



Best Practices for Desktop Videoconferencing Success **By Melanie Turek, Industry Principal, Frost & Sullivan**

Desktop videoconferencing is on the rise, and for good reason. The technology is a cost-effective way to keep remote and home-based workers engaged in company meetings, whether they're exclusively among colleagues or involve business partners and customers. With desktop videoconferencing, employees everywhere can leverage the benefits of video, including the ability to read facial expressions and body language, which lead to a deeper level of engagement. And if the desktop videoconferencing software integrates with room-based systems, remote employees can use the technology to participate in larger meetings even if they don't have access to a conference room.

But clear business benefits only get a technology so far. Desktop videoconferencing is gaining acceptance, too, as more end users grow familiar with the use of video in their everyday lives. That makes it more likely that employees will embrace desktop videoconferencing, and make it part of their daily communications.

But using video for business communications is not the same as posting clips to YouTube, or calling Grandma to have a video chat with the kids. To use the technology successfully, employees should pay attention to some basic but critical rules:

1. Treat a desktop videoconference call as you would an in-person meeting. Pretend you are in the same room with the people you are communicating with—and act accordingly.
2. Look presentable on camera. Remote and home-based workers can get into the habit of dressing down. That's OK when no one can see you in your pajamas, but it doesn't fly for videoconference calls, especially with partners and clients. Since you might not know you'll participate in a videoconference at some point in the day, dress business casual every day.
3. Pay attention to camera placement. Desktop videoconferencing often captures people looking down, especially if they are taking notes or otherwise using a computer while on the call. If you are talking during a meeting, look into the camera. If you are presenting, place your presentation and any other visual aids on the same level as, or even behind, the camera, so that you can look at your notes without taking your eyes off your audience.
4. Consider your environment. What does your office look like—are papers and equipment stacked everywhere, or does it look neat and professional? Do you have art work on the walls, or concert posters from your favorite punk band? Personal touches are fine—they can even jumpstart conversations. But you don't want to risk offense, either. And more mundane concerns matter, too: For instance, is there a window behind you, which could reflect glare to people watching you on video, and make it hard for them to see? Ask a trusted colleague for feedback on any visual distractions, then change them before you engage in another desktop video call.
5. Don't multi-task. Just because you're not talking doesn't mean people can't see you; depending on how the video is set up, you may be on camera for the length of the conference, regardless of who has the floor at any given time. When you're participating in an audio or web conference call, it's easy—and tempting—to read and send email and IM, work on deadline projects, even get up and walk around the room—or out of it. Do that on a videoconference at your own risk.