



HD Video Communications Special Report

Top 10 Questions to Ask Before Purchasing Video Conferencing

It's no secret that today's smart businesses are looking for ways to improve productivity and efficiency, making the most of the resources they have. In theory, video conferencing has always offered this promise. Video communication has long pledged to greatly enhance conference call effectiveness, even reducing the need for travel when a video chat could take its place.

Unfortunately, video conferencing has fallen short on this promise for a long time. Shaky quality has led to frustration — offering more distraction than enhanced communication. And images have been too fuzzy to satisfy those who use their powers of observation to ascertain how a meeting is going. While High Definition has fixed these problems, it hasn't been accessible to any but those companies with superior infrastructure and large technology budgets.

Thankfully, times have changed. High Definition is now not only accessible — it can be attained for what standard SD videoconferencing systems used to cost. This means that for minimal investment, any business can benefit from crystal clear picture, perfect sound, and even the ability to share multimedia presentations with ease — all at 10X the quality of legacy systems.

But before you purchase a new video communications system, it helps to think through a few key points. Below are the top 10 questions we've been asked by those doing their research on today's video conferencing solutions.

1. How will we use video communications?

The applications for video communication are endless — especially since these days, 9 out of 10 people don't work at corporate headquarters. HD video conferencing is for those who are looking for a life-like solution that encourages natural interaction, or businesses that need to easily connect a PC or use a white board that everyone can see clearly. Some may be looking for one-on-one solutions whereas others may need to interact with a large group. Different solutions are available for different needs, all which offer a crystal clear "in person" meeting that is reliable and simple to use.

2. How complicated is the technology? And how does it fit with what we already have?

The good news is that HD technology is more common than SD these days — just visit your local electronics store if you don't believe us. But if you plan to interact with legacy systems, make sure that you invest only in standards-compatible systems — those that work with both HD and SD. Solutions such as those from LifeSize can work with SD systems, but can also achieve true HD video quality with less than 1MB of bandwidth — in other words, you can benefit from an HD video communications system on a public Internet. They can also run on any network, so there's no need to purchase any additional lines or equipment.



3. How much does it cost?

HD video conferencing systems vary widely in cost — from \$8-12K for everything to tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars per room. As well, some video conferencing systems require additional features, such as their own bandwidth, special cameras and management systems, or charge a monthly fee and additional per-call costs. Make sure that while researching a system, you uncover the total cost of ownership — not just the initial investment.

With LifeSize, you pay for the equipment needed to make a call — a codec, phone , and camera. Our systems plug into any existing network with any HDTV, so no additional costs are incurred. And you'll find that all of our systems are surprisingly affordable.

4. Is it worth the investment?

ROI is a big topic these days — and rightfully so. Be sure to work with your provider to determine the best way to prove the return on your video communications investment. Many companies find that they reduce travel to meetings, saving both valuable time and money on a regular basis, and increasing overall productivity.

Because LifeSize systems provide the highest quality at the lowest bandwidth, as well as an affordable price, return on investment is very easy to prove with our systems. To read more about LifeSize client success stories, visit http://www.lifesize.com/solutions/case_studies.

5. How important is quality? And how do I know I'm getting the best?

Video conferencing equipment only works if people want to use it. Research has shown that if picture and sound quality isn't there, frustration will lead to abandonment or the need for more travel to face-to-face meetings. Systems that run on lower bandwidth produce jerky, blurry images that are actually more distracting than a regular phone call. So before you buy, be sure to test your system on multiple levels of bandwidth to determine if the quality is up to your standards.

LifeSize manufactures only HD quality products, guaranteeing users the most realistic video experience on the market today. So be sure to compare any system you consider with LifeSize as part of your evaluation process.

6. Is it difficult to set up videoconference equipment? How about making a call?

Implementing a new technology system and learning how to use it is rarely easy. And in many cases, videoconferencing is no exception. But there are some extremely simple plug-and-play solutions out there, such as those offered by LifeSize. Before purchasing a system, have a sales rep give you a demo on both setting up and using it in the store. Unless you plan on paying for installation, insist on a simple setup and make sure that it will take no more than a few minutes to launch.

When it comes to placing your first videoconference call, the task shouldn't be any more complex than making a phone call — simply enter the IP address of your destination (or select it from your address book) and connect. LifeSize solutions also include intuitive, simple to use remotes and color-coded menus for trouble-free navigation.

7. Are there additional benefits or features that come with videoconferencing?

Whether connecting to your own team or another company, one great benefit of video conferencing is the ability to share presentations and multimedia instantly with colleagues across the world. Before purchasing a system, research its flexibility in sharing various file types. Also ensure that multimedia sharing is a separate high-quality stream and does not take the place of a participant, so everyone can view every file with ease. Finally, make sure that file sharing happens in HD, and is simple to do. And if you plan to connect with another company or system, it's crucial that your solution is standards-compatible.

8. How many different people can be on one call?

Depending on how your video communication system will be used, you may require multiple users to be on each call at once. Some systems may only support point-to-point (one on one) calls on their own, and require additional hardware and investment for multipoint calls. LifeSize is on the opposite end of the spectrum, supporting up to 6-way multipoint without extra hardware. If you are interested in replacing team or even company meetings at an affordable price, finding a video conferencing system that does not require additional hardware will give you the most "bang for your buck" in travel savings.

9. Who in my organization could benefit from video conferencing?

Anyone whose role requires in-person meetings and effective communication could see real value in video conferencing. The benefits grow for those who share presentations, three-dimensional objects (think product packages or circuit boards), or draw concepts on a white board for feedback, as long as video quality is high enough. Reducing travel, increasing productivity, saving time and money and "going green" are just a few of the benefits our clients realize through the use of HD video conferencing.

Executives and their teams, professors and their students, medical practitioners and their patients, and service providers and their clients have already been benefiting from video communications for years. Video is now truly for anyone, anywhere, and quality has never been better.

10. How do I get started?

If you think your organization could benefit from better communication, we at LifeSize believe you've only seen the tip of the iceberg. Evaluate the variety of High Definition products and solutions that could suit your needs. And when you are ready for a demo that will change the way you view video communications, call LifeSize.

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