



F R O S T & S U L L I V A N

50 Years of Growth, Innovation and Leadership

Why Your Organization Should be Using
Web Conferencing Right Now—
Driving Business Value Through Technology

A Frost & Sullivan
White Paper

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INTRODUCTION

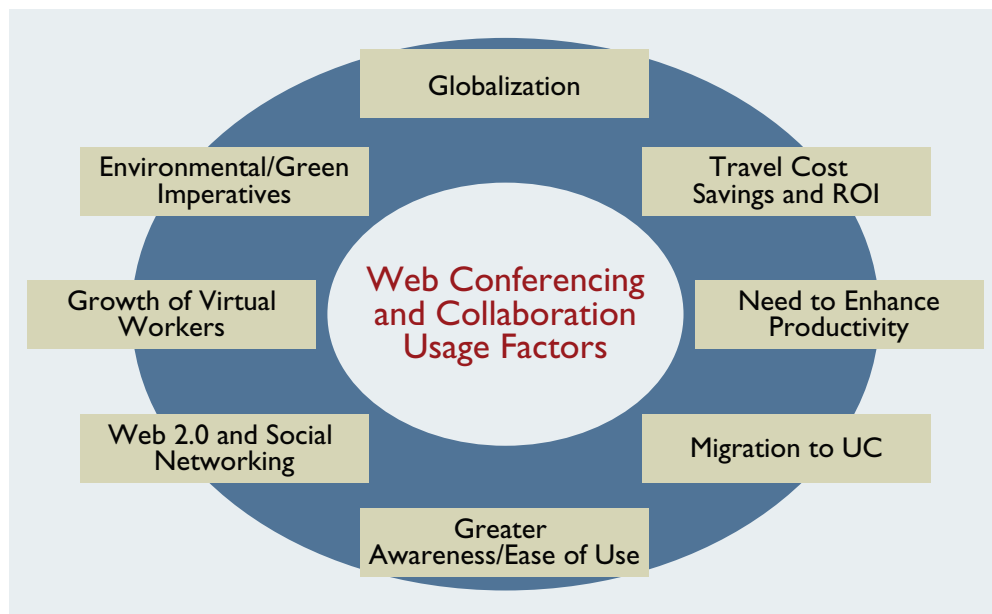
As more and more employees work in locations that are different from those of their colleagues, managers and direct reports—not to mention business partners and customers—are creating a so-called “virtual workplace”. Companies that support virtual workers see significant benefits, including lower facilities costs, better business continuity and employee productivity, higher retention and recruitment rates, and the ability to respond quickly to new market opportunities. Employees get the benefit of reduced or eliminated commutes and better work/life balance.

But even as companies become more dispersed, they need remote and mobile workers to be able to communicate and collaborate—anytime, anywhere, and with anyone. They also need to reach out to business partners, customers, and prospects to support training, sales, and marketing efforts. The growing need for real-time collaboration in the workplace is drawing more and more users to Web conferencing. Frost & Sullivan research shows the market grew by 10 to 16 percent, depending on the format, in 2009, and it’s on track to see similar growth over the next several years. Overall, the Web conferencing market reached \$1.7 billion in 2009, and is expected to hit \$4.12 billion by 2014.

Web conferencing technology lets participants meet online to share documents, deliver presentations, ask questions, partake in sidebar chats, answer polling questions, and share information in real time. With built-in audio, Web conferences make it easy for people to communicate and collaborate across geographic and cultural boundaries. But with advances in technology, Web conferencing has moved beyond collaboration and is now being leveraged by organizations for myriad other uses, including training (internally and externally), sales and marketing, and even revenue generation.

Because of its value in the modern workplace, Web conferencing has the highest usage of any other advanced communications tool, according to a recent Frost & Sullivan study conducted with 200 C-level executives representing North American companies of various sizes and vertical industries. It is in use at 53 percent of organizations and is personally used by 40 percent of executives; 97 percent of users say Web conferencing meets or exceeds their expectations.

The top reason executives are deploying the technology is to improve collaboration and productivity across geographically dispersed teams (25 percent). They are also hoping to enhance employee mobility (15 percent) and reduce costs (15 percent). As they expand their use of Web conferencing in the next 12 months, more than half want to improve employees’ work/life balance and general welfare; 49 percent want to reduce costs; and 45 percent want to improve collaboration and productivity across geographically dispersed teams.

Figure 1: Drivers for Using Web Conferencing

USE CASES: WHERE THE VALUE LIES

Web conferencing can benefit a range of employees in a variety of industries, but there are certain key areas of use that will deliver value to all organizations.

