

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO VIDEO CONFERENCING TECHNOLOGY



The Ultimate Guide to Video Conferencing Technology

How we communicate around the office and with our clients and customers is changing. Where there was once costly travel, conference calls emerged to speed up the conversation and help expedite decision making. Flash forward 20 years, and employees are working from home in greater numbers, mobile devices have become viable work machines and people are able to meet face to face over video with the click of a button.

With cloud video conferencing, you can be up and running in minutes, making HD video calls from your favorite devices from anywhere you can connect to the Internet. For the user, the human element of face-to-face communication provides a more natural experience, and for the administrator, deploying and managing a cloud solution is easier and more secure than ever before.

This guide is designed to provide you with the knowledge you need to search out and select the best video collaboration solution for your needs. We'll cover the four classic approaches to video conferencing, the features worth evaluating and the pitfalls to look out for.



Evaluating Your Video Conferencing Needs

Before seeking out vendors and pricing options, the first step should always be evaluating your needs. The nice thing about a cloud solution is that as those needs change, you can easily scale up or down to match. To start, answer these ten questions about your current requirements:

1. How many locations do we need to connect?
2. Do we have remote or work-from-home employees?
3. How many total employees will use the service?
4. How many meeting rooms need to be video-enabled?
5. What types of devices does the solution need to support?
 - Meeting room system
 - Mac®
 - PC
 - iOS mobile/tablet
 - Android™ mobile/tablet
 - Windows® mobile/tablet
6. Are security and encryption important factors?
7. Do we want separate systems for audio and web conferencing?
8. How will employees use the service?
 - 1:1 conversations
 - Multiway group collaboration
 - Large/all-hands meetings
9. How technical is our user base?
10. What are some must-have features for our video solution? (See Features that Matter for some ideas)

The Four Schools of Video Conferencing

Video conferencing services come in many different flavors, but the majority fall into one of these four categories:

Traditional On-Premises Video Conferencing

Heavy on the hardware and hard on the wallet, traditional on-prem solutions are typically focused on high quality meeting room hardware and require the most support from IT and outside integrators. Servers and meeting room systems need to be maintained and monitored for outages and upgrades throughout the life of the system.

Web Conferencing

Some web conferencing providers offer a video element to their web-based meeting room services. These types of solutions are usually best for a small group of presenters to share information with a larger audience. Think of it like an upgraded audio conference call that allows the speaker to share their presentation and their face.

Meet-Me Video Services

The “meet-me” solution, also known as reservationless conferencing, varies slightly from web conferencing in that it doesn’t require scheduling. The process for connecting to a meet-me video meeting is very similar to a web conference—dial in to a shared meeting space in the cloud and wait for the moderator to connect and start the call. It’s like a calling card for video.

Cloud Video Conferencing

- **Business-Class Video Services**

Cloud video conferencing is the easiest solution to deploy and use. The call experience is centered on a shared company directory so users connect by name instead of by dial string. Business-class solutions are typically higher in quality, more secure and, because there are no hefty hardware costs, more affordable than their on-prem counterparts.

- **Free Video Services**

Most free services are built as consumer products. Either they are ad supported or they come with limited features. Free services give you all of the quality and support you would expect from a free service. The biggest downside to a free service is the lack of security and service-level agreements.



As video services differentiate themselves, you start to see the importance of matching your priorities to the solution set that best fits your needs. Some services offer a mix of web collaboration and content sharing but fail on multiway video conferencing. Others offer audio, video and web conferencing capabilities but lack enterprise-grade features that businesses look for, like recording and reporting.



Beyond a Meetings Tool

If your only motive for video conferencing is to upgrade your meetings, then you're in for a wealth of unexpected bonus content. Here are a few departmental use cases you may not have thought of:

HR and Training

From recruiting new team members to training and career development conversations, nothing is more important than face-to-face communication. HR teams can always benefit from the enhanced nonverbal communication that comes across over video conferencing.

IT

Let's face it—IT departments are known for their interest in all things tech, so they're sure to find creative ways to use it. Teams can record process updates, support remote employees and collaboratively troubleshoot over video to service the help desk.

Professional Services

Video conferencing provides another means of communication for consultants to manage global projects with their customers. Professional services teams are able to stay on track and on budget without unnecessary and costly travel.

Marketing and Sales

Most marketing and sales teams require extensive collaboration with customers and external agencies. Video conferencing helps them connect on projects to create more engaging campaigns that ultimately help customers make more informed decisions.

Engineering

Research and development can't stop and wait for business trip logistics. Engineering departments are able to optimize their time with global experts by collaborating over video. Daily scrums, bug triaging, prototyping and quality control are all perfect for video conferencing.

Every department and every industry can benefit from the collaborative powers of video conferencing. From the weekly 1:1 meetings to the monthly status meetings and even just to say hi, video conferencing helps you build relationships by providing more personal connections.

