



# The Ultimate Buyer's Guide to Video Conferencing Solutions

Selecting the best video conferencing solution for your unique needs



# Introduction

Video conferencing usage growth has exploded in recent years and become a fundamental and vital tool for growing organizations that depend on reliable communication. Where there was once costly travel, conference calls emerged to speed up the conversation and help expedite decision-making. Flash forward 20 years, and employees are now working from home in greater numbers, mobile devices have become viable work machines and people are able to meet face to face over video with the click of a button. By 2021, video conferencing and other types of videos will represent 82% of all IP traffic.

With cloud video conferencing, you can be up and running in minutes, making HD video calls from your favorite devices from anywhere you can connect to the Internet. For the user, the human element of face-to-face communication provides a more natural experience, and for the administrator, deploying and managing a cloud solution is easier and more secure than ever before.

This guide is designed to provide you with the knowledge you need to search out and select the best video collaboration solution for your needs. We'll cover the four classic approaches to video conferencing, the features worth evaluating and the pitfalls to look out for.

# Evaluating Your Video Conferencing Needs

Before seeking out vendors and pricing options, the first step in any technology investment is to evaluate your own unique needs. The nice thing about a cloud solution is that as those needs change, you can easily scale up or down to meet them. To start, answer these 10 questions about your current requirements:

1. **How many locations do we need to connect?**
2. **Do we have remote or work-from-home employees?**
3. **How many total employees will use the service?**
4. **How many meeting rooms need to be video-enabled?**
5. **What types of devices does the solution need to support?**
  - Meeting room system
  - Mac®
  - PC
  - iOS mobile/tablet
  - Android™ mobile/tablet
  - Windows® mobile/tablet
6. **Are security and encryption important factors?**
7. **Do we want separate services for audio conferencing and screen sharing?**
8. **How will employees use the service?**
  - 1:1 conversations
  - Internal video calls/team meetings
  - External video calls/customer and vendor relationships
  - Large/all-hands meetings
9. **How technical is our user base? Is ease of use a key factor?**
10. **What are some must-have features for our video solution? (See [Features that Matter](#) for some ideas)**



# The Four Types of Video Conferencing Solutions

Video conferencing services come in many different flavors, but the majority fall into one of these four categories:

## 1. Traditional On-Premises Video Conferencing

Heavy on the hardware and hard on the wallet, traditional on-prem solutions are typically focused on meeting room hardware and require the most support from IT and outside integrators. Servers and meeting room systems need to be maintained and monitored for outages and upgrades throughout the life of the system.

## 2. Web Conferencing

Some web conferencing providers offer a video element to their web-based meeting room services. These types of solutions are usually best for a small group of presenters to share information with a larger audience. Think of it like an upgraded audio conference call that allows the speaker to share their presentation and their face, but video quality is often subpar.

## 3. Meet-Me Video Services

The “meet-me” solution, also known as reservationless conferencing, varies slightly from web conferencing in that it doesn’t require scheduling. The process for connecting to a meet-me video meeting is very similar to a web conference — dial in to a shared meeting space in the cloud and wait for the moderator to connect and start the call. It’s like a calling card for video.

## 4. Cloud Video Conferencing

### Business-Class Video Services

Cloud video conferencing is the easiest solution to deploy and use. The call experience is centered on a shared company directory so users connect by name instead of by dial string. Business-class solutions are typically higher in quality, more secure and, because there are no hefty hardware costs, more affordable than their on-prem counterparts. Think of it as the Swiss Army knife of video conferencing.

### Free Video Services

Most free services are built as consumer products. Either they are ad supported or they come with limited features like time limits or a max number of participant limits. The biggest downside to free services is the lack of security and service-level agreements. It gives you all the quality and support you would expect from a service that is free. As the saying goes, “If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.”

As video services differentiate themselves, you start to see the importance of matching your priorities to the solution set that best fits your needs. Some services offer a mix of web collaboration and content sharing but fail on multiway video conferencing. Others offer audio, video and web conferencing capabilities but lack enterprise-grade features that businesses look for, like purpose-built meeting room camera systems, recording and reporting.



# Beyond a Meetings Tool

If your only motive for video conferencing is to upgrade your meetings, then you're in for a wealth of unexpected bonus content. Here are a few departmental use cases you may not have thought of.

## HR and Training

From recruiting new team members to training and career development conversations, nothing is more important than face-to-face communication. HR teams can always benefit from the enhanced nonverbal communication that comes across over video conferencing.

Video interview and recruit candidates

Conduct virtual employee reviews

Create onboarding and training videos

## IT

Let's face it — IT departments are known for their interest in all things tech, so they're sure to find creative ways to use it. Teams can record process updates, support remote employees and collaboratively troubleshoot over video to service the help desk.

