



Managed Services for More Efficient Video Conferencing



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- Use of video conferencing and AV technology has become mainstream
- Organizations face cost and management challenges as use grows
- A managed service can help control costs and improve service

CIO INSIGHT
Executive Brief

The impact of video conferencing and audio visual (AV) technologies is truly transforming organizations. As the use of these solutions becomes more mainstream, they increasingly play a more critical role in business. As a result, many organizations are looking for more efficient ways to manage and operate these systems.

However, the traditional approach of buying and managing one's own solution and managing that solution is falling out of favor due to cost, staffing and quality of service issues. This is causing many organizations to use managed services to meet their video conferencing and AV needs. Managed services provide levels of efficiency and service that are required in business today.

This use of such services for video conferencing and AV technology was the topic of a recent Web seminar titled: *Managed Services Provide More Effective & Efficient Video Conferencing & AV Solutions*.

The Case for Managed Services

At the heart of the seminar's presentation was a discussion of the growing expectations when it comes to the use of video conferencing and AV technologies and how meeting those expectations can be done more effectively when using a managed service.

"We're moving to a second phase with video conferencing and AV



technology," said speaker Aaron Goldberg, CEO of the consulting firm Content4IT. He noted that use of these solutions has become very common and there is little tolerance for dealing with technical issues.

He embellished on this latter point, noting that given the key role these technologies are playing in business operations, organizations simply cannot afford to wait for problems to be fixed.

One example Goldberg cited related to internal use of these technologies. If a law firm gathers 10 top lawyers to work a brief, it cannot have a half hour of downtime getting people online and systems to work. "They would lose those billable hours," he said.

Another example of the unacceptability of technical issues focused on the growing use of these technologies when working with key customers or business partners. Meetings with external attendees are a

showcase for organizations. "So there is a demand for successful meetings," Goldberg said. "Spending 15 to 20 minutes resolving technical problems reflects poorly on the company."

DIY Challenges Abound

For years, many organizations have taken a do-it-yourself (DIY) approach to video conferencing and AV solutions. Now, as use of these technologies changes to keep pace with new business requirements, many organizations find that the costs and management of such solutions have gotten out of control.

Several issues contribute to the challenges of the DIY approach.

To start, improved connectivity services and the ability to link remote offices via the Internet have allowed organizations to be more geographically dispersed. With this type of organizational structure,

video conferencing and AV services are critical. Unfortunately, from a DIY perspective, technical expertise is required in every location. For many organizations, this is simply not an option. There may be many locations with no IT staff. And in small offices with an IT staff, the staff members will likely be busy managing other aspects of the operations at that site.

Another issue is that business today is 24x7. The global nature of many businesses is aided through the use of video conferencing and AV technologies. But with regards to a DIY approach, this means IT staff must be available at all hours in all sites if problems arise. Again, this is simply not practical for many companies.

There is also an expertise issue to consider. The solutions often have proprietary administrative systems for configuring and managing the equipment. Many IT staffers do not have the necessary skills to work with this equipment. To bring this expertise in-house would incur recruiting costs, hiring additional staff and constant training as the equipment evolves over time. For many companies, IT budgets

are still tight and hiring dedicated staff for these efforts is not practical.

Finally, there is the on-call aspect of managing a DIY approach. IT systems supporting email, collaboration and file sharing are used all the time. Video conferencing needs can be highly unpredictable which makes it hard to allocate appropriate human resources in a timely manner. It also introduces a highly unpredictable cost factor into the equation.

As organizations scale-up their use of video conferencing and AV technologies, all of these issues are compounded. This is leading many organizations to consider a managed service approach. Companies can avoid CAPEX costs by offloading systems management and leveraging a provider's expertise thereby complementing their own IT staff by offering 24x7 service.

The Case for a Managed Service

The changing nature of business today, along with the increased importance of video conferencing and AV technologies in conducting

business, is driving companies to a managed service approach.

In the Web seminar, Goldberg noted that the expected explosive use of video conferencing and AV technologies makes the managed service approach even more necessary. He cited research by consultancy Ovum that predicts a 20 percent increase in large scale deployments of this technology through 2016. Another indicator of the growth came from Wainhouse Research, which predicts that more than 80,000 video conferencing endpoints will be delivered per quarter.

With such growth, IT departments do not have the resources to manage the large number of devices. Nor do they have the time (or expertise in some cases) to deal with the multiple products that go into a solution. Beyond working with the required video conferencing CODEC, a complete solution must tightly integrate and manage a display, microphone system, sound system and control system.

Another point to consider is that while video conferencing technology is not necessarily overly complex, there is usually a lack of regular interaction with the systems. So even if IT staff is available to address a problem, they may not remember menu trees and shortcuts in the equipment's administration system to quickly resolve problems.

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Genero as Your Technology Partner

With Aaron Goldberg detailing the video conferencing and AV challenges organizations face today and the benefits of using a managed service, the Web seminar then shifted to a discussion of a specific offering.

Rob Gilfillan, President of Genero, led this part of the discussion. He noted that to address the issues Goldberg raised, organizations need a managed service partner that offers several key characteristics and features. His recommendations:

A good managed service is both reactive and proactive. He said to look for a provider that offers 24 hour live support and on-site technical support, when needed. A very desirable feature is some form of service ticket tracking

so an IT manager can see the progress being made to resolve any problems.

Go beyond just reacting to problems and look for a provider that is proactive. Some providers offer routine remote monitoring and systems testing. This can help identify potential problems before they cause a disruption.

Get a service that offers plenty of reporting. There is a constant need for detailed information about system performance and usage. Such information can help organizations better manage costs, aid in planning for extra capacity and ensure that required service levels are being met.

From an IT department perspective, Gilfillan noted that a managed service for video conferencing and AV reduces the strain on IT resources by offering

round-the-clock support and experts that can quickly resolve problems related to these technologies.

He then discussed Genero's managed service solution for video conferencing and AV. The service, called Constant Connect, is a remote managed service that assures high-availability room readiness for high-profile conferencing and meeting rooms in large organizations. The service gives organizations an analytics dashboard, which tracks performance and analyzes data to maximize return on investment (ROI) when using these technologies.

Gilfillan noted that Genero services are being used in a variety of industries including legal, healthcare, manufacturing and others. And the company has more than 1,000 customers in North American and worldwide.



To view the entire web seminar on-demand, visit:

<http://www.eseminarslive.com/c/a/Web-Conferencing/Genero113012/>

For more information about Genero and its managed service for video conferencing and AV, visit:

<http://cenero.com/> ■