

# Guide to Increasing Video Conferencing Usage

*5 Easy Steps to Create Awareness, Increase Utilization and Expedite Adoption of Video Conferencing Throughout your Company*

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## Overview

You've just purchased and installed a video conferencing system (or two or more). Now the real challenge begins – getting your company to actually use the technology. What is the best way to launch and promote video conferencing internally? Which departments or groups should you be targeting? What are the keys to maximizing usage levels? What are the major concerns surrounding video conferencing, and how do you overcome them? This document will outline five easy steps to create awareness, increase utilization and expedite adoption of video conferencing throughout your company.

## The Need for Video Conferencing

Visual communication plays a major role in the overall effectiveness of communication by providing visual, non-verbal cues that aid in comprehension. Nodding heads, raised eyebrows, crossed arms and eye contact (or lack of) all help to gauge understanding, agreement and integrity.

In fact, researchers have focused studies on the role of verbal and non-verbal communications. While some reports indicate that nearly 80 percent of communication is non-verbal, the most famous study on this subject comes from Dr. Albert Mehrabian. In his “7%-38%-55% rule”, he concludes that:

- 7 percent of communication comes from spoken words
- 38 percent from the tone of the voice
- 55 percent from body language

In other words, over 50 percent of communications is “seen”. To optimize understanding and comprehension, a visual element should be included in communications.

A recent report from Leapfrog Innovators further supports this research by indicating that our knowledge retention is:

- 10 percent when we read
- 20 percent when we only “hear”
- 30 percent when we only “see”
- 50 percent when we “see and hear”
- 80 percent when we “experience”

Some studies show an even greater increase in learning when interactive audio and visual communication takes place. One such report from the University of Wisconsin indicated that face-to-face meetings show a 200 percent increase in learning.

So, clearly, the need for a rich, visual experience is needed to facilitate the creation of a collaborative environment where people and organizations work together to achieving common goals through knowledge sharing, learning and building consensus.

Video conferencing is one of the solutions that can make this vision of collaboration a result today. Now, how do you get this message across to the rest of the company?



## Defining Video Adoption and Usage Levels

Companies that use video conferencing today vary greatly in terms of size, industry, geographical location. They also vary in terms of their adoption and usage levels of video conferencing. Some companies have embraced video as a key part of their corporate collaborative culture. Others, however, may have systems installed but only occasionally used. Still others may be new to video conferencing and are looking for strategies and processes to launch video conferencing internally.

For the purposes of this paper, we will define the adoption and usage levels as follows in the chart below. Recommended “start” steps are also provided to tailor the approaches you should take to maximize adoption within your company. Keep in mind, however, that any of these steps and recommendations can be used regardless of category level to optimize video awareness and utilization.

Category Level	Usage Level	Description	Recommended Start Point
New User	Low	This company is just starting video conferencing implementation. The company may have already decided on a vendor and platform but is seeking guidance to optimize performance and to create initial awareness of video conferencing benefits.	Step 1
Innovators	Low to Medium	This company has installed the latest video systems (including HD monitors) at room and desktop levels. The company is eager to create a culture of collaboration but is unsure how to start.	Step 1
Legacy Installs	Low to Medium	This company has video installed in multiple locations. The company has a combination of new systems (HD) plus several older (SD) systems. The outdated systems negatively impact the user experience resulting in lower-than-expected usage levels.	Step 2
Heavy Users	Medium to High	This company uses video conferencing in many, of not all, aspects of communication. Functional lines of business see tangible benefits from workflow process improvements. Although this company has adopted video conferencing throughout the company, there are still areas of potential improvement.	Step 4

## Step 1: Identify Video Conferencing Champions

The first step when building a company-wide video collaboration culture is to identify a champion (or better yet, champions) within the organization.

The champion does not have to be an IT or video conferencing specialist. Rather, this person or group or people, can be in management, HR, operations or any group within the company. The only requirement is that they be the evangelizers and promoters of the new technology. They must also “walk the walk and talk the talk” to add credibility to their champion roles – using video conferencing not just for group meetings but also for day-to-day activities. They must understand the benefits ideally through usage (see Step 4 for usage examples). It helps to find champions in different functional groups, geographical locations and at different employee levels to broaden reach throughout the company.



***Find video conferencing champions, and adoption/utilization will increase.***

## Step 2: Make Sure Your Network, Systems and Rooms are Ready

This document assumes that you have checked your communications network for bandwidth, quality and other performance-related issues. If not, this should actually be Step 1. A network that lacks the 2MB typical bandwidth to support HD connectivity and content, for example, will often lead to disappointment. So, check your network first to ensure that it can handle the video conferencing traffic you will be generating.

If your system is a mix of older legacy products and newer systems, keep in mind that earlier generation video conferencing products simply do not provide the clarity or image quality required for effective business-critical visual communications. Blurry images, pixelized screens and difficult-to-read content limited video conferencing acceptance.