Features that Matter

There are many video conferencing services available in the market. They cover a range of features and specializations to meet different business requirements. Here are some features to look for when making your selection:



Ease of Administration

Check for a service with an online dashboard that gives you the ability to pull in-depth reports on statistics like user and room participation as well as call and device usage. This will come in handy when it's time to evaluate the solution come renewals time. An online admin portal also makes it easy to modify user and meeting room directories and lets you control security permissions.



Security

Support for secure firewall traversal allows users to conduct their meetings with coworkers, partners, suppliers and anyone else outside their organization. Support for encryption lets users discuss top-secret projects with confidence. Look for a solution with authentication procedures at the account and meeting level and that offers 128-bit AES (Advanced Encryption Standard) end-to-end calling.



Interoperability

People don't want to be burdened with interoperability. Find a solution that supports any-to-any connectivity irrespective of devices, including video systems, laptops, tablets and smartphones. It's also critical for a cloud-based video conferencing system to be "standards based," meaning that it can connect to devices made by any manufacturer. Imagine if iPhones could only call other iPhones. Be careful—some providers still operate this way.



Ease of Use

Simply put, the easier and more intuitive it is to support all of the different ways your company communicates, the more it will be used. Communication can be between two people in a chat, an audio call or a video call, or it can be a group discussion in a more organized meeting. Chances are that people in your organization use a few different methods depending on the task they are trying to complete.



Automatic Updates

You'll always have the latest and greatest features as the software updates automatically. Subscribe to receive real-time status updates so you're always in the know when features are available.



Quality

Reliable audio and video quality makes you feel like you're in the same room, even if you're connecting from thousands of miles away. Make sure the service provider supports network resiliency and packet error correction solutions.



Scalability

A cloud-based video conferencing solution should be scalable to grow as your company grows. Scalability makes it easy for companies of all sizes to benefit from video conferencing, not just the privileged few.



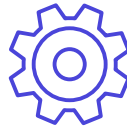
Affordability

Typically, the costs of a cloud-based solution are lower because you don't have to invest in or maintain any infrastructure hardware. Find a solution that lets you enable every employee and every meeting room.



All-in-One Solution

Replace an outdated audio or web conferencing service with an updated cloud video conferencing solution. A unified service is more efficient and creates a better user experience among audio, video and web conference calls.



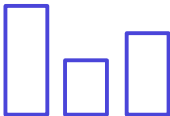
Device Support

PC or Mac, tablet and smartphone (Android or iOS), Google Chrome™ or Internet Explorer®. BYOD is here to stay—for the best adoption, find a solution that integrates with all of the devices your team loves to use.



Live Chat

Chat and group chat provide an additional level of collaboration—a text level.



Screen Share

Instantly transform your video call into collaboration by sharing your screen or presentation. That way you can cooperate on a document in addition to communicating face to face.



Guest Invites

Do not invest in a walled garden. Video conferencing should be available to every person and every meeting, including guests outside the company. Find a solution with a seamless guest experience free from heavy download requirements and other barriers to connect.



Scheduling Integrations

Calendar integrations make it easy to set recurring meetings or to send guest invitations to people outside of your organization.



Virtual Meeting Rooms

Just because meet-me services are limited doesn't mean virtual meeting rooms are unnecessary. Users should have the option to create reusable meeting room spaces for recurring meetings in addition to direct calling.



Recording and Sharing

Capture important meetings, conversations, events and ideas and share them with the people on your team who weren't able to make the live event. Few solutions offer recording, and even fewer offer a built-in sharing platform.



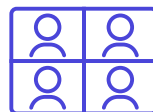
Conference Room Cameras

Check for a solution with integrated video systems for large and small collaboration spaces. That way your local team can meet in person and connect to the remote team over video right from the meeting room.



Search-Based Directory

Clicking a name to make a call is a much better experience than entering the endless dial string of a meet-me service. A presence-enabled directory lets you know that the person you need to talk to is available and ready to connect.



Call Escalation

Just as a solution needs to scale to the size of the company, a video call should scale to grow as more people are included. Choose a solution with call escalation to avoid the hassle of having to hang up a two-way call just to open up a multiway call.



24x7 Support

Who do you call if something breaks? A business-class solution must be backed by support within meaningful response times. Choose a solution that will support you throughout the life of the service.

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Connections Matter

At Lifesize, we understand the power of connecting people to make the workplace great. Our video conferencing solutions are designed to meet the demands of today's modern enterprise yet fully accessible to businesses of any size. See if Lifesize meets the criteria on your list and try it out for free.

- ✔ Support for all the ways your company communicates
- ✔ Connects all the devices your company loves to use
- ✔ Affordable and easy to purchase, manage and support
- ✔ Interoperable, regardless of manufacturers or operating systems
- ✔ Complete security for your top-secret conversations
- ✔ Highest video, audio and presentation quality
- ✔ Recording and sharing platform

FREE TRIAL

GUIDED DEMO



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