Training Dispersed Teams

Corporate training has never been more important or more challenging. Organizations are managing a growing number of remote workers in an increasingly global and competitive marketplace. These employees and business partners need to be well educated and trained to make the most of the products and services at their disposal and do their jobs effectively. Companies are also seeing value in training their customers, which leads to higher customer engagement, decreased customer attrition, higher revenue per customer, and lower support costs.

To be successful, corporate and customer training must be insightful, relevant, collaborative, and cost-effective. In this age of constant information, it's critical to keep the attention of training attendees, effectively disseminate information, and make sure that the necessary knowledge is understood and retained. It's also important that trainers offer follow-up, as needed, to ensure participants remain up to date on the latest information and can get refreshers when circumstances require.

Web conferencing helps training organizations create dynamic learning opportunities using new tools and technologies, including polling, sidebar chats, and recording and archiving capabilities that ensure compliance and flexibility. Forward-thinking businesses are increasingly adopting Web conferencing and collaboration

products and services to enable virtual training so employees don't need to travel and can stay productive before and after every educational session, immediately putting their new skills to work. The tools also create opportunities for training partners and customers who might otherwise forgo education due to the costs and constraints of travel. And, of course, Web conferencing lets companies better utilize their corporate trainers, who no longer need to travel to reach their students, and can conduct classes with more people more often.

Finally, recording and archiving capabilities let companies extend training to those employees and partners who cannot make the live event while still tracking participation.

Marketing to Far-Flung Customers and Prospects

Nothing is as important to a successful business as lead generation, whether the goal is to find new customers or up-sell existing ones on new products and services. But in an increasingly global marketplace, companies must find ways to cost effectively build their brand and reputation to distinguish themselves among an array of competitors.

Marketing professionals are faced with a growing array of business challenges, and they require technologies that can help them reach more targeted audiences, expand their global footprint, generate more leads in less time, reduce the cost per lead, and collaborate closely with sales teams and business managers to qualify and convert leads into sales.

Web conferencing lets marketers meet with prospects and clients anywhere, anytime, in an environment that offers rich functionality, including presentation capabilities, file and application sharing, mark-up tools, online chat, polls and surveys, and archiving and recording. Web conferencing is a perfect way to cost-effectively deliver presentations and product demonstrations without regard to audience location. As a result, marketers can target content to specific audiences based on what they do and where their interests lie, rather than on where they happen to be located. This makes the sessions more relevant, and it also lets companies reach more prospects and customers more often.

Done well, webinars can help companies distinguish themselves and their brand in a crowded marketplace. That, in turn, will help deliver more qualified leads to the sales team; improve customer loyalty and up-sell opportunities; and shorten sales cycles and drive revenues. Webinars help accelerate the pipeline, by giving companies meaningful reasons to target and interact with prospects. Webinars also qualify leads by giving sales people information not just on whether prospects attended specific events, but also on how engaged they were during the session. Webinars close business, by making it easy to follow up with webinar participants with the specific, targeted information needed to seal the deal.

Some Web conferencing services even integrate with leading CRM systems, such as salesforce.com. This allows sales people to track webcast registration, attendance, and follow up from within the business tool they already use every day, which helps ensure leads are converted into sales. For instance, sales people can see whether a prospect or client has responded to an invitation to a webinar with a yes or no and can then follow up accordingly. They can also track how many events contacts have attended; on what topics; and whether they participated in the dialogue by answering polling questions or asking questions of their own. That gives sales people more information and context when following up with those participants.

Collaboration within the Enterprise

For as long as companies have been doing business, they have been looking for ways to increase and improve collaboration. That's especially true in a knowledge economy in which information, ideas, and execution are what define successful companies. These days, companies are also looking for ways to enable collaboration not only among local employees, but between employees, business partners, and customers on a global scale. Executives are realizing that they can gain value from working with partners and clients to solve problems, create new products and services, and generate deeper business relationships, which in turn help improve customer service and brand loyalty while boosting the bottom line.

But getting employees to share their knowledge and expertise is a challenge, especially when people are spread out across geographies, time zones, and cultures. That's where Web conferencing can help. By making it easy for colleagues to meet online and share and collaborate on documents and presentations, Web conferencing adds value to everything from weekly status meetings to project work sessions to strategic planning.