HD video, however, is expected to be a catalyst in video conferencing implementation. With better resolution, HD content sharing and bandwidth optimization technologies, companies are literally seeing the difference that HD brings to video communication. As stated by the industry analyst firm Frost and Sullivan, “HD will enable users to accept video conferencing, therefore increasing adoption and utilization.” So, consider the move to HD if you haven’t done so already. The video conferencing experience will be richer and more life-like.

Other network and system-related readiness areas include:

- **Scheduling Tools** – Ensure that a system is in place to easily schedule video conferences. Integration with applications such as MS Outlook calendar will simplify scheduling. Also, many companies only have video in certain rooms. If these video rooms are always booked for non-video meetings, usage will not increase.
- **Usage Instructions** – Provide clear and concise instructions for usage in the rooms. Don’t simply put the user guide in the room. Take time to create an easy-to-follow, step-by-step instruction sheet that can be followed by even the most non-technical user.

- **Support Contact List** – While it is okay to include a contact person for support, remember, the ultimate goal is to promote simplicity and usability. Therefore, never include a statement such as “Contact IT or the AV Group to Set Up System” – this implies difficulty and complexity.
- **Web Portal** – Provide an easy-to-access online location for training manuals, application briefs, usage videos and other sales and marketing tools. Champions especially will need these materials to promote the new technology.
- **Maintenance and Support** – Make sure your maintenance and support plans are up-to-date. If you create the need for video conferencing, there is nothing worse than equipment that is broken or needs repair. Equipment downtime should be minimized wherever possible.
- **Equipment Updates** – Are all your systems updated to the latest software or version numbers? Failure to do so can result in interoperability issues.

**Make sure your video conferencing network, systems and rooms are ready, and adoption/utilization will increase.**

### Step 3: Promote Your Video Conferencing System

Ever wonder why the latest movies always hold star-studded premiere nights? Or why a company promotes on large-scale events such as a World Cup or Super Bowl? Or why new technologies are unveiled at the industry’s top tradeshows? The answer is simple – they want to create awareness. The same holds true for your video conferencing system. How will people know that video conferencing is installed if they are not aware of it? Don’t bother with an email announcement or a flyer – they may create some interest but not at the level you desire.

So, hold a launch party. Invite key line of business personnel. Show live demonstrations. Give examples of how video can help them in their daily activities. Have actual users talk about their experiences. Have application briefs targeted to specific functional groups available as take-away literature. Position the new technology as a catalyst to improve their performance and to streamline operations. Share customer testimonials to add credibility. Provide a glimpse of future applications if such videos are available. Offer incentives to teams that embrace the new technology the fastest. The call-to-action of this launch event is to get employees excited to sign up for more information and training.

By the way, several companies use an “always on” video conferencing system in public places such as the cafeteria or break room. Since video is always on, it allows people to see their colleagues in a remote cafeteria location. This helps them experience first hand the usage and impact of video. Promote your video conferencing system, and your adoption and utilization will increase.



#### Step 4: Train Users on LOB Applications and Value (not Products)

Nearly everyone has a mobile phone today. You can make calls, surf the Internet, text or tweet with friends and colleagues or check emails anytime, anywhere.

Do mobile phone users really care about the technology behind the application? Some do, yes. But, for the majority, it is the application and value to the user – access to the information and resources at your fingertips. — that has caused the mobile phone to become ubiquitous on a global scale.



To achieve widespread adoption, video conferencing users must become aware of the business value of the product (and not necessarily become product experts). Training should not necessarily focus on “how” to use the systems but rather on “why” to use the systems. Remember, video conferencing has to be perceived as “easy-to-use”. Too much training on the actual operation of the product translates into apprehension. Emphasize the functional line of business applications detailed below. In fact, it would make sense to hold any training session with similar functional departments to create a more tailored or customized session. Highlight examples of best practices and video conferencing etiquette. Walk through ROI examples to show cost savings and productivity improvements. Bottom line, emphasize the “why” and usage will increase.

Finding process improvements in functional lines of business (LOBs such as Human Resources, Operations, Customer Service, Training, Sales & Marketing, R&D) can often mean the difference between a company’s success and failure. Reducing hiring time, shrinking a product’s time-to-market and maximizing a sales team’s product expertise, for example, can drive down costs, increase revenues and improve productivity. Key line of business metrics such as increased employee satisfaction, stronger customer relationships and reduced financial costs will follow. Employee productivity and work/life balance are improved. Customers and partners have closer integration with sales and support teams. Bottom line, the entire company will see an increase in shareholder value and a maximizing of revenue and profitability. This focus on line of business process improvements will enable video conferencing benefits beyond obvious travel savings to become apparent.

