Adobe® Connect™: Bringing together video and next-generation web conferencing

Many businesses can achieve the benefits of face-to-face meetings through an investment in a video or web conferencing solution, saving the company both travel time and resources. Selecting the right technology to replace in-person meetings begins with understanding your organizational needs and pairing these needs with the optimal conferencing solution.

With video teleconferencing (VTC), presenters and participants can securely engage with one another through real-time video and high-quality audio. Desktop add-on components allow users to present slides and share their desktops. However, VTC solutions can be very expensive and often lack reach, richness, flexibility, control, and extensibility—key functionality requirements for effective meetings. On the other hand, web conferencing excels where rich collaboration and close interaction with both internal and external participants are needed.

Adobe Connect offers an affordable award-winning web conferencing solution with multipoint video and advanced audio, as well as an expansive set of collaboration features. Because there are no barriers to entry, it allows for effective and highly interactive online meetings, training, and events, regardless of the location of the presenter or participant. For organizations with an existing investment in VTC, video can be streamed into the Adobe Connect meeting environment to provide a complementary solution. Additionally, an investment in the Adobe Connect solution delivers superior value, as compared to both VTC systems and these systems with a VTC desktop add-on option.

Conferencing solutions options

Let's explore the three key conferencing solution options currently available: VTC, VTC with added desktop capabilities, and web conferencing.

Video teleconferencing (VTC)

In the past, the primary focus of a VTC system was to broadcast video from one company location to another to provide more of an in-person feel than a telephone conference call. Today, dedicated systems with real-time, high-definition video and high-quality audio enable close-up views of meeting participants. When an organization is primarily focused on enhancing internal company meetings by adding video into the meeting environment and can regularly leverage the conference rooms where the technology resides, a VTC system might be an appropriate solution. Large TV screens, sometimes with HD video of up to 1080p30 or 720p60 resolution, can provide excellent visual detail, while surround-sound 22 kHz audio ensures that all participants are heard. VTC solutions often require a substantial upfront investment due to the infrastructure that is required. Also, because bandwidth usage is high and a dedicated network is required, an on-premise IT department is often needed to manage the infrastructure and deployment. Additionally, VTC solutions can quickly become outdated and necessitate a fundamental architecture overhaul for upgrades.

VTC with desktop add-on software

Desktop add-on software extends videoconferencing functionality to personal computers and provides basic conferencing components. Sometimes these systems are bundled with proprietary VTC system purchases. Functionality can include two-way or multipoint video, advanced audio, and screen sharing. However, advanced meeting features, as well as most training, event, and on-demand presentation creation capabilities, are not included.

While the desktop add-on software works well for presenters and participants who have the licensed technology available on their computers, use of the software is typically limited to these individuals, and users cannot engage in on-the-fly meetings with people outside the organization. Additionally, because the desktop add-on is tied to the VTC solution, customers must continue to use and invest in the proprietary VTC system to enable use of the desktop add-on software.

Web conferencing

Web conferencing is a contemporary Internet-based approach that includes video and audio components and also extends to a variety of features that enable more enhanced interaction through the desktop environment. If the main goal of a meeting is to facilitate teamwork, partnership, and collaboration among users both inside and outside of the organization, web conferencing provides a good solution because of its interactive meeting features. Web conferencing also runs on a variety of platforms, including desktop, laptop, and mobile devices, so it offers ease of use from any location. More-advanced web conferencing solutions have tools and features for live and on-demand training, which can include participant testing, grading, and tracking, as well as capabilities for large-scale online events and webinars. A web conferencing solution is generally less costly than VTC systems because it is software-based and leverages existing technology investments in computer hardware, laptop computers, and mobile devices. Some web conferencing solutions even enable integration with VTC solutions, allowing users to considerably broaden the reach of their core technology investments.
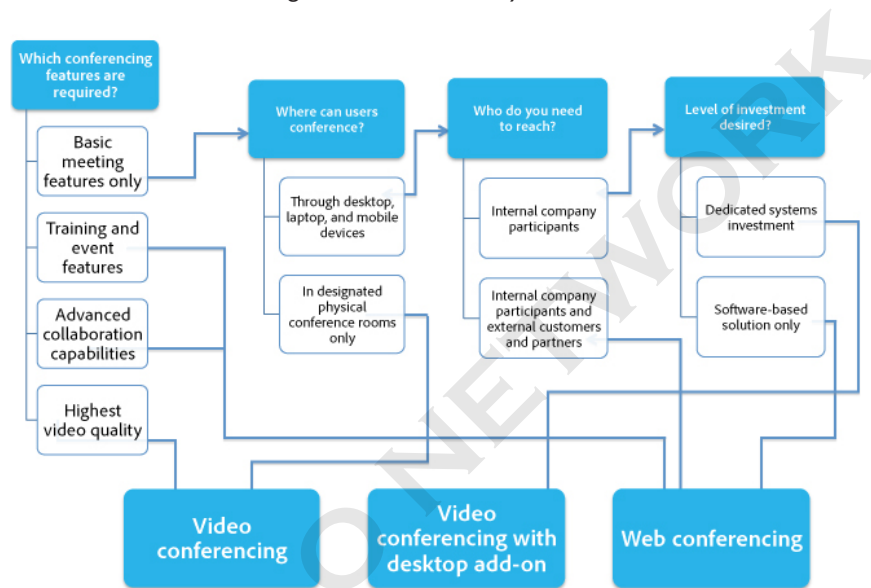
Choosing the best conferencing solution for your needs

