



Set Conferencing Free:

Bring the Benefits of Unlimited Conferencing to Everyone in Your Company

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Overview

Gartner describes conferencing and collaboration as “birthright” workplace tools for high-performance companies, tools that are universally useful and should be deployed in some form to almost everyone in the company.¹

Gartner also suggests that end users are beginning to expect access to these tools, and that if IT departments do not provide them as part of the standard application set, users will find their own alternative sources. The resulting “collaboration chaos” can undermine business productivity by introducing a range of different applications all designed to fulfil the same aim. IT departments can avoid this by providing and supporting conferencing and collaboration tools broadly across the organization from the outset.²

Interwise shares Gartner’s vision of giving conferencing and collaboration tools to everyone in the enterprise. This white paper outlines the value of broadly distributing these tools and explains how to do this efficiently, securely, and affordably in the real world.

Business Value

Why give conferencing and collaboration tools to everyone in an organization? For two bottom line business reasons:

- To expand proven economic and productivity benefits more broadly, and
- To unleash the entrepreneurial energies of groups typically denied access to these tools, enabling them to create new, innovative ways to improve quality, speed time to market, strengthen customer and partner relationships, and numerous other profit-enhancing activities.

Expand proven benefits: Conferencing and collaboration tools have already demonstrated their value in cutting costs and enhancing business productivity for those fortunate groups that have been given access to them. Cost savings have typically come from reduced travel and, in the case of IP-based tools, significant savings in regular conference call spending. Productivity increases have mostly accrued from enabling sales and service groups to touch more prospects and customers in less time.

However, for many companies, only 10–20 percent of all knowledge-based employees enjoy access to these tools. And even members of this lucky minority find their usage is regulated due to limitations of existing conferencing products, especially high, usage-based costs and concerns over technology scalability and security.



"We saved \$4.2m on travel and conference calls in 2005."

Metso Corporation

Metso Corporation, a \$5b engineering and technology company with 20,000 employees working in 200 offices across 50 countries around the world, provides an example of the value to be gained by addressing these limitations and expanding conferencing access. Choosing Interwise Connect, a conferencing platform that offers enterprise scalability, a fixed price/unlimited usage business model and ability to integrate with its existing IT infrastructure, Metso began to expand access to integrated voice, Web, and video conferencing to all knowledge workers in the organization. The results were impressive. In 2005, the company increased its initial group of conferencing tool users from less than 5 percent to almost 30 percent of total Metso knowledge workers and saved \$4.2 million in travel and conference call expenses. More important, Metso saw a marked improvement in product delivery, project management, and sales activity.

Create innovative new value: Consider the following real life examples of Interwise customers who have transformed broad access to conferencing tools into demonstrable business value:

- A high-end retailer increases profitability by conducting weekly merchandising meetings in which 50 store managers with access to real-time inventory data use live conferencing to plan and implement inventory-clearing exchanges and local store promotions.
- Finance, legal, and business development teams of a life sciences company use integrated conferencing technology to shorten contract negotiations with biotech start-ups, beating competitors in the race for promising new therapies.
- Senior managers at a rapidly growing engineering firm improve operational effectiveness by holding monthly all-hands meetings to align geographically dispersed business units around critical activities in support of new strategic direction.
- Distributed engineering teams at a global software company help to shorten time to market and reduce support calls by using real-time collaboration to better align architecture designs for new products, share code, and standardize QA testing.
- An automotive manufacturer accelerates the integration of a newly acquired subsidiary by using a broad mix of conferencing functionality for weekly management team meetings, cross-functional planning and review sessions, and dealer marketing programs.
- A rapidly growing retail chain increases employee retention and grooms the next generation of managers by offering certified, degree-granting high school and college programs using the virtual classroom capabilities of its core conferencing technology.

"We attract five times the number of experts to our virtual events as would attend our physical events."

UK Department of Trade and Industry

- To accelerate the commercialization of promising new technologies — and increase local tax revenues as a result — a government trade and industry agency creates virtual communities in which experts from around the world in the areas of research, finance, manufacturing, patent law, and other key disciplines collaborate to shorten go-to-market times.
- The finance department of a multinational manufacturing organization uses conferencing tools to streamline its complex financial reporting and audit activities, bringing together external auditors, internal audit personnel, and appropriate business groups as necessary in secure virtual meetings.
- Managers of a transportation security firm improve the skills of both new and veteran agents by monitoring passenger screening activities at geographically remote airports using high-resolution video capabilities of its conferencing tool.

