

Look, hear!

Comms Business looks at low cost video conferencing solutions as well as desktop audio conferencing to see what products are selling well, what margins are available and to pick up some sales tips on how to make margin



Konftel 300

For many years, video conferencing meant an expensive solution was only available for the minority. The solution that was comprised of a large video monitor, one or more cameras and the video conference system itself.

Many observers feel that a quantum shift has happened, in the form of more viable replacements, which reflect emerging trends in user behaviour. HD desktop video has become the replacement for expensive video conference solutions and due to its price point and mobility is available to the masses.

Manufacturers and suppliers of conferencing solutions say that 2010 was a tipping point for video and that sales are very much on the increase.

In 2010 European business executives spent an average of 13 days out of the office through taking short-haul flights, the average travel time being around six hours. Delays are commonplace thanks to incidents like the ash cloud and torrid weather conditions. It seems it is the travelling business executive who is picking up the bill, spending unproductive hours travelling to and from the airport and sitting out delays with limited access to work tools and enduring absences from families. These facts were unearthed in a recent pan-European survey, carried out by Polycom, examining changing travel habits.

It is little surprise that 30 per cent of all executives would like to travel less in 2011 compared to 2010 and one-third agree that many of the meetings they attend could be

undertaken by video conference.

Statistics like this, coupled with concerns over costs, work/life balance and carbon footprint appear to have become fairly commonplace.

Key Findings: Impact on Business

- *Half (51%) of all short-haul domestic business flights taken by executives were for regular meetings.*
- *One-third (33%) of executives question whether the business gets the best value from their travel.*
- *One-third (33%) say that many meetings they attend could be conducted by video conference.*
- *Nearly half (45%) believe the business could save a lot of money by using video conferencing.*
- *Four in 10 (40%) reported late arrival for an average of 2.5 meetings for the year because of travel-related delays.*

Source: Polycom 2010/11

2010 also proved a tipping point for Manchester-based BCH Digital, especially with regards to usage. Managing Director Andrea Wilson-Brown commented, "Minutes used for conference calls increased six-fold from 2009 to 2010 and this doubled again on

the comparative figures for the first three months of 2011.

"In July this year BCH launched its enhanced conference solution, which they believe offers more control than a face-to-face meeting and is more inclusive and flexible than video conferencing.

"Conference calls are set up via the online control panel where caller types can be defined as Chairperson, Contributor or Listener and each type allocated its own access PIN. The Chairperson has full control as to how the call is conducted. Listeners can only listen in to the call, but by using push button options on the telephone keypad can request to speak during the call, which the Chair can choose to accept or reject via the online control panel. The Chair can also mute or unmute callers via the watch screen and during the call invite people into the conference simply by dialling their number (without them having to dial any access numbers).

"An invitation section has been created in the control panel, which allows the user to create contacts and assign DDIs and PIN numbers. The system will then automatically send out meeting requests via Microsoft outlook or other compatible email clients.

"Each conference call can have multiple DDIs, which allows for easier access for international calls. Conferences can also be recorded and are stored on line for download."