. Grassroots employees can have the same access to telepresence right at their desks that managers have reserved for group meetings.

Telepresence has helped New England Credit Union strengthen its customer relationships. By deploying high telepresence, NECU has enabled customers to take advantage of services remotely, such as wealth management, loan approvals and insurance expertise.

## Benefits of Transparent Communication

When telepresence is at the desktop, visual collaboration becomes a transparent part of the everyday workflow and benefits an organization in multiple ways.

### Unified Company Culture

A cohesive company culture can be hard to maintain when employees are spread around the world. With telepresence, employees begin to see remote colleagues for the first time. People become more than just a voice on the phone or an email signature. This face-to-face interaction helps employees avoid miscommunication and to feel more included in decision making.

For managers, it can be hard to gauge if company goals are understood and internalized by customer-facing employees located far away. With telepresence, everyone can see and experience the same organizational messages—and stay on the same page.

### Serving Customers

Removing telepresence from the constraints of the boardroom can also mean getting it out into the field. Imagine on-site experts using handheld endpoints to communicate in real time about a customer's maintenance problem. Or picture telepresence systems set up in bank offices to serve customers as they come into the branch location. You can build a stronger connection with customers when you bring telepresence to where they need it.

### Visual Telework Programs

Concern over work/life balance and environmental sustainability are promoting the rise of telework programs around the world. Organizations with telework initiatives save money through reduced office rental expenses and greater energy efficiency. They also find that telework employees have higher retention rates and use fewer sick days.

But there remains a hesitation on the part of many managers—as well as employees—to implement large-scale telecommuting programs. Employers worry that “off-site” means “out of sight.” They wonder whether employees are really working. On the other side, workers fear that promotions and other rewards will go to the more visible employees who show up in the office. Equipping home workers with desktop telepresence can make these telework programs more sustainable and help organizations more fully realize the potential benefits of these initiatives.

### Business Continuity

Desktop telepresence collaboration technology can play an important role in any organization's business continuity plan. With personal telepresence, you can enable employees to work from anywhere and allow them to work together even in separate locations. This flexibility equips them to better adapt to crisis or disaster situations whether natural or caused by human intervention. In an unexpected situation, business can continue as usual because your employees have the same tools on their desktop that they have in the office.

As a global executive search company specializing in the provision of senior and high-level recruitment solutions, the Tardis Group needed a solution that would support its global expansion, limit travel between offices and help employees be more productive. Telepresence has enabled Tardis to stay connected with its worldwide network of offices and has allowed employees to interact face to face with clients and candidates across continents. The company has also used the technology to share, in a cost-effective manner, repeatable best practices and proven techniques to deliver continuous training and development to its staff.

In a crisis, telepresence also serves as a powerful information-gathering tool, allowing for accurate reconnaissance directly from the field. It reduces the chances of misinterpretation and allows for immediate confirmation of information creating a cohesive, coordinated crisis response. And, regardless of location, experts can be brought into the crisis response team and aid in the decision-making process.

## Attracting New Hires

Younger employees are often already accustomed to using video collaboration technology in school or at home. When they join the workforce, they expect to be constantly connected and to collaborate visually regardless of location. When you equip grassroots employees with telepresence, you are sending a powerful message that their contributions are highly valued.

## What Type of “Personalized” Solution Is Right for Your Organization?

When you expand outside of the boardroom, appliance-based telepresence endpoints, personal telepresence, PC-based telepresence, and VoIP video phones can all become part of your network.

By offering a variety of choices to your organization, you allow users to “personalize” their video collaboration experience. Executives might want a personal telepresence system. Those who often find themselves on the road or in home offices might look for a PC-based solution such as Movi. And, if people are looking to combine their desktop phone with a video system, a video VoIP phone might be right for them.

As long as these solutions are standards based, they can link to a single management system. That means that you can run diagnostics on the endpoints, troubleshoot issues, download software updates, and track usage, all under one roof. The result is a scalable way to provide the benefits of video collaboration to more people.

You have various personalities, communication styles, and business needs within your organization. One size does not fit all. By taking telepresence out of the boardroom and putting it on the desk—or in the hotel room, home office, or field—you can offer a variety of options to help everyone be more productive.



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