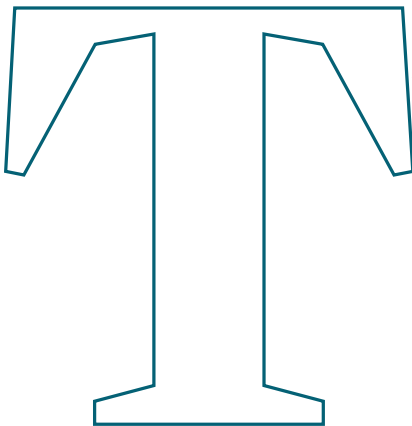


SMALL BUSINESSES ACHIEVE LARGER PRESENCE WITH ONLINE MEETINGS



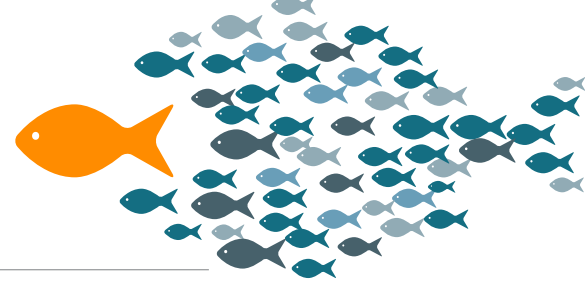
Technology is lowering many of the barriers that have traditionally prevented smaller businesses from competing effectively with larger companies, as well as disrupting them. Today, online meetings and instant access to expertise around the globe make it much easier for these ventures to make a bigger impact on the market, get products and services to customers and prospects more quickly, and build a larger-than-life reputation for quality and reliability.

In today's highly networked environment, an up-and-coming company can leverage a cloud infrastructure, create geographically dispersed networks of experts, and assemble worldwide supply chains to compete with the largest global companies.

But "looking" like a small company can still be a major impediment to winning business. Many prospective customers are attracted to the traits that are often found with a larger business, such as deep financial pockets, experience, and reputation. Perhaps one of the biggest advantages larger companies have over their smaller counterparts is an implied endorsement of their success in the market and an ability to deliver for their customers.

Overcoming the Face-to-Face Challenge

For hard-charging companies that have limited resources and lack a broad reputation in the market—typically smaller businesses—meetings are critical to



collaboration and cementing contracts for products and services. But hopping on a plane is not always feasible for smaller companies that are saddled with limited geographical reach.

As a result, they're hampered by slow decision making, the cost and disruption of travel, and the difficulty of scaling up to meet a new challenge.

A survey conducted in December 2015 by IDG Research Services on behalf of Cisco shows that the primary challenges of traveling for face-to-face meetings are the costs, potential delays, and impact on productivity.

The survey shows that nearly 40% of smaller companies consider travel delays, travel costs or impact to productivity to be challenges of face-to-face meetings with colleagues. The concern about productivity especially makes sense, given that workers at smaller ventures typically perform

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multiple functions. Heading out of the office for even a day or two can result in missed deadlines or projects piling up.

"No one will deny the importance of face-to-face meetings," says Susan Boyce, Director of Marketing at Cisco. "But travel time takes you away from getting things done, which can be all the more challenging for smaller companies that have a limited number of employees."

Achieving work and life balance is another challenge for more than one third of those surveyed. Traveling for the purpose of face-to-face meetings can take people away from their families, leisure activities and other personal endeavors.

The Virtual Alternative

Not surprisingly, small up-and-coming companies are increasingly turning to online meeting and video conferencing systems to overcome some of these business obstacles.

Network technologies make it possible to assemble interstate and global teams, strike distant partnerships and perform many other functions that were once only feasible for larger companies. In essence, smaller companies can now look like bigger companies with a greater reach, more effective collaboration, and be more responsive to customer needs.

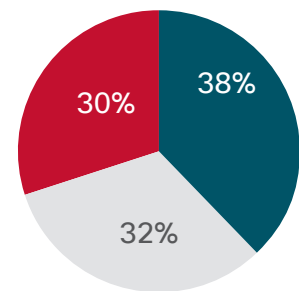
But these up-and-coming businesses in the IDG survey also face challenges when it comes to deploying and using these newer meeting technologies effectively. Without an adequate corporate IT infrastructure, taking full advantage of online meeting and video conferencing technology can sometimes be a challenge, they indicate.