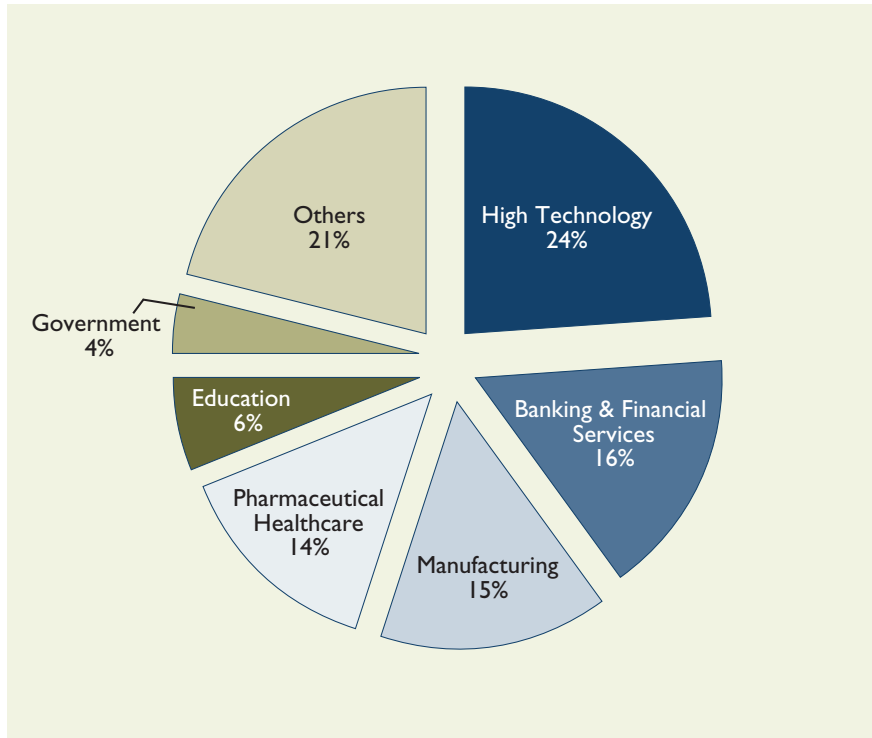
The next generation of workers is bringing a different approach to sharing expertise in the workplace. Social networking and other collaboration applications encourage and reward information sharing and collaboration in a way not seen before; they make people more inclined to collaborate in the first place. Smart companies recognize that right now, they have a rare opportunity to leverage technology to take advantage of a cultural shift, one that is changing how people actually work.

Businesses can gain a competitive edge, if they take advantage of this shift, by giving all employees access to technology that supports and encourages not just communication, but true collaboration; and by changing their policies and practices to encourage, support, and reward teamwork over individual success. They can even integrate Web conferencing with social media sites like Facebook and Twitter to bolster interaction and keep the connections going before, during, and after a given event.

Embracing new collaboration strategies and deploying next-generation collaboration tools like Web conferencing, has measurable business benefits. Eighty-six percent of enterprises that have deployed advanced communications and

collaboration technologies say the tools have improved innovation within the organization, according to Frost & Sullivan research. Companies that deploy the technology now will see an advantage from using the tools two-to-five years ahead of the competition. Furthermore, two-thirds of C-level respondents in a recent Frost & Sullivan study say the tools technologies allow for faster access to people and information, which they view as critical to business success in the 21st Century.

Figure 2: Web Conference Usage by Industry



BUSINESS BENEFITS: STANDARDIZING ON A SINGLE PLATFORM MAKES SENSE

Historically, companies have deployed a wide array of Web conferencing services and applications within the organization. This is not the result of a conscious decision, but, rather, that most Web conferencing has been purchased by business groups or individual users who then expense the cost as part of a broader business group budget rather than through IT.

As IT takes ownership of advanced communications and collaboration applications for the entire organization, they can deliver significant cost and usability benefits to the company and its employees. By deploying a single service to all Web conferencing users, companies can take advantage of bulk-rate pricing and minimize maintenance and support costs. At the same time, if everyone is using the same technology, with familiar features and a common interface, employees are better able to leverage the

technology throughout the business—with colleagues in other departments and job roles, and for global uses such as training and marketing. IT can use it for training and support; HR can use it for company-wide meetings, training, and education; marketing can use it to reach new prospects and build brand; while sales can use it for qualifying leads, conducting product demos, and closing deals.

Integrating Web Conferencing with Other Applications is Key

- Customer Relationship Management
- Marketing Automation
- Enterprise Resource Planning
- Social Media
- Unified Communications

CONCLUSION

As companies continue to enable and support an increasingly virtual workplace, they must find ways to encourage their employees to cost-effectively communicate and collaborate across boundaries and time zones. Web conferencing can be an excellent tool for training disparate employees, partners, and customers; for marketing to prospects and customers regardless of where they are located, with sessions that are targeted to their specific interests and needs; and for enabling collaboration among employees, whether they work in an office, at home, or on the road.

As companies consider embracing Web conferencing throughout the organization, they should work with a single provider for internal and external use cases in order to leverage cost efficiencies and maximize usage.



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