

# **Whitepaper – EasyShare and Video Conferencing**

## **Teleworking Benefits for the Senior Executive**

Advancements in technology now provide for successful and effective visual collaboration, achieving a level of “connectedness” between remotely located participants. Videoconferencing and collaboration can yield significant improvements in corporate efficiency and productivity. GlobalMedia’s conferencing and collaboration solution EasyShare not only saves easily quantifiable travel costs, but also reduces stress and boosts personal productivity for the corporate executive. In this whitepaper, GlobalMedia explores many of the benefits that directly tie to the senior executive.

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### **GlobalMedia Solutions for Enterprise Communications**

GlobalMedia operates in the rich media conferencing and collaboration industry. GlobalMedia has, since 2002, continued to deploy software-only, low cost, highly scalable, secure, Internet Protocol video, voice, and data; PC based desktop conferencing products along with developing the hardware necessary to make the experience sound.

Videoconferencing typically involves a system of hardware and software installed in dedicated conference rooms with the video signal carried by a bundle of ISDN lines or satellite. Some new systems use dedicated IP networks or the Internet to carry both audio and video. The hardware costs for videoconferencing room systems vary depending on the types of systems and the manufacturer. For example, one industry expert estimates the cost of videoconferencing equipment for one site to be \$10,000.

For data conferencing, which is the sharing of a document or an application such as PowerPoint presentations, spread sheets, Word documents, or engineering drawings, service providers typically use the Internet to transport the data, and existing desktop PCs to permit geographically dispersed groups to view and revise a presentation or application collectively. Some but not all providers of data conferencing systems include audio and/or video conferencing in their products. One of the leading data conferencing service providers charges over \$70 per named host (any individual that may schedule and host a meeting) per month subject to minimum subscriptions and additional charges.

GlobalMedia operates on virtually all PCs as well as off-the-shelf servers running Linux OS. The system is highly scalable (it could scale to millions of users) to meet the largest customer's needs or installation requirements and does not require the purchase of proprietary hardware from GlobalMedia.

The only additional hardware costs are an off-the-shelf camera and microphone for the desktop and an off-the-shelf computer server or servers (depending on the size of the installation). Utilizing the Internet to transport the data, there are no additional per minute charges. EasyShare allows up to ten endpoints to meet simultaneously with full duplex audio and video, so that all can simultaneously hear, speak, see and be seen.

EasyShare, GlobalMedia's software-only conferencing product, is a secure product that offers audio, video and data conferencing in one package that is easy to use, deploy, maintain and up-grade and delivers high video quality at any given bandwidth at substantially reduced costs. This cost savings coupled with increased quality of home based technology, provides a real world solution for teleworkers.

The widespread distribution of offices of major enterprises and the large-scale outsourcing of internal enterprise functions has created greater need for collaboration and interaction among geographically dispersed individuals and groups. Many observers believe that the need to reduce travel costs coupled with travel risks and the need for enterprises to enhance business processes will continue the growth of teleworking.

GlobalMedia believes that the driving forces for an enterprise to adopt teleworking are as follows:

- The constant pressure to accelerate growth and improve speed in all processes, whether speed to market, speed to resolve issues or speed to capitalize on opportunities
- The need for clearer more efficient communications and teamwork among geographically dispersed teams, stakeholders, experts and decision makers
- The need to provide improved communications and management for outsourced functions often on the other side of the world
- The need for enterprises to continually reduce travel expenses
- The motivational benefits of allowing staff to work from their home office or remote location
- Concerns for travel safety

GlobalMedia suggests that enterprises looking to implement teleworking within their organization will require the following:

- High Quality Experience: High quality video and audio and built-in systems to optimize the experience.
- Ease of Use: Ease of use for end-users and administrators, requiring minimal training with comprehensive easy to use administrative tools for the IT group.
- Low Cost Basis and Flexibility: Use of standard hardware that fits into the current IT infrastructure, long duration and low cost of maintenance or upgrades and feature migrations to avoid future obsolescence.
- Scalability, Protection of Investments: Technology that handles all anticipated demand for the future and interfaces with other existing systems in the rest of