

Empowering The Team Process

How Web Conferencing Has Fundamentally Changed The Way Teams Get Work Done

Web conferencing has been changing the way many people work for over a decade. While the technology has several applications - general business meetings, Web seminars, and on-line training to name a few - one that often is overlooked is the team meeting.

By nature, team meetings are collaborative affairs where a group of routine participants present data, introduce their ideas and perspectives, wrangle and reach consensus, and then often produce some sort of deliverable. Almost all teams are facing increased time pressure, heavier workloads, and tight operating cost constraints. As the globalized economy continues to evolve, the need to involve team members independently of their location is also increasing.

With all of the pressures being faced by teams, has the role of Web conferencing changed? What are the values that teams are realizing - and can they be quantified? To find out, Wainhouse Research conducted a number of interviews with individuals from a diverse set of organizations who all have one thing in common - they are members of teams that hold meetings using Web conferencing. While the traditional benefits (such as saving on travel costs) are once again mentioned, we were pleased to find a number of new values are being realized as well - many of which indicate a "maturation" in the role that Web conferencing plays to enable and catalyze the team meeting process.



We've come to find Web conferencing is really important for teamwork. It enhances everyday conversations.
- Healthcare Provider

We view Web conferencing as really more of "an enabler" for teams - it gives them more collaboration tools. We really have become reliant on it.
- Software Development

Web conferencing is an accepted way of working. We recently had some reliability issues with (our platform) and got a lot of pressure because teams were delayed - this proves Web conferencing has become an integral part of how they work.
- Consumer Goods Manufacturer

Look at the MasterCard "priceless" commercial: Doing a Web conference is priceless! We get so much accomplished. If I told any of my team members it was going away, they would cry.
- Healthcare Alliance



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Looking at information visually enables participants to come up to speed on an issue faster

Many topics lend themselves to visuals – organization charts, process plans, tables and graphs, photographs, an application's user interface. Visual materials also can better suit the working / perceptual styles of many knowledge workers. Adding the visual component also can increase the quality of materials that are prepared before a meeting.

Things are better understood, I get better input, and there's more involvement of a high value nature from participants, [than would be possible] meeting without Web conferencing.

– Healthcare Provider

Participant attitudes become more collaborative; there is no longer one person driving the meeting. Web conferencing fosters better input and participation.

– Software Development

Web conferencing makes team meetings more interactive.

– Consumer Goods Manufacturer

Our meetings are "gather and share." These are serious meetings – have all information ready to share – and everyone is expected to participate.

– Insurance Provider

Meetings are more efficient; more is accomplished in less time

Many users report the ability to actually shorten the length of their meetings by using Web conferencing. If people can spend less time in meetings, it can add up to quantifiable savings very quickly while accelerating schedules and deliverables. Participants are more inclined to join a meeting knowing it will be an efficient use of their time, and are more satisfied with the process.

It is easier to talk about something when you see it.

– Consumer Goods Manufacturer

Many people work on a visual basis. They completely understand (based on visuals) instead of verbally talking.

– Healthcare Alliance

One person builds a document and everyone can see it and point out that "that sentence doesn't make sense."

– Healthcare Alliance

When everyone is expected to show their materials, it raises the bar of the materials that everyone contributes. They come to the meeting more prepared.

– Insurance Provider

Meetings are more interactive; the presenter role becomes a facilitator role

Because visual materials can help participants assimilate facts and get up to speed faster, their ability to contribute and interact increases – which raises the quality of the meeting output. In some organizations, the gathering and use of visual information has raised the expectation that all team members should participate.

We would need four months to accomplish what we now can do in two months because it's quicker and everyone will be comfortable with the solution. We can make decisions immediately, get agreement faster, and it's done.

– Pharmaceutical Manufacturer.

It absolutely gets us through a meeting faster. In many instances we would have talked for hours - but by exchanging screens we are done within a half hour. It's very useful and value is added.

– Large Consulting Firm

Meetings are much more efficient - because you can do changes immediately - this results in shorter meetings.

– Consumer Goods Manufacturer

Where a conference call took 30 minutes, it now can be accomplished in less than ten.

– Healthcare Alliance

Meetings are more efficient & satisfying for those involved.

– Healthcare Provider

Some of the execs will come in, give a comment, and leave - they'll do it if they know the meeting will not take up a lot of their time.

- Software Development

Senior directors now join us via Web conferencing - we make concise, decisive decisions very quickly.

- Healthcare Alliance

We can tap very specific people with expertise to match the task at hand.

- Software Development

It is easier to get subject experts or senior management to participate

Experts and senior staff are more inclined to join a meeting if they believe the discussion can be held effectively and efficiently - which is exactly how Web conferencing can help. Those with situational knowledge or valued opinions can be added easily at any time to an in-session meeting. Not only does their involvement improve the quality of the decisions, but it can save an approval / revision cycle since they are already involved in the result .

The actual deliverable is revised in the meeting; eliminates the need for post-meeting review

Teams can update documents as a group - which eliminates the need to update and circulate materials after the meeting, and the confusion caused by emailing documents for review - which can add up to significant times savings. This value compounds in a global enterprise or when dealing with a global economy.

We used to manually update an Excel file and sent it out for everyone to update and review - (it was) really difficult to collaborate and keep everyone on the same page before. Now we actually work on the same page.

- Software Development

It's a lot easier than emailing back and forth, plus you don't have to take the time cleaning out email clutter.