The biggest hurdle by far, according to 51% of those surveyed, is achieving systems reliability. So it's apparent from the research that many professionals at smaller companies have had to deal with systems problems when trying to meet with colleagues online, which can lead to a lack of productivity and other frustrations.

And professionals at smaller companies appear to be struggling with

other, more personnel-oriented issues, such as scheduling which many indicate is akin to "herding cats."

Challenges Faced by the Up-And-Coming Businesses



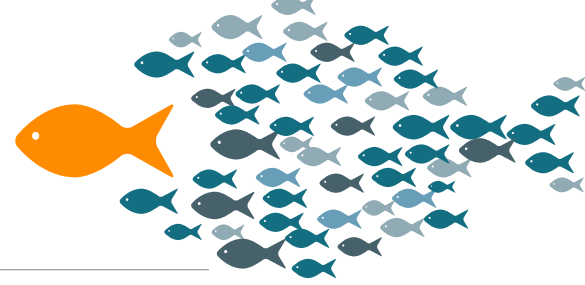
- Getting participants to join meetings on time
- Keeping participants engaged and attentive
- Getting participants to commit to the meeting

These personnel issues can be addressed by making meetings more compelling for people, so they feel inclined to attend on time and actually take part in the meetings and get something out of them. It might make sense to query workers about why they are late for meetings, why they don't participate, or why they blow them off entirely.

Much of this is common sense. But if management doesn't find out why people are not getting enough out of meetings or engaging in them, a lot of time is wasted waiting for people to join or even holding the meetings at all.

Benefits: Personal and Business

If done well, meetings can offer a number of compelling potential benefits for smaller businesses as well as the people who work for these companies, according to the research. And before deciding to invest in an online meeting and video conferencing solution, it's a good idea for company management to have an understanding of these benefits



Top Business Benefits of Meeting with People

51% Improving customer service

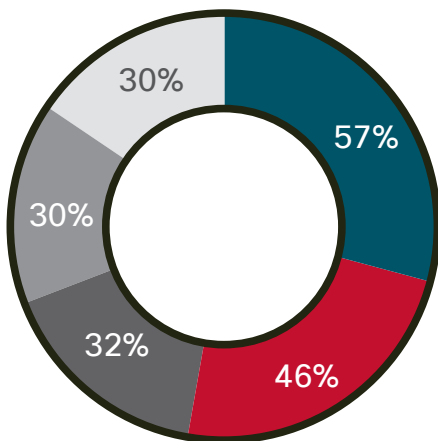
51% Increasing sales

46% Strengthening customer relationships

38% Growing the customer base

38% Increasing prospect and customer communications

Top Personal Benefits of Meeting with People



- Meetings create and develop more opportunities for individuals
- Meetings help people achieve important goals
- Meetings enable people to see company growth
- Give them a competitive edge
- Improve their personal productivity

and how they can be maximized via the latest solutions.

Small companies and startups on average use three different online meeting and video conferencing systems on a regular basis. But they typically only pay for one preferred solution. And of those companies that use two or more online meeting or video conferencing solutions, being compatible with different clients or colleagues is the top reason. Another reason is that certain solutions work better on some devices than others.

Regardless of how many solutions companies are using, it's clear that a growing number of businesses and individuals are reaping benefits from these services. And the trend will likely continue as more people work from remote office locations or home and client offices.

For example, with online meeting solutions, a professional who is working from home and has expertise in a particular subject area such as data science can quickly and easily share knowledge and any related documentation with someone working in headquarters or a regional office in another part of the country.

There are plenty of other examples of how online meeting and video conferencing solutions can deliver value for small companies and their employees.

CureSeq, Inc., is a biotechnology company that offers solutions to revolutionize next-generation sequencing in oncology by making it more affordable, offering faster time to results with a comprehensive solution.

"I'll have meetings with folks in Korea, Italy, and in China, as well as here in the U.S. Having the flexibility to do a WebEx and have the stability of the platform is really key," says Vikki Friedman, Global VP of Sales and Marketing at CureSeq.

