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## Putting a TV Network in Your Network

Companies have been using video for years, but the demand is growing rapidly in this YouTube era. Supporting video will soon become IT's problem, and CIOs must be prepared.

By David F. Carr

**C**IOs AT SOME COMPANIES HAVE been responsible for supporting video broadcasts and conferences for years. But in the YouTube era, users and executives expect video to be far easier to create and more ubiquitous than ever before. Since specially equipped conference rooms can cater to a limited number of participants in a videoconference session, the better way to reach the mass market of employees is to act more like a TV broadcaster.

Streaming video on the intranet makes that possible, but it's rarely an initiative that comes from the IT organization. "It's not typical for a CIO to say, 'I've got all this bandwidth, so let's find a way to use it,'" says Ira Weinstein, an analyst at Wainhouse Research, a market research firm that specializes in video and rich media. Rather, the demand tends to come from a corporate communications department, or from top executives eager to see their smiling faces broadcast across the enterprise.

But supporting video will soon become IT's problem—and it will be a big problem if CIOs aren't prepared.

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## Training and Travel

At the Western Area Power Administration, the federal agency that manages the transmission of electricity generated by hydroelectric plants in the West, the rationale for video revolved more around training than corporate communications. It started in WAPA's Phoenix-based Desert Southwest Region, as a way to reach more employees more cheaply and cut down on travel costs within the five-state region, which covers Arizona, California, New Mexico, Nevada and Utah.

"Fully half of our staff members are out working the lines or at different substations, and they're not readily available to come into a training room," says Regional Information Officer Jim Potts, who is essentially a regional CIO. As a result, WAPA had to schedule multiple training sessions, and personnel could easily wind up spending a few days traveling to a meeting that lasted only a couple of hours. Now, in many cases, the agency will conduct a training session once in a conference room equipped with easy-to-use video equipment and publish the recording on its intranet for employees to view at their convenience.

The video capture and publishing system WAPA purchased from Accordent Technologies cost about \$100,000 to implement, and Potts expects it to save about \$3,000 per person for up to 135 people, or more than \$400,000 per year. "Everybody is impressed by our savings," he says.

After equipping several conference rooms with the requisite cameras, microphones and lighting, Potts' team used Accordent's capture-station appliance to simplify the process of making a video: Essentially, all someone has to do is press the "record" button. The system includes basic video-editing capabilities, sufficient to edit out pauses and interruptions, and it allows integration of other visual content such as slideshows.

When the resulting video is published, Accordent's distribution and management tools allow WAPA to track who has viewed it. Potts says that's important because, in many cases, it's essential to be able to document, for example, that all employees have taken part in the company's required diversity training.

In the past, WAPA tried to reduce travel expenses by equipping conference rooms with videoconferencing equipment, but the return on investment never materialized. "When we looked at how much was saved on travel, and how often the room was utilized, the ROI [return on investment] wasn't there," Potts says.

Rather than continuing to invest in that equipment, the agency decided to limit itself to using relatively simple desktop videoconferencing software.

WAPA thought videoconferencing would provide value, but it didn't—partly because people still tended to want to meet in person. On-demand access to video turned out to be more useful because it allowed employees to "attend" an event that otherwise would not have fit into their schedules.

## The Enterprise Video Spectrum

FOR AN OVERVIEW OF ENTERPRISE VIDEO, HERE are some descriptions from a Gartner report:

**Video streaming:** Non-real-time streaming broadcasts have become one of the most common and cost-effective applications of enterprise video for training, demonstrations and executive announcements.

**Webcasting:** Streaming of live events is less common within the enterprise, with market penetration at about 1 percent to 5 percent. It's typically used to reach a large, passive audience with an event such as a CEO's speech.

**Videoconferencing:** Most large organizations have some conference rooms equipped for videoconferencing, but they are often underutilized. This technology is useful for multisite events that involve a large number of participants and require high interactivity. Desktop videoconferencing can be an alternative for smaller group sessions.

**Telepresence:** This technology makes telecommunications as intimate as an in-person meeting. Telepresence uses multiple video screens to display participants who may be in different locations. The cost may be prohibitive for many organizations, but conference room rental services could make this technology more broadly available.

**Web conferencing:** This is a relatively lightweight solution for giving interactive presentations, and it can include video. About 75 percent of the market goes to hosted service providers such as WebEx (now part of Cisco), as opposed to technology that's implemented in-house.

**Personal/team collaboration:** As universal communications platforms and products mature, Web conferencing and desktop videoconferencing will be part of collaboration solutions that also include e-mail, instant messaging, calendar sharing and phone. —DFC

Source: The Gartner View on Enterprise Video, May 2007