- Professional Development

We are now more responsive - especially reducing the need to cycle documents for input and review.

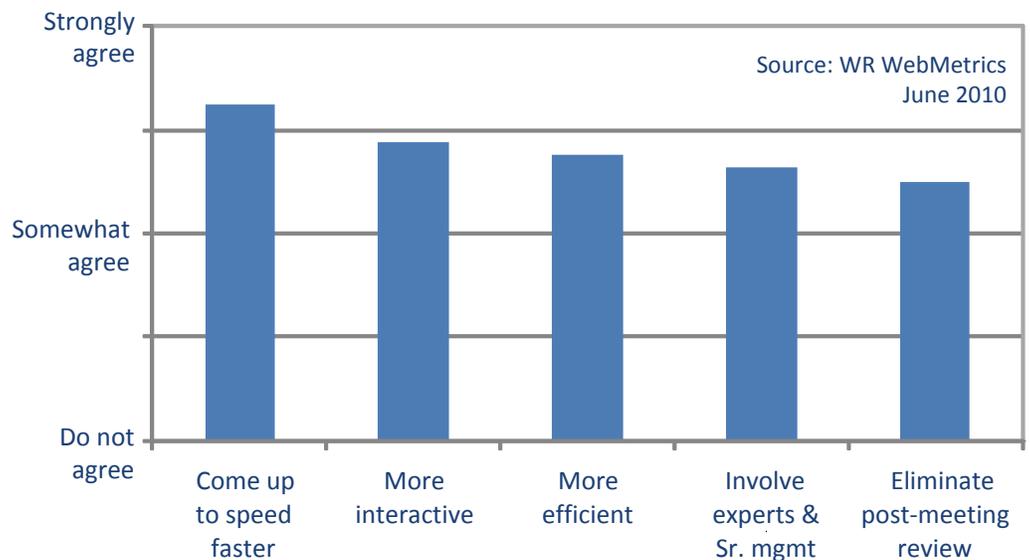
- Software Development

Web conferencing brings a big gain in efficiency. With teams around the world, we would need to wait for each work shift - 24 hours total. It saves lots of time to get everyone together at one point. Can save days a week.

- Software Development

Has Web conferencing changed how you conduct your meetings?

A recent survey of 164 Web conferencing users reinforces what we learned in the interviews. The respondents agree that the five factors revealed in the interviews show how Web conferencing has changed the way they conduct their meetings.



What to Look for in a Web Conferencing Solution For Teams

While one might think that teams generally require the same Web conferencing capabilities as everyday users, those we interviewed articulated a set of specific requirements as a priority for teaming. The ideal Web conferencing platform for teaming is:

- Reliable
- Easy to use
- Starts quickly
- Can share desktops and applications
- Works with existing applications and workflows (Outlook email / scheduling, etc).

Some also find recording helpful for time shifting (much like a DVR), and the ability to invite a colleague in on-the-fly .



About Wainhouse Research

Wainhouse Research, www.wainhouse.com, is an independent market research firm that focuses on critical issues in rich media communications, videoconferencing, teleconferencing, e-Learning, and streaming media. The company conducts multi-client and custom research studies, consults with end users on key implementation issues, publishes white papers and market statistics, and delivers public and private seminars as well as speaker presentations at industry group meetings. WR publishes a variety of reports that cover the all aspects of rich media conferencing, and the free newsletter, [The Wainhouse Research Bulletin](#). Web conferencing users are invited to [join the WebMetrics panel](#).

About Citrix Online

Citrix Online, a division of Citrix Systems, Inc., is a leading provider of easy-to-use, on-demand applications for Web conferencing and collaboration. Its award-winning services include GoToMeeting Corporate, a complete collaboration solution that satisfies all Web conferencing needs ranging from large Webinars to small online meetings. With GoToMeeting Corporate, organizations of any size can use GoToWebinar for do-it-yourself Web events and GoToMeeting for smaller, more interactive online meetings. GoToMeeting Corporate allows users to easily present, demonstrate and provide training online to anyone, anywhere in the world. GoToMeeting Corporate can make businesses of any size more productive by reducing travel time and costs and enhancing communication, ultimately leading to faster decision making and more efficient workers. For a free evaluation of GoToMeeting Corporate, please visit www.gotomeeting.com/s/WRReval.

Reliability - if it fails or has problems people will not use it. It needs to integrate into Outlook - just "fire off" the meeting link. Ease-of-use is also key.
– Software Development

The key point is [that] the tool must be easy to use. I have used different tools. Some are not friendly. In real life, if you want to go to meeting, you go into the room, open the door, that's it. Web conferencing should have the same ease of use. A simple link and click, I'm in the meeting.
– Pharmaceutical Manufacturer

One-click conferencing that takes microseconds to start.
– Software Development

Definitely desktop sharing. The other thing, the ability to annotate – is fabulous! When looking at an Excel sheet, 2,000 lines long, column B, row 199. Now we can highlight, blow up, and it's easy to see what one is referring to.
– Healthcare Alliance

Application sharing. That as well as audio being integrated, being able to talk through and see at same time.
– Professional Development

Compatibility / integration with Microsoft applications & workflow, reliability. How easy it is to use and deploy.
– Insurance Provider

Recording features are great; they help teams because if they are not there live, they can see a recording.
– Building Supplies Manufacturer