Achieving a better work-life balance is another important benefit of online meetings. As one professional points

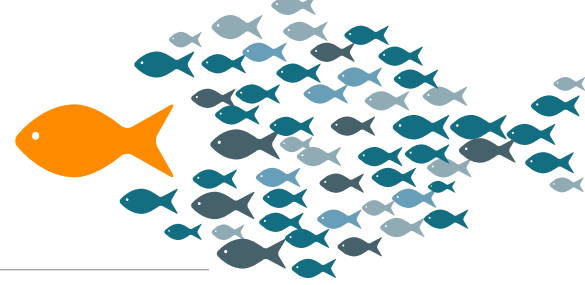
out, "when you think about trying to fit professional development into your schedule, and working out is important, and having dinner is important, and your commute home takes time, if you can attend the class [online] and it doesn't matter how you look; that's a big advantage to fitting into people's busy lives."

Finding the Right Solution

Professionals at emerging companies are most interested in using online meeting and video conferencing solutions to meet with one or two other people at a time. A majority of the companies surveyed (86%) cited this as a feature of these solutions that they would be most likely to use if available.

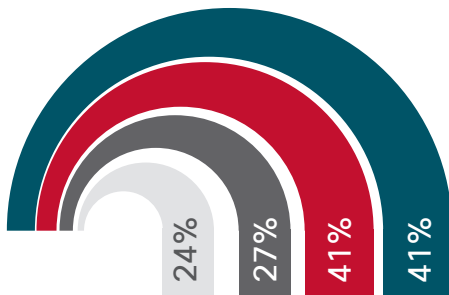
"Instead of picking up the phone and staring at a wall or window, these emerging companies seek the face-to-face experience enabled by videoconferencing, building the relationship with a client and

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understanding the body language that brings more understanding to the conversation,” Boyce says.

Much Lower on the List of Features Likely to be Used by Professionals at Emerging Companies



- The ability to meet with up to 100 people
- Group chat, video calls and virtual work rooms
- The ability to train and teach others online, including break out rooms
- Having instant, remote tech support

Businesses should look for certain capabilities when evaluating online meeting and video conferencing solutions and vendors. Here are some key features:

Flexibility: Given that so many businesses, even smaller ones, now have remote operations, the online conferencing solution should be able to provide global online meetings that can be joined via multiple video systems. Businesses and users should be able to add features and capabilities as needed, customize the features, and use the solution for a variety of functions such as training, Webinars, and other events. For example, the solution should allow users to have small online meetings with video conferencing and screen sharing, and then add specialized functionality for Webinars, training, or remote technical support.

Security: Given the rising number

of increasingly sophisticated threats, ensuring that the solution operates in a secure environment is also critical. How secure and reliable is the solution?

Ability to share and record: Can users share presentations or applications on their screen, sketch ideas on a virtual whiteboard and share recorded meetings with others?

Various screen options: Does the solution include video conferencing with full screen, multiple feed, and side-by-side with screen sharing available on desktop, tablet, and smartphone devices?

Mobile options: Given the rising number of mobile devices in the workplace, having the meeting solution available via mobile apps is vital. Can the solution be used optimally with mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets, as well as multiple mobile platforms?

Scalability: Companies should also consider how easily the solution scales to meet the increasing amount of users and whether it supports a global user base. As small companies grow, the online meeting solution must be able to support growth and provide additional features without compromising quality and reliability.

Vendor experience: When evaluating vendors that provide these types of solutions, companies should look at factors such as how experienced the vendor is in the communications and collaboration market, how it is regarded in the industry and among the research community, and what level of security and technical support the company provides.

“While basic features are available from several vendors, make sure your selection is easy to adopt, that screen sharing and video are consistently high quality, and that it securely shares your critical business information while minimizing adverse effects from network glitches,” Boyce says.

Driving Business Growth

How effectively a small company conducts meetings can be critical to the success of the business as well as the people who work at the organization. That’s especially true for a startup that is trying to make a name for itself in a highly competitive business environment.

Many companies now have a wealth of resources scattered throughout the country and globally. The ability to quickly and easily tap into that expertise and knowledge has become a critical factor—and a competitive necessity.

It’s clear that having the right online meetings and video conferencing solutions in place can provide significant value for professionals and their companies. By choosing the best possible solution to meet their needs, small companies can reduce costs, enhance productivity and collaboration, build relationships and ultimately provide better services to their customers that drive business growth.

Companies should also consider how easily the solution scales to meet the increasing amount of users and whether it supports a global user base.

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