These real-life examples provide a taste of the innovative new business opportunities, process improvements, and cost cutting activities the other 80 percent of employees could provide if given access to conferencing and collaboration technology.

Current Conferencing Limitations

Most businesses today use some combination of teleconferencing, Web conferencing, and video conferencing in their daily operations. As currently delivered, all three of these conferencing applications impose economic and technical limitations that prevent companies from broadly deploying the tools to achieve the benefits described above. The most important of these limitations are the following:

- **Cost:** With few exceptions, conferencing products employ usage-based price models that result in unacceptably high, unpredictable expenses as usage grows. Many companies today are paying between \$150 and \$300 per knowledge worker per year for their combined conferencing and collaboration activities. This "the more you use, the more you pay" model precludes deploying conferencing far beyond quota-carrying sales teams and senior managers. It also encourages strict usage limitations on those who do have access.
- **Breadth of Functionality:** Few conferencing products have the range of functionality to serve as a single corporate standard for multiple business groups in the organization. While most products support basic meetings, few support the stand-alone voice conferences that make up the bulk of current conferencing spending today, the moderated seminars that marketing teams need, the virtual classrooms that training and HR groups require, the large "all-hands" internal broadcasts that senior managers want, or the ability to record, edit, and play back any of these events on an on-demand basis.

- **Security:** Hosted conferencing services carry higher risks than solutions that are deployed behind corporate firewalls. While Web conferencing services try to ensure that the content of the actual event is protected, other aspects of the event, such as registration information, attendance logs, and recordings, are more vulnerable.

The situation for voice conferencing is even more extreme. Regular voice conferencing services use traditional TDM technology that is normally not protected in any significant way from either electronic interception or access by unauthorized attendance. The typical invitation mechanisms — emailing a generic event number and password — provide minimal protection at best. Similarly, the ability to know and regulate who actually attends the event is fraught with significant security risks.

- **Integration:** Overworked IT teams have little time to administer new applications. For conferencing to be effective on a broad scale, the products need to leverage the company's existing IT infrastructure. Robust integration with directory services tools, single sign-on systems, advanced security systems, and other IT infrastructure tools from multiple vendors can significantly reduce IT workload.
- **Scalability:** Most conferencing products support a moderate number of small to mid-sized meetings at any one time, a far cry from the number needed if everyone is given access to these tools. Often the products' own limitations prevent large numbers of participants in a single event while bandwidth requirements limit the number of simultaneous events a company's network can support. Large voice conferences have their own unique problems: attendees find it difficult to identify who is speaking, understand what is being said, or interact dynamically (trying to break in to speak, asking for clarification, signaling they are having problems, etc.).
- **Bandwidth Management:** Both hosted and on-site conferencing solutions can pose bandwidth problems for network managers if the applications themselves don't effectively manage bandwidth. And, as more organizations begin to support different qualities of bandwidth (higher for voice, lower for other uses), the conferencing applications must be sensitive to effectively managing multiple bandwidth types.

Set Conferencing Free

For companies of a thousand employees or more, achieving the business benefits that widespread access to conferencing and collaboration can bring requires a solution that addresses these limitations by delivering:

- Integrated voice, Web and video conferencing in a single IP-based platform.
- A fixed-price, unlimited use pricing model that makes it affordable for companies to give conferencing to everyone in the organization, as it does with e-mail.

- A range of capabilities complete enough to serve as the single corporate conferencing standard for all groups across the enterprise. Those capabilities include stand-alone voice conferences, Web meetings, virtual training, marketing seminars, all-hands broadcasts, and on-demand recordings for use with both internal and external participants.
- Increased security by bringing all conferencing elements behind the firewall, integrating with a company's directory services, reverse proxy, and other security infrastructure, enabling user-based authentication, offering closed events, and providing a visual, Web-based management interface for telephone conferences.
- A "blended" deployment model that combines the cost savings, security, and control of on-site software with the rapid start-up, global reach, and overflow/failover capabilities of a hosted service.
- Effective bandwidth management across both hosted and on-site deployment components.
- Integration with a company's existing multivendor IT infrastructure to accelerate user adoption, and simplify administration.
- Alignment of corporate conferencing expenditures with a company's IP telephony strategy and roadmap, while leveraging existing TDM investments.