The Adobe Connect collaboration difference

Adobe Connect has consistently proven to be a strong solution. Most recently, Adobe has been positioned in the Leaders Quadrant of the Gartner, Inc. Magic Quadrant for Web Conferencing* (D. M. Smith/November 2010), and cited as a Leader in "The Forrester Wave™: Web Conferencing, Q2 2010", Forrester Research, Inc. (June 2010). Over the past few years, Adobe Connect has garnered numerous other awards, including Best Web Seminar Solution by Best of Elearning! (2010), and the TopTenREVIEWS Gold Award for web conferencing products (2009).

The reasons for the accolades are clear: the Adobe Connect collaboration capabilities set it apart from both VTC and standard web conferencing options. It excels in the areas of reach, richness, control, and extensibility, while providing high-quality video features. Further, the financial benefits of investing in an Adobe Connect solution are highly compelling to organizations looking at leveraging their existing technology investments.

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Reach, richness, security, control, and extensibility

Advanced features and functionality are not offered at the expense of security and control. Users can safeguard, store, and track electronic communications to help ensure compliance with internal policies and government regulations. For more control within meetings, Adobe Connect offers email and event management tools and participant and meeting room controls. Additionally, while some web conferencing solutions are designed for online meetings only, Adobe Connect is highly extensible and can be leveraged as a single platform for end-to-end solutions around presentations, meetings, training, and events, as well as a variety of customized use cases such as guided selling and emergency response. Adobe Connect can also integrate with proprietary VTC solutions, allowing video from these solutions into the Adobe Connect environment.

High-quality audio and video without barriers to entry

A core Adobe Connect value proposition is its ability to cost-effectively deliver high-quality video to meeting participants through its native capabilities as well as an organization's existing VTC system to provide an even more interactive experience. Because Adobe Connect can integrate industry-standard H.264 audio and video streams from VTC solutions, organizations can leverage their existing investments in VTC platforms within Adobe Connect for seamless interoperability and a vendor-neutral approach to unified communications. There is no need to install new devices or hardware to pull in video or be physically present at an endpoint to participate. Users need only a browser and Adobe Flash Player, which is installed on virtually all Internet-enabled computers.

The key to any successful video solution is ease of use and adoption. Adobe Connect exemplifies these points: Without downloading software, users can access a persistent Adobe Connect meeting room to collaborate, communicate, and train with just one click of a mouse from virtually any computer in the world.

FranklinCovey delivers high-quality video and interactivity with Adobe Connect and doubles training attendance

FranklinCovey Co., a global provider of training and consulting services, was able to double their webinar-based training and eLearning attendance within a year using Adobe Connect. They attribute much of this success to its flexibility and ability to deliver high-quality video and interactivity.

"Our brand is associated with having the best live-training workshops in the industry, including Hollywood-caliber video productions that enhance our training, so we couldn't sacrifice quality," says Matt Murdoch, global director of sales and marketing for online learning. Because Adobe Connect is based on Adobe Flash technology, FranklinCovey can deliver video and interactive content without requiring users to download software or encountering firewall issues at user sites, enabling them to reach a broader worldwide audience while providing a highly engaging experience.