As far as work-life balance for employees is concerned, spending hours in transit on planes, trains, automobiles equates to productivity loss. Even more important, however, is the impact of travel on work-life balance. Watching a son’s baseball team play, attending a daughter’s piano recital, celebrating a birthday or anniversary – they all improve employee morale and build family ties. Just as in retail where the philosophy is to ensure a “happy” customer, those companies that focus on employees (and specifically work-life balance), will often be the most well-respected, most sought after and highest performing.



A quick glance at several lines of business shows the following video conferencing usage opportunities. This list does not represent all functional groups, but rather shows the typical lines of business within the majority of large Enterprise organizations. Help these LOBs understand the business value of video conferencing, and usage levels will increase.

- **CXO or Executive-Level** - For the CXO, video conferencing helps improve corporate communications, increase customer relationships and maximize shareholder value. Board meetings, company-wide messages, annual investment reporting, deal negotiations can all be completed using video without the need for expensive and time-consuming travel. The end result is a highly-efficient organization that is strongly positioned for success.

- **Corporate Training** – Distance learning provides the ability to extend training beyond an on-site classroom and into the remote offices and desktops of the students. Training remains interactive and visual to ensure maximum effectiveness. But, with video conferencing, time, costs and resource requirements are minimized. Furthermore, training sessions can be recorded for on-demand viewing when and where needed.
- **R&D/Engineering** – For product development organizations, video conferencing provides the ability to reduce product development cycles, enhance team communications and get products to market sooner. This results in improved productivity (collaborative design), increased revenue (sooner revenue generation) and increased customer satisfaction (validated product features).
- **Manufacturing** – Companies that use video conferencing in their manufacturing processes often see more efficient build processes and enhanced vendor management. Product inspections, returned material authorizations (RMAs), quality assurance activities, for example, can all be done remotely to eliminate cumbersome and time-consuming shipping of materials to/from manufacturing and headquarters locations.
- **Human Resources** – HR departments can use collaboration in all facets of HR policy administration – from the hiring process to training to employee communications. Instead of voice-only phone interviews, for example, remote video-based interviews can be held to simplify interview coordination, reduce hiring time and shrink associated interview travel costs.
- **Customer Service** – For customer service, video conferencing provides the ability to provide the highest level of service via visual collaboration resulting in quicker response times, face-to-face interaction and in-depth problem analysis/resolution. Remote interactive video conferencing kiosks, for example, can provide access to product experts or other remote personnel.
- **Sales and Marketing** – Collaboration solutions enable better tracking of sales opportunities, enhanced customer and vendor relationships, efficient project management functions and better alignment of sales and marketing goals and objectives.

***Train on video conferencing applications and business value, and adoption/utilization will increase.***

### Step 5: Track Your Progress

So, your company is now headed in the right direction. Video adoption and utilization levels are increasing (or are soon to be increasing). Don't rest on your laurels, however. Just as an athlete who wins an Olympic Gold Medal must continue a training regiment to maintain peak performance, you must do the same with your video conferencing installation. Check regularly to ensure that:

- **ROI and Cost Savings are Calculated** – As with utilization tracking above, touch base frequently with the various user groups and quantify the savings. Share this information regularly with management and your budget may increase in addition to your utilization.



- **Utilization is Tracked** – How do you know if you've taken the right steps to increase awareness and usage if you cannot track utilization? Make sure you have the processes and procedures in place to accurately calculate the minutes and hours of use.
- **Industry Trends and New Products are Understood** – Moore's Law has accurately predicted that the processing power on a silicon chip will double every 18 months. This means that video conferencing technologies will continually improve. Keep up-to-date on industry trends and products and you will be better prepared for the future.
- **Best Practices are Shared** – Meetings with internal champions or users to understand the pros and cons of the video conference experience will be key to maintaining and increasing usage levels. Provide feedback forms or solicit opinions – good and bad – on a regular basis. Development of an internal User Group will help facilitate these discussions.
- **Problems are Resolved** – In many customer installations today, usage levels increase within a couple of times of using the technology. If not, there could be number of reasons including those shown below. Focus on correcting these, and video adoption will increase.
  - Expectations were wrong
  - Equipment does not meet meeting requirements (e.g., difficult to use, poor quality)
  - Not enough front end training
- **Bandwidth is Optimized** – Bandwidth is king, and this is especially apparent in a video conferencing environment. Slow bandwidth can result in poor image quality, poor audio communications and worse, a poor user experience.
- **Systems are Current** – The majority of compatibility issues arise when products and software are not kept current.

**Track your video conferencing progress, and adoption/utilization will increase.**

## Conclusion

Increasing video conferencing adoption within a company is no easy task. But, with proper planning, you can create a culture of collaboration and gain the associated business, operational, and financial benefits that comes with visual communications.

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