The combination of these capabilities gives companies the ability, both economic and technical, to provide robust conferencing and collaboration tools to everyone in the company, just as it does with e-mail and telephone service.

Evaluating Conferencing Solutions

While there are many conferencing and collaboration products on the market today, few bring together the technical and economic characteristics required for companies to broadly deploy this type of real-time communication. IT teams looking for enterprise-class solutions can think about their choices along four major dimensions: pricing, functionality, deployment model, and integration.

Pricing: virtually all conferencing offerings today use some form of usage-based pricing for at least one component of their offering. These include:

- **Per-minute pricing:** This is most common for the voice element of a conferencing solution, although some Web conferencing vendors use it as well. The model is simple: you pay for only what you use, and the more you use, the more you pay.
- **Concurrent user pricing:** This is a popular pricing model for Web and video conferencing vendors. Most plans consist of a license fee for each concurrent user or host, a separate per-minute voice conferencing fee, and, all too often, a per-minute overage penalty when the usage exceeds the licensed number of concurrent users.

Because customers find it difficult to manage the timing of Web meetings and events, even low levels of usage tend to incur these high, unpredictable, per-minute overage penalties.

On-site voice conferencing vendors use a version of this approach, licensing concurrent voice ports. Unlike Web conferencing providers, however, when concurrent port capacity is reached, additional participants cannot access the conference.

- **Named User Pricing:** Used mostly with Web conferencing, this model is similar to e-mail pricing, in which each individual user buys a license. Voice conferencing is usually purchased separately on a per-minute basis.

Usage-based pricing, in whatever form, precludes companies from providing wide access to integrated voice, Web, and video conferencing because overall costs are both prohibitively high and unpredictable. To give conferencing to everyone, enterprises need the kind of fixed price/unlimited usage model that they have for email and other enterprise software applications.

Functionality: From a functionality perspective, customers today can choose one of two approaches:

- **Individual point products for voice, Web, and video conferencing:** Customers with enough time, money, and expertise can assemble the best products in each category. However, this approach requires IT to train and support users in multiple products, and resolve conflicts in areas where functionality overlaps. It also requires users to learn multiple products and know when to use each one.
- **Loosely bundled “integrated solutions”:** these offerings integrate voice, Web, and video functionality more at a marketing level than at a product level. They allow customers to schedule independent voice, Web, and video events at the same time, provide a thin UI to make them feel like an integrated event, and deliver a single bill for the multiple pieces. However, they lack the most critical element of a true integrated offering: architectural and data level integration.

For customers, this means:

- Integrating these offerings into their IT environment for security and user administration is difficult.
- Limited interaction between participants using different voice infrastructure standards (e.g. regular telephone users cannot speak directly to VoIP users and vice versa).
- Recording all channels of an event (voice, Web, and video) is complex and expensive.
- Paying on a per-use basis (per minute, concurrent users with overage penalties, etc) for some if not all of their conferencing.

Neither of these choices overcomes the limitations that prevent companies from offering conferencing tools widely across the enterprise. Only a single corporate standard platform that integrates the key components, supports the business needs of multiple departments and can be integrated with the company's existing IT infrastructure will achieve that goal.

Deployment: From a deployment perspective, customers must choose between two options in today's market:

- **Hosted Service:** Companies generally choose hosted services when the level of conferencing use is not well known, when most meetings are external, and where there is a lack of in-house IT skills to manage the solution.
- **On-site Implementation:** Organizations choose on-site deployments when the level of conferencing use is high, most meetings are internal, security is a key concern, integration with existing IT infrastructure tools and processes are important for administration and adoption, and there are sufficient in-house IT resources to manage the solution.

However, making customers choose between these two models is an unsatisfying approach in today's complex, rapidly changing business environment. Most companies need to work with both internal and external participants. Few companies would willingly accept a lower level of security if given a choice. Usage levels and IT support are different in different locations. To provide broad access to conferencing and collaboration capabilities, companies need a blended mix of both hosted and on-site deployment benefits.

Integration: The ability to integrate with business applications, IT infrastructure tools, security frameworks, and other systems and processes offers both usability and administration benefits. Both are important to companies looking to ensure that broad usage delivers the business benefits they are expecting.

For example,

- Integrating the conferencing application with a company's directory services server simplifies user administration for the IT team.
- Integrating with a company's reverse proxy implementation allows the conferencing application to serve both internal and external participants.
- Integrating with a company's Single-Sign-On product, its enterprise portal, or its Lotus Notes or Outlook system simplifies usage and promotes adoption.