Read the full story here
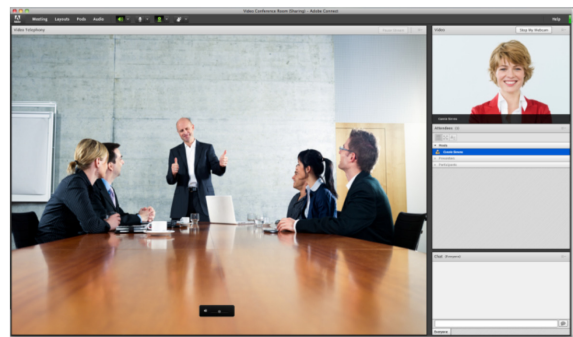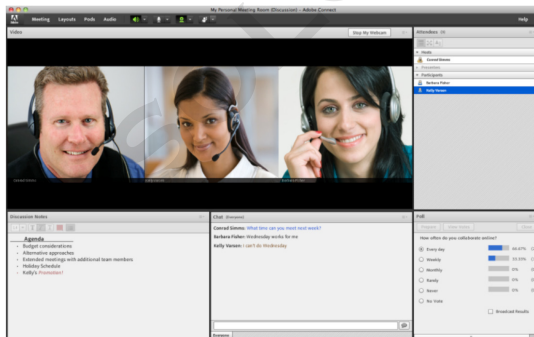
Financial savings

Whether an organization is looking at Adobe Connect as an alternative to a VTC solution or as a complement to an existing system, it is important to consider the financial implications. Key considerations include the level of investment required, the total cost of ownership, and the return on investment.

Adobe Connect delivers superior value

In a study done by IntelliCap, a global consulting firm providing economic value analyses to Fortune 2000 customers and the software vendors that service them, the total cost of ownership (TCO) of VTC, desktop add-on software for VTC, and Adobe Connect was calculated and compared, using price points and market data from industry reports, basic VTC solution packaging from leading VTC vendors, and cost figures from actual enterprise deployments. Figures were calculated for sample scenarios based on an organization with 1,000 employees requiring 20 basic conferencing rooms for VTC, and 500 users with desktop access. In addition, the value of Adobe Connect when integrated with VTC was quantified and compared to that of a VTC system extended to the desktop with a typical desktop add-on solution.

The end results demonstrate that in addition to offering a more robust solution for meetings, training, and events, the Adobe Connect solution delivers superior quantifiable value, providing a much lower TCO than VTC solutions and a better return on investment than VTC desktop add-on solutions.

Large U.S. government organization reaps benefits from Adobe Connect as a collaboration alternative to their VTC service

Using Adobe Connect, the government organization exponentially expanded videoconferencing at a fraction of the cost of their previous VTC investment. A multiyear contract for their VTC system had cost over $200 million, yet the service could only reach 3,000 endpoints. To increase user adoption, the organization added Adobe Connect, which enabled them to expand the number of possible endpoints to include any computer, Android, or iOS device. Tens of thousands of endpoints are now being regularly used, with over 30 million minutes of usage per month—all using IP networks that were already in place. With Adobe Connect, they are able to deliver secure video and interactive content to handle activities like all-hands briefings, tactical mission planning, emergency response management, and more. These capabilities were not possible with their VTC system or other web conferencing providers for the following reasons:
- Bandwidth limitations
- Dispersed locations of personnel
- Need for persistent meeting environments for immediate collaboration
- Ability to easily collaborate with no additional software other than a web browser and Adobe Flash Player

Lower TCO

In the following table, a sample three-year TCO is modeled for a VTC solution, a VTC solution extended to the desktop, and Adobe Connect. The figures show a significantly lower three-year total cost of ownership of Adobe Connect over VTC, with savings further enhanced when factoring in the cost of VTC desktop add-on software to enable functionality on the desktop. Cost considerations include the following:

- The VTC solution cost necessitates significant investment in hardware and related infrastructure for each room, such as high-fidelity audio systems, flat panel displays, video cameras, cables, remotes, microphone arrays, a videoconferencing appliance, and bridge, as well as internal support from the IT department.

- The VTC desktop add-on cost is inclusive of the preexisting VTC costs that are required for it to be deployed. The incremental costs for the desktop add-on include the application software, maintenance and support, and internal support costs.

- The Adobe Connect solution includes the user (host) software, related maintenance and support, two servers, and internal support comparable to the level required for the VTC desktop add-on solution.