Record process updates

Support remote employees

Deploy a video help desk

## Professional Services

Video conferencing provides another means of communication for consultants to manage global projects with their customers. Professional services teams are able to stay on track and on budget without unnecessary and costly travel.

Save money on costly travel

Manage long distance interactions with clients

Add video check-ins to ensure project success

## Marketing and Sales

Most marketing and sales teams require extensive collaboration with customers and external agencies. Video conferencing helps them connect on projects to create more engaging campaigns that ultimately help customers make more informed decisions.

Meet with customers and external agencies

Expedite lead qualifications

Stay connected while traveling





## Engineering

Research and development can't stop and wait for business trip logistics. Engineering departments are able to optimize their time with global experts by collaborating over video. Daily scrums, bug triaging, prototyping and quality control are all perfect for video conferencing.

Create video daily standups

Facilitate bug triage syncing

Share prototypes

Conduct quality control

## Health Care

Physicians can have more convenient face-to-face interaction with patients over video calls, and health-care professionals can collaborate on research and medical demonstrations without having to travel.

Extend telehealth patient care virtually

Reduce travel and out-of-office time

Engage in flexible learning opportunities

Collaborate with global specialists

## Education

While academic courses and programs are becoming more and more virtual, some courses still need a teacher to teach the course instead of a standard four-minute clip on how to solve a math problem. Having online collaborative tools for students makes it easy to:

Enhance online course experiences

Create virtual tutoring rooms

Enable distance learning

Collaborate with global educators

Record and share class content

Every department and every industry can benefit from the collaborative powers of video conferencing. From the weekly 1:1 meetings to the monthly status meetings and even just to say hi, video conferencing helps you build relationships by providing more personal connections.



# Features that Matter

There are many video conferencing services available in the market. They cover a range of features and specializations to meet the needs of end users and service administrators. Here are some features to look for when making your selection.

## End Users

Communication can be between two people in a chat, an audio call or a video call, or it can be a group discussion in a more organized meeting. The features that end users look for are all about ease of use, integration into existing workflows and creating a consistent experience across the communication spectrum. Simply put, the easier and more intuitive it is to support all of the different ways your company communicates, the more it will be used.



### Quality

Reliable audio and video quality makes you feel like you're in the same room, even if you're connecting from thousands of miles away. Don't settle for anything less than amazing for your business-critical communications.

### Search-Based Directory

Clicking a name to make a call is a much better experience than entering the endless dial string of a meet-me service. A presence-enabled directory lets you know that the person you need to talk to is available and ready to connect.

### Scheduling Virtual Meeting Rooms

In addition to directory-based calling, users should have the option to easily schedule one-time meetings, create reusable meeting room spaces for recurring meetings and send guests outside the organization invitations with seamless calendar integrations.

### Guest Invites

Video conferencing should be available to every person and every meeting, including guests outside the company. Find a solution with a seamless guest experience free from heavy download requirements and other barriers to connection.

### Seamless Call Escalation

A video call should scale to grow as more people are included. Choose a solution with call escalation to avoid the hassle of having to hang up a two-way call just to open up a multiway call.

### Interoperability

People don't want to be burdened with interoperability. Find a solution that supports any-to-any connectivity irrespective of devices, including video systems, laptops, tablets and smartphones.

### Screen Share

Instantly transform your video call into a collaborative working session by sharing your screen or presentation. That way you can cooperate on a document in addition to communicating face to face.

### Meeting Recording

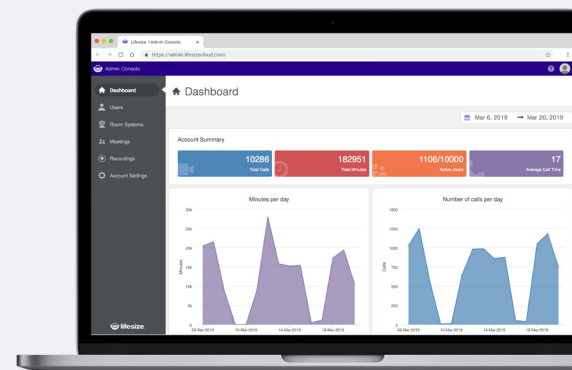
Capture important meetings, conversations, events and ideas and share them with the people on your team who weren't able to make the live event. Few solutions offer recording, and even fewer offer a built-in sharing platform.

### Live Chat

One-on-one chat and group chat provide an additional level of collaboration — a text level. Look for a solution that enables always-on chat or at the very least integrates with chat tools so you can easily jump to video from within a chat app.

