



Video Value Series #3

Eliminating Meeting Tourists Through Video

This paper is the third in a series of three papers on the value of video in organizations. They are intended to provide a basis for analyzing roles and use cases for video from a value and ROI perspective. This paper focuses on the value of video to optimize meeting attendance through the elimination of meeting "tourists". To better understand this paper, reading the first paper "Selling Versus Task Collaboration and Video Value" and the second. " The Value of Middle Video" will enable understanding the overall concepts. While the first two papers were more focused on one on one and small meetings and the value of video on the outcomes, this paper focuses on larger meetings and the attendance and focus of those sessions.

A key potential benefit of using video for meetings may be the elimination of "meeting tourists". The concept of a meeting tourist is something that Kevin Kennedy, CEO of Avaya has noted. He observed that in most, if not all, of today's organizations the meeting has become a way of people spending time, without really being productive. A meeting tourist is someone who comes to a meeting, typically joining on an audio conference, and does not really participate in the meeting in a meaningful way. This person may be there to listen for issues, or just because they were invited and it seem a good use of time. The result is that in any reasonably large meeting there are at least one or two tourists, often more.

Often the tourist is in their office, doing email or other on-line activities and only partially listening and not actively contributing to the meeting. It is easy to recognize meetings that tourists attend, as they often have large lists of attendees and multiple presenters. If attendance is taken, they will identify themselves as having attended, but not speak again for the entire session.

If we assume that in an average organization of professionals, the average person spends 3 hours per day in some form of conference call, that is about 34% of working time assuming a 9 hour average day. if we assume that 50% of those calls are the large group form, then about 17% of the organizations time is spent in those sessions. If we further assume that 20% of the participants in any of those calls are really only there as tourists, then we have an investment or 3.4% of the total organizational resources in meeting tourism. Many mangers in organizations that I have talked to would argue this is on the low side, but it is actually a sufficiently large number to justify investment. If we assume that the average cost per head is \$175K for this level of employee (including benefits, overhead, and management), then the lost cost of meeting tourism per employee is \$7K on average. In many organizations the actual number may be double or triple that number.

A video conference has an interesting impact on video tourists. As they can now be seen and identified, the lack of contribution becomes obvious. The result is that the level of discomfort in attending without



contributing goes up dramatically. In organizations where video is routinely used and all participants are expected to use video, the number of non-contributing attendees has been noted to decrease significantly. For example, in one organization, a meeting that typically had 9 attendees on average without video dropped to an average of 6 attendees after it was made video mandatory. As the video client, network, and bridge were all available as standard capabilities to all of the employees, lack of technology cannot be seen as the factor, it is an elimination of tourism. The point is that video became mandatory, not an option.

To understand the ROI/payback for this capability, the cost must be established. If we assume that the average cost of the video unit is less than \$1K on average (for many it is the PC or tablet they already have), and that the cost for the meetings that would use video is 17% of the average employees time, the cost can be calculated. If it is assumed that the operational costs for video in volume can be defined as either \$/minute or per port on a system, the costs are fairly easy to calculate and then determine the payback. The quality of the video is not as important as seeing all of the attendees simultaneously.

Cloud Model

For unlimited use, a cloud based video meeting space can be acquired from companies like Vidtel for a price range of \$250-600 per month with standard definition/HD for 8 or 12 participants. Using the 17% average time in these types of meetings, one space should be good for supporting 6-7 employees (sequential use), resulting in a cost per month of \$35-75 per employee. If we assume the middle ground, the cost for the service is about \$50 per month per employee, or about \$600 per year. . As this is a cloud service, the cost of bandwidth needs to be added, resulting in potentially doubling the cost. The actual cost is doubled to \$1,200 to include bandwidth. When added to the \$1,000 start-up average costs, our cost to video enable all of the meetings that could eliminate tourists is about \$2,200 per employee. Using our \$7K annual savings, this results in a payback of less than 4 months with an ongoing cost of about \$100 per month per supported employee after the payback period. As the average savings is \$584 and the cost is \$100, the net future annual savings per employee is \$5,800 on average. While this may not result in an actual headcount reduction, the result should be increased productivity and results.

This solution is particularly well suited when the company has many employees teleworking or outside of major offices. As the video conference is in the cloud, these users traffic does not need to go in the headquarters location for this service.

In-House System

Similarly, an in-house video bridge or Media Server (MCU for the older crowd) can be a better answer. If most of the attendees oar in a major site and there is good inter-site WAN services, this may be a better alternative. It also has the advantage of security for organizations that are conscious of this type of internal communications going outside the firewalls. Pricing for internal conferencing facilities can be highly variable, but the advent of next generation software based units is rapidly driving pricing down. If

Assuming that the average port cost is \$1,000, the analysis is simple. As this port can support 6 or 7 users for the 17% use ratios discussed earlier, the cost per users is about \$170 for the core equipment. If it is assumed that over-provisioning is required to assure availability, this number can be doubled to \$340. There will be a requirement for some bandwidth, management and operations..This is calculated to cost about \$50 per month per supported employee (for 5,000 employees, this is \$ 300K per year). As in the cloud example, the ROI can be calculated as a payback of the \$1,340 plus the \$50 per month. Again, the payback is within 4 months, but the costs after that are about half of the cloud model, assuming the operational costs are the \$50 per month per employee.

Conclusions

Deploying a "mandatory" system for video conferencing using desktop video and enabling a significant number of meetings in an organization for the express goal of reducing meeting tourism is a viable project. With management support, a change in culture that makes meeting attendance focused to those having input or decision making will change the overall productivity in significant ways. The mere act of focusing in this area will reduce meeting tourism to a great degree. By adding tools now becoming available for both meeting annotation and video replay, it is very easy to discourage attendance unless required. If a topic comes up that someone not a t the meeting needs to see/hear, the replay capabilities of the latest generation of systems enables rapid identification of the index and the information.



The CIO and his team can take the lead in creating an organizational transformation that can result in significant organizational optimization and improvement. By partnering with senior management and Human Resources, the IT group can take a leadership role in a new area and demonstrate the value of technology and leadership.