Three-Year TCO Summary (For 500 users in a company with 1,000 employees)					
Solution	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total	Total per User
VTC (with 20 rooms)[a]	$1,002,000	$140,500	$140,500	$1,283,000	$2,566
VTC extended to the desktop (VTC + 500 desktop users)[a,b]	$1,129,000	$207,500	$207,500	$1,544,000	$3,088
Adobe Connect (500 users, on-premise deployment)[c]	$431,250	$121,500	$121,500	$674,250	$1,349

Another important point to consider when comparing solutions is the per-minute costs. When using VTC, conference rooms can quickly become booked, which limits usage. The lack of knowledge in setting up meetings using VTC may also inhibit user adoption. In addition, VTC systems, even when combined with desktop add-on solutions, do not easily reach out to external users, making them an ineffective tool for meetings that require external collaboration. By contrast, Adobe Connect allows for easy access from virtually any Internet-connected computer for users both internal and external to the organization, allowing for much more usage of the system. For these reasons, when factoring in total costs over the minutes actually used, the cost of VTC compared to Adobe Connect could be even less favorable than what is shown in the table.

Assumptions for TCO
- One conference room added for every 50 employees, or 20 conference rooms.
- $40,000 per room for VTC infrastructure with a basic setup (high-fidelity audio system, flat panel display, high-definition camera, microphone arrays, cables, and remote).
- Price points and packaging for VTC and VTC desktop add-on solutions were taken from Wainhouse Research, "Comparison Matrix—Desktop Conferencing—CPE Solutions" (Wainhouse Research, July 2009), *www.polycom.com*, *www.tandberg.com*, and Adobe internal information.
- Figures are based on North American regional price points and packaging, and may differ in other regions.
- (a) One communication bridge of $34,000, plus annual technical support and maintenance.
- (a) $3,750 per room for installation (25 hours @ $150 per hour per room).
- (b) VTC for desktop license of $120 per user plus 20% annual support and maintenance.
- (a) (b) Internal IT support consisting of a half FTE of $55,000 per year for VTC and an additional half FTE of $55,000 for the VTC for desktop application.
- (c) Adobe Connect TCO includes 500 hosts, 25 concurrent learner licenses, 5 presenter licenses, events module, 2 server licenses with supporting 3rd party hardware/software, 20% annual support and maintenance, and internal IT support of a half FTE of $55,000.

The value of Adobe Connect

Some organizations with an existing investment in VTC are confronted with a choice when they look to extend VTC capabilities to the desktop: to purchase a desktop add-on offered by their existing solution or to augment their capabilities with a different solution, such as Adobe Connect. The potential benefits of these options were compared and quantified over a three-year period for 500 users. The results of this analysis are summarized in the following table.

Sample financial benefits of Adobe Connect integrated with VTC versus a typical VTC desktop add-on solution	
Three-year benefits	$2.3 million
Payback	7 months
ROI	191%

These results were driven by Adobe Connect advantages in the following key areas, which translate directly into financial benefits when compared to a typical VTC desktop add-on solution:

Richness and flexibility—Persistent meeting URLs and content, unlimited number of video and webcam streams within a meeting room, customizable meeting layouts and templates, and use of multiple in-meeting pods for such activities as notes, chatting, Q&A, video, application sharing, and whiteboards facilitate more efficient collaboration, reduce meeting duration, and increase employee productivity.

Ease of access—External users (outside the firewall) can attend meetings, enabling more effective customer interactions resulting in increased revenue opportunities, and reducing the number of in-person meetings, resulting in decreased travel costs.

Extensibility—Adobe Connect can be used for solutions outside of general web meetings, including eLearning and webinars. It can also be customized to meet specialized use cases, such as emergency response, guided selling, and so on. As an eLearning solution, ease of content creation and delivery reduces the cost to prepare and deliver training sessions and reduces travel and related costs for trainers and attendees.

In the following table, the quantified value drivers do not directly consider the differentiators of Adobe Connect versus other web conferencing systems. If they did, many of the value drivers around richness and extensibility would still apply, but additional value drivers would come into play, such as productivity savings by enabling attendees to immediately join meetings without having to download additional software.

Summary of quantified value drivers

Three-year quantifiable value drivers of Adobe Connect versus a typical VTC desktop add-on solution (For 500 users in a company with 1,000 employees)				
Quantifiable Value Driver	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Reduce travel to internal and external meetings, such as sales calls[a]	$167,050	$170,391	$173,799	$511,240
Reduce trainer and attendee travel to internal product and compliance training[b]	$106,393	$108,521	$110,692	$325,607
Improve employee productivity due to more efficient and effective web meetings[c]	$235,463	$240,172	$244,975	$720,609
Reduce the number of annual in-person events with customized, branded webinars[d]	$240,000	$244,800	$249,696	$734,496
More efficient training content development and delivery[e]	$8,064	$8,225	$8,390	$24,679
Total quantifiable value drivers	$756,970	$772,109	$787,552	$2,316,631