## Administrators

Admin features focus more on the behind-the-scenes aspects of managing a solution. Check for a service with an online dashboard that gives you the ability to pull in-depth reports on statistics, like user and room participation, as well as call and device usage. This will come in handy when evaluating the solution come renewals time. An online admin portal also makes it easy to modify user and meeting room directories and lets you control security permissions at a global level.



### Automatic Updates

Enable your users with the latest and greatest features with automatic software updates. Subscribe to receive real-time status updates so you're always in the know when features are available.

### Scalability

A cloud-based video conferencing solution should be scalable to grow as your company grows. Scalability makes it easy for companies of all sizes to benefit from video conferencing, not just the privileged few.

### All-in-One Solution

Replace an outdated audio or web conferencing service with an updated cloud video conferencing solution. A unified service is more efficient and creates a better user experience among audio, video and web conferencing calls.

### Affordability

Typically, the costs of a cloud-based solution are lower because you don't have to invest in or maintain any infrastructure hardware. Find an affordable solution that lets you enable every employee and every meeting room.

### Security

Support for secure firewall traversal allows users to conduct their meetings with coworkers, partners, suppliers and anyone else outside their organization. Support for encryption lets users discuss top-secret projects with confidence. Look for a solution with authentication procedures at the account and meeting level and that offers 128-bit AES (Advanced Encryption Standard) end-to-end calling.

### Quality

Make sure your video conferencing service provider is built on a reliable and resilient network that has the global availability to meet your business's unique needs.

### Device Support

Support for PC or Mac, tablet and smartphone (Android or iOS), and browser-based calling is essential. BYOD is here to stay — for the best adoption, find a solution that integrates with all of the devices your team loves to use.

### 24x7 Support

Who do you call if something breaks? A business-class solution must be backed by support within meaningful response times. Choose a solution that will support you throughout the life of the service.

### Conference Room Cameras

Check for a solution with integrated video systems for all of your meeting spaces. That way your local team can meet in person and connect to the remote team over video right from the meeting room.



# Connections Matter

Imagine a video conferencing solution that enables an experience so immersive that conversations flow naturally and ideas are flawlessly conveyed. Teams that base their communication strategy around Lifesize get a level of communication that's better than meeting in real life. Technology that lets you present your business in the best light and make the best impression with every conversation and every interaction. A breakthrough experience with audio so precise that not one word is lost, and video so stunning you forget where you are. Lifesize has revolutionized video communication beyond imagination with the most captivating experience ever.



- ✓ Support for all the ways your company communicates
- ✓ Connects all the devices your company loves to use
- ✓ Affordable and easy to purchase, manage and support
- ✓ Interoperable, regardless of manufacturers or operating systems
- ✓ Complete security for your top-secret conversations
- ✓ Highest video, audio and presentation quality
- ✓ Meeting recording with built-in live streaming for up to 10,000 attendees
- ✓ Best-in-class cloud-based video conferencing experience

	Lifesize	WebEx®	GoToMeeting®	Blue Jeans®	Zoom®	StarLeaf
Interoperable cloud video offering	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	✓
Manufactures unified, plug-and-play HD camera systems and HD phones for every room	✓	×	×	×	×	✓
Video system monitoring and real-time alerts	✓	×	×	×	✓	×
Consistent experience across devices	✓	✓	×	×	×	✓
Directory with name-based dialing	✓	×	×	×	✓	✓
One-on-one and group calls with call escalation	✓	×	×	×	✓	✓
One-on-one chat	✓	×	×	×	✓	✓
Persistent group chat in a meeting room	✓	×	×	×	×	×
Up to 300 live participants in HD video	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	×
Live streaming up to 10,000 viewers per event	✓	×	×	✓	✓	×
Unlimited audio-only calls for users and guests in more than 60 countries	✓	×	×	×	×	×
HD recording and sharing via personal video library	✓	×	×	×	×	×
Skype for Business support	✓	×	×	✓	✓	✓
Full-featured web-based app	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	×
Desktop and mobile app	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

## About Lifesize

Headquartered in Austin, TX, Lifesize combines best-in-class, cloud-based video conferencing services with integrated equipment to help you present your business in the best light. Recognized as Frost & Sullivan's Cloud Video Conferencing Vendor of the Year, Lifesize leads the industry in customer satisfaction with the world's first 4K video conferencing solution and 4K service architecture. Together with a full suite of integrations and offerings designed for businesses of any size, Lifesize sets a new standard for workplace communication and productivity on a global scale. To see why companies like Yelp, Netflix and Major League Baseball rely on Lifesize for their mission-critical team communication, visit [www.lifesize.com](http://www.lifesize.com) or follow the company @Lifesize.



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