

Videoconferencing: Be There Without Going There

Ever wish you could be in two places at once? You can with videoconferencing.

"Videoconferencing is the use of communication technologies to allow people at two or more sites to see and hear one another while being in different locations," says J. Scott Christianson, owner of Kaleidoscope Videoconferencing.

The technology also allows the sharing of computer applications — PowerPoint presentations, document sharing, file transfer, etc. At its most sophisticated, it provides transmission of full-motion, high-definition video images and high-quality audio between multiple locations.

"In short," Christianson says, "videoconferencing allows you to 'be there without going there.'"

The benefits of videoconferencing include reduced travel costs and increased staff safety, time savings, greater flexibility, improved access to clients, more convenient employee recruitment and increased collaboration.

Christianson explains how the technology works.

"The video and audio from one site is encoded and sent over a digital network — typically, ISDN lines or the Internet network — to another site, where it is decoded back into audio and video and displayed," he says. "The same thing happens in the other direction simultaneously, so you end up with a two-way communications channel. When there are just two sites in a videoconference, we call that a point-to-point call. When there are more than two, it is referred to as a multipoint conference.

"In the past three years there have been several technological breakthroughs in the protocols [technical standards] used for videoconferencing," Christianson says. "These protocols have allowed for much more efficient use of bandwidth, and much higher quality video and audio. The H.264 standard has effectively dou-

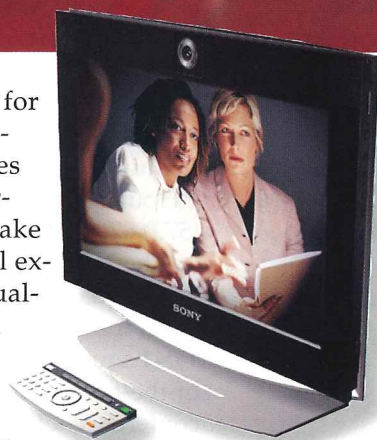


bled the video quality for videoconferencing systems. There are features in today's videoconferencing systems that make it a much more natural experience. The audio quality is such that the full spectrum of sound can be transmitted, making it sound like the other person is in the same room. All of the systems that we offer now have the ability to send the image of a PC screen or a document while simultaneously sending an image of the presenter. It makes for a much more natural experience."

Controls have also been simplified, he adds, so that the user just uses a handheld remote control to make calls and operate the cameras.

If all you need is a basic videoconferencing package, you might like the Sony PCS-TL30.

"Providing an all-in-one conferencing package, this new system features



a unique pan-tilt-zoom camera embedded in an attractive 20-inch wide LCD display that doubles as a PC monitor," Christianson says.

If you want all the bells and whistles, you can get a system integrated into your home theater or corporate boardroom with plasma

screens, projectors and the like.

Kaleidoscope Videoconferencing sells and installs videoconferencing systems and is the only certified dealer in Mid-Missouri for Tandberg, Polycom and Sony videoconferencing equipment. The business also has a rental facility at Doctors Park.

"We offer everything to make sure that videoconferencing becomes a key tool for communication and increasing productivity," Christianson says. ■

— ANITA NEAL HARRISON
for *INSIDE COLUMBIA*