

→ Bridging distances and enhancing efficiency

Friday, 08 October 2010

Abhimanyu Gupta, Director, Actis Technologies

Telepresence picks up where video conferencing left off. Telepresence is real time, full-high-definition, immersible sound and vision. It is most importantly the feeling of being there when you're here. Clearly, telepresence systems are delivering the remote meeting experience, including audio-video quality, ease-of-use, and a realistic face-to-face environment. Whether used in business negotiations, candidate job interviews, sales calls, or team meetings, telepresence systems are providing business professionals the ability to reduce travel, while attending more meetings at the same time. Video conferencing has been around a while now, but has always lacked a realistic feel. Although costly at first, telepresence systems have successfully addressed the limitations of typical videoconferencing designs.



Abhimanyu Gupta
Director,
Actis Technologies

The telepresence solutions and video conferencing market is poised for strong growth. By 2014, the market is expected to reach US\$ 4.7 billion, according to analyst group Frost & Sullivan. Of that total, the Asia-Pacific region is expected to be a major market for telepresence, and will account for more than one-third of the total market, or US\$ 1.7 billion in revenue.

The key verticals that are driving the growth of the telepresence market include enterprise, IT, telecom, education, pharma, and finance. 3D telepresence helps businesses transform the quality of communication and collaboration, by providing 'same-room quality' interaction capabilities across multiple office locations. This enables cross-location meetings where all participants interact naturally with true eye contact and with extremely realistic 3D viewing.

Telepresence brings a sense of realism to virtual meetings, which are almost like being in the same room. Its features enable users to work productively, without experiencing communication fatigue. They can work for longer hours due to the natural feel of the solution. As a result, not only do organizations save on unnecessary travel costs, but also make the most of their senior level people. The introduction of higher quality products, dropping broadband prices, and the need to cut business travel costs are just some factors fueling telepresence. In order to do more with less, businesses are realizing that conferencing technology has improved products, and managed network services that are tailored specifically to enterprises' needs and challenges.

To be most effective, the telepresence system needs to be integrated with other communications applications, such as unified communications, for its interoperability with the telephone switchboard (PSTN/ VoIP), web collaboration, standard and legacy, videoconferencing rooms, PC-based video end points, email messaging systems, integration with the interactive whiteboard and document camera to share plain paper and 3D objects, and room viewing and room scheduling systems.

Other features include room resource management, which provides management of room resources (AV resources, remote system diagnostics, network activity logs, and event scheduling) irrespective of the geographical location of the room, from a central help desk. Making sure that room bookings are managed without conflict becomes easy with the room scheduling system. Bookings can be made with wall panels or even over the Internet directly from messaging systems.

Some of the key challenges faced by Indian players are the CapEx and OpEx costs like bandwidth, or acquisition costs, and the lack of knowledge on open standards and interoperability.

The latest trend-shaping telepresence is 3D technology. Higher resolution, and low bandwidth consumption video codecs are some of the other trends that have shaped the telepresence industry. The introduction of higher quality communication, dropping broadband prices, and the need to cut business travel costs, are also some factors fueling telepresence, which is surely here to stay and grow manifold.