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Driving Videoconferencing Usage to Maximize ROI
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The cost benefits of videoconferencing can be significant, as the technology allows employees to cut travel and become more productive at the same time. Those savings are never more important than during an economic downturn, and smart companies today are deploying videoconferencing technology in order to leverage the benefits. For some organizations that means adding to and upgrading an existing videoconferencing infrastructure; for others, it means deploying the technology for the first time. Either way, managers expect the investment to have a positive impact on the bottom line.

But the only way to get maximum value out of videoconferencing systems is to *use* them. Although today's technology is easier to use than ever before, companies must make sure their employees know how to do so, and then actually put theory into practice every day. To get the best return on their videoconferencing investments, managers must make videoconferencing core to their communications and business processes.

To maximize the value of *your* videoconferencing initiatives in trying times, follow these tips:

- **Deploy videoconferencing solutions to everyone who needs them**. This includes workers in remote offices, who will benefit from smaller team systems, as well as home-based employees who might need an executive desktop system or even desktop videoconferencing software or services. Then deploy the necessary MCUs and gateways to ensure your employees can easily connect with partners and customers, too.

- **Train your employees on the technology**. Although today's videoconferencing is as easy to use as a TV remote control, not all your end users know that—and those that don't feel comfortable with new technology won't participate in meetings, let alone launch them, without being walked through the process at least once. Make sure they understand the various systems available to them, so they can use the best endpoint for a given situation.

- **Clarify proper etiquette and expectations for your company's videoconferences.** Once employees understand the nuts and bolts of how to use videoconferencing technology, they must feel comfortable in the meetings themselves. That means setting expectations for participation (no e-mailing/IMing/Facebooking during calls; proper dress code for home-based workers; etc.), as well as "rules of the road" for hosting and managing a productive virtual meeting.

- **Change corporate policies to prioritize videoconferencing.** Require employees to justify why they *can't* use a videoconference instead of an in-person meeting that requires travel. Also, make it standard operating procedure for audio conferences to be video-enabled quickly and easily. For instance, set it up so that when an employee schedules an audio conference call, a window pops up asking him if he'd like to video-enable the call for participants.

- **Set an example from the top down, including the executive team.** Managers should make it par for the course that the meetings they call are done via videoconference, and executives should ensure even all-employee meetings have a video component.

- **Track savings and gains**. If you can show your employees the hard-dollar value they're delivering to the company by using videoconferencing, they'll be more inclined to use it. In a recession, everyone is aware of the need to cut costs. Reinforce a clear message of savings: "This quarter we saved $20,000 by using videoconferencing"; "Last month, 15 employees got to stay home with their families instead of traveling to a meeting thanks to videoconferencing." Doing so will motivate people to use the technology even more.

Investing in videoconferencing is a smart move in a down economy. Take the necessary steps to ensure your money is spent as wisely as possible.