Hosted services offer limited opportunities for integration. Some of the limitations are technical, related either to the difficulty of linking a third-party hosted service with an on-site application or to weak integration interfaces of specific conferencing services.

Some limitations are security-related. For example, even where it is possible for a hosted service to integrate with a company's directory service, doing so requires unacceptably exposing proprietary company information.

On-site hardware-based conferencing products avoid many of these problems in theory but not in practice. Often, hardware-based products have limited API capabilities. In addition, many hardware vendors have made limited investments in anything that would support integration of their conferencing products with a competitor's offerings. Their goal is to use the conferencing application to lock customers into their own hardware products, so there is little incentive for them to support multi-vendor integration.

Achieving the expected business benefits from providing wide access to conferencing requires effective integration to multiple components in the typical multivendor environment found in most enterprises today.

Unlimited Conferencing with Interwise Connect

Interwise's Connect is one of the few conferencing products available today that can provide unlimited conferencing for everyone in an enterprise. The vision behind the product is to transform conferencing into a core business application like email. From an economic perspective, Interwise's fixed price/unlimited usage pricing model makes it affordable to deploy conferencing broadly across the organization. From a technology perspective, its native IP, distributed software server architecture provides the scalability and performance required of an enterprise-class application. The following table illustrates how Interwise Connect offers more of what companies need to get the business benefits of giving real-time conferencing and collaboration to everyone.



"Interwise makes it economically and technically feasible to make conferencing available to everyone in the company, rather than just a few select groups."

PAULI NUUTINEN, VICE PRESIDENT,
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, METSO
CORPORATION

	Interwise	Otherwise
PRICING MODEL	Fixed price / unlimited usage	Usage based
BREADTH OF FUNCTIONALITY	Voice conferences, web meetings, virtual classroom, web seminars, broadcasts, recordings integrated in one product	Subsets of functionality. Gaps filled by marketing bundles with other products
SECURITY	Enterprise-class for voice, Web and video <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operates behind corporate firewall Integrates with company's existing security framework User-based authentication Closed events Reverse proxy support 	Mixed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low: TDM voice conferencing Moderate: web, video conferencing
DEPLOYMENT	Integrated on-site and hosted service for best of both worlds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-site: highest security, cost savings, control Hosted Service: rapid deployment, broad availability, overflow / failover protection for on-site components 	Either hosted service or on-site
INTEGRATION	High: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rich, multi-vendor integration layer On-site deployment benefits Integrated voice simplifies making conferencing a service to other business applications 	Low to moderate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integration not a focus so API's limited Hosted service limitations Multiple products (voice, Web, video) complicates initial integration, on-going maintenance
VOIP SUPPORT	High: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Native support for VoIP: high scalability, voice quality Full interoperability with existing TDM investments 	Low: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited scalability Uneven quality Limited interoperability with TDM

Summary

Interwise customers are demonstrating the real-world applicability of Gartner's "birthright" approach to workplace tools such as conferencing and collaboration. They are giving integrated voice, Web, and video conferencing to everyone in the company and reaping the cost savings, business productivity and innovation benefits. Interwise's fixed price/unlimited use business model makes it affordable. Its unique architecture, deployment model, integration and security capabilities make it technically effective.

About Interwise

Interwise is the leader in delivering unlimited voice, Web, and video conferencing for the enterprise. Interwise's fixed price/unlimited usage business model and enterprise-class technology combine to make it easy for companies to deliver conferencing and collaboration as a core business application, replacing multiple products with a single, integrated solution that can reduce overall conferencing expenses by 50 per cent or more. More importantly, its unique capabilities drive innovation, corporate agility and operational effectiveness by enabling customers to give unlimited conferencing and collaboration to every employee in the enterprise, like email. Interwise sells to and supports customers globally through a direct sales force, distributors, value-added resellers, communications service providers, and network-oriented systems integrators.

Visit us at <http://www.interwise.com>.

References:

¹ The Workplace Application Classification Framework; Tom Austin, 4 October 2005 ID Number G00131005

² Findings from the Gartner 2006 Global Research Meeting: Fulfilling Users' Collaboration Expectations; Nikos Drakos, Tom Austin, Tom Eid, Kathy Harris, Jeffrey Mann, 3 February 2006 ID G00137548

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