Video communication offers significant benefits for improving group collaboration and breaking distance barriers. Rapid growth of Unified Communications platforms such as Skype for Business/Lync has made video collaboration even more accessible to individuals and companies of all sizes. One of the key demands of video conferencing solutions is to interoperate between different platforms.

A true integrated video collaboration solution should be able to connect disparate environments and provide a high quality and simple experience for users. Such a unified solution, when integrated into an intuitive, foolproof workflow for multipoint video collaboration, has the potential to transform the culture of video collaboration and realize highly leveraged end-to-end group collaboration. Lacking any one of these qualities, however, may result in poor user experience and low user adoption of the technology.

As technology leaders and businesses try to resolve these issues, they are confronted by questions such as the following:
FAQ Increasing Video Adoption in Multi-Vendor Video Environments

Q. Where does video collaboration rank in terms of preferred communications methods?

A. Over time, video communication (video chat, video conferencing) has become the communications protocol of choice for a diverse range of individual users, growing businesses and established enterprises. While video communication technology has increased in sophistication, there are still compatibility issues and inconsistent user experience when connecting disparate video endpoints and soft clients together.

Q. What are the common inhibitors of video adoption?

A. There are many different video providers on the market. Combining these disparate video solutions into one connected experience has historically been challenging. The solutions to this challenge in the past have diminished the overall user experience. These range from different and unfamiliar workflows to losing the functionality that video participants normally expect. In general, as long as users are interacting on the same video platform, they have a consistent workflow to schedule and initiate a multi-party video call, and share desktop and applications during the meeting.

However, when disparate video systems and soft clients meet together, they may confront multiple challenges. For example, each video solution may have its own unique method for scheduling a video call. Having more than one scheduling method requires a conference organizer to know in advance whether a call will be hosted on a Skype for Business/Lync conferencing bridge or an alternate bridge, which can be quite confusing. Or for conference participants, the process of joining a meeting may require different approaches. Conference attendees who aren’t tech-savvy might not realize that instead of simply clicking on a Skype for Business/Lync hyperlink in an Outlook meeting invite, they need to type in a conference bridge number on a Lync client. This may disorient users and lead to user errors that result in wasted time, missed meetings and lost business opportunities.

Another challenge is the inconsistent video experience once they join the meeting. For instance, conference participants generally expect their video layout and content experience to appear as if it were a homogeneous video call. When they see an unfamiliar video format, or find that the content sharing is unfamiliar, their productivity in the meeting may be impacted.

Q. How can the challenges associated with multiple video platforms be solved to improve the user experience?

A. Organizations with multiple video platforms such as Skype for Business/Lync, Cisco and Polycom should consider a solution that bridges diverse infrastructures and allows users to maintain familiar workflows and seamlessly collaborate in the way they are used to. Polycom offers such a solution in Polycom® RealConnect®. It is built on a highly scalable and interoperable video infrastructure (Polycom® RealPresence® Platform) and provides a platform for heterogeneous video systems to connect on a multi-party screen while maintaining each system’s native experience.
Q. How does the Polycom RealConnect feature work?

A. The benefits of Polycom RealConnect extend both to Skype for Business/Lync users and to traditional video users. It leverages existing Outlook video scheduling workflow and seamlessly unifies them all into the same video call without the need for user intervention or IT support.

The Polycom RealPresence infrastructure natively integrates with Skype for Business/Lync and bridges the two solutions together. Users can seamlessly enter the same multi-party video meeting, share content across both solutions and viewing all content from within each native user’s standard format.

Using the RealConnect feature, both Skype for Business/Lync and traditional video system participants can use Microsoft Outlook to schedule a multi-party video call. Lync users click to join the meeting hyperlink to instantly join the Lync Audio Video Multipoint Conferencing Unit (AVMCU) and see the native video format.

Traditional video system participants can access the video meeting by dialing the conference ID which is specified in the meeting invite and connecting to the Virtual Meeting Room (VMR) on the Polycom conferencing infrastructure.

Moreover, participants using the Polycom RealPresence Group Series and HDX endpoints can access a scheduled meeting via one-click dialing on the calendar screen via the RealPresence Calendar Proxy App, which gives the same click-to-join experience as Lync users. Traditional video endpoints view the native continuous presence video layout on their screens.

Q. Can users who lack a video conferencing system or software client also join a Polycom and Skype for Business/Lync video collaboration?

A. The Lync Web App for Lync 2013 (and the Skype for Business Web App) provides a browser-based video experience for users without access to any video system or software-based client. They can join a multi-party video call as guest users via web browser (with ActiveX control) when they click the hyperlink in the meeting invite and install a plug-in.

Another option for these users, especially if they join the meeting as audio-only participants from a cell phone or a desktop phone, is web browser-based content sharing via the Polycom® RealPresence® Content Sharing Suite (CSS). These users can access CSS content via web browser by entering a CSS Server URL in the browser, installing the CSS software plug-in and dialing the conference ID to join a session and actively participate in the video collaboration.
Conclusion

Visual communications today should provide a high level of functionality and simplicity. Solutions must work across multiple networks and video environments integrating existing video investments and offer consistent native experience.

The Polycom RealPresence Platform (with RealConnect) together with Skype for Business/Lync 2013 provides that capability through unmatched ease of use and an enhanced video collaboration experience, made possible by deep integration and workflow integration.

RealConnect ensures that Lync and non-Lync video users (and Skype for Business and non-Skype for Business) can fully participate in a multi-party call through a consistent video scheduling workflow and native video collaboration experience within their native environment. In an era when video communications should be seamless and versatile, the Polycom RealPresence Platform and RealConnect offer true integrated collaboration and unrivaled ease of use.

To see the RealConnect experience video, click here.

About Polycom

Polycom is the global leader in open standards-based unified communications and collaboration (UC&C) solutions for voice and video collaboration, trusted by more than 415,000 customers around the world. Polycom solutions are powered by the Polycom® RealPresence® Platform, comprehensive software infrastructure and rich APIs that interoperate with the broadest set of communication, business, mobile and cloud applications and devices to deliver secure face-to-face video collaboration in any environment.