Assumptions for quantified value drivers
- Assumes a 2% company growth rate.
- Employee productivity benefits assume an hourly rate of $40–$45 per hour for time saved.
- Typical VTC desktop add-on solution includes broadcasting and receiving of live video, screen sharing, and participant status. The solution does not include external user access, meeting rooms with persistent content and URLs, whiteboarding, annotation, polling, Q&A, meeting notes, attendance reporting, ability to develop and use customized in-meeting applications for more efficient collaboration, breakout rooms, content development tools, and training capabilities (curriculum development, participant testing, grading, tracking, and reporting).
- (a) 500 users hold one web meeting per week in lieu of an in-person meeting with an external party (prospect, customer, and so on), resulting in reduced travel expenses and improved employee productivity.
- (b) 24 on-line training sessions per year in lieu of trainers and attendees traveling to in-person training sessions, resulting in reduced travel expenses and improved employee productivity.
- (c) Reducing the average meeting duration time by 15%, or from 60 minutes to 51 minutes, and reducing web meeting administration preparation and administration time by 90%, or from 10 minutes to 1 minute.
- (d) One on-line webinar per month in lieu of an in-person event, resulting in reduced event expenses and increased revenue.
- (e) Reducing training content development and administration time by 90%, or 7.2 hours from 8 hours, per training session through rapid creation and reuse of training content, and automated tracking and reporting of attendance, grading, and completion of curriculums.

Adobe Connect offers unparalleled capabilities

Most VTC systems, even when the solution is extended with desktop add-on software, lack key features that are essential to today's conferencing user. Below is a snapshot of the additional benefits Adobe Connect offers that are typically not available with VTC and VTC desktop add-on software, highlighting key benefits in reach, richness, security, control, and extensibility.

Key Adobe Connect benefits vs VTC and VTC desktop add-on software:

Reach	Adobe Connect Web Conferencing
No barriers to entry—Quick and easy to deploy for both internal and external users. No download is required, room URLs are persistent, and the solution has cross-platform and browser support.	✓
Anytime, anywhere access—Meetings can be joined from the web on any Internet-enabled computer, plus many Internet-enabled mobile devices, providing users with access any time from just about everywhere.	✓
Instant collaboration—After joining a meeting, collaboration can begin immediately. No additional steps or downloads are required to use any of the rich features offered.	✓
Support for internal and external participants—Many VTC desktop add-on solutions do not enable external participants to join a meeting. Adobe Connect does.	✓
Support for low-bandwidth environments—Meeting rooms are accessible from even low-bandwidth environments.	✓
Persistent content in always-available meeting rooms—Users can save all configurations and content automatically in multiple persistent meeting rooms, dramatically reducing preparation time for recurring events.	✓
Richness	
Enhanced customization capabilities—Meeting preferences, use of collaboration functionality, layouts, and branding can be customized to fit the organization's needs.	✓
Broad set of collaboration capabilities—Rich, functional pods can be activated as needed during meetings, including public and private chat, application and screen sharing, file sharing, notes, video, whiteboarding, polling, and Q&A pods. Organizations can also create custom pods.	✓
Recording and editing—Meetings can easily be recorded, edited, and replayed either online or offline, offering the same interaction as the original live meeting—files can be downloaded, links clicked, and text copied. Recordings can even be searched for keywords so the user doesn't have to listen to the entire recording.	✓
Breakout rooms to focus discussions—Within meetings, multiple breakout rooms can be created using default or custom templates, each with its own private Voice over IP (VoIP) or telephone conference call. Easily monitor breakout sessions, move between rooms, or broadcast messages to participants across room boundaries.	✓
Security and Control	
Participant management and controls—Adobe Connect hosts can set permissions before meetings begin and manage participants during meetings to ensure that online sessions are as effective and productive as possible.	✓
Email and event management—Presenters can set email and registration communications to automatic so that meetings are simple to organize and facilitate.	✓
Enhanced compliance management—Administrators can limit screen sharing to only approved applications.	✓
Extensibility	
Extended in-meeting functionality—Customized applications to fit specific needs can be developed, leveraging an extensive set of integration partners and the Flex, ActionScript® 3, and Flash technology developer communities.	✓
A complete solution—While VTC offers a solution focused on internal face-to-face meetings, Adobe Connect offers a complete solution for presentations, meetings, training, and events.	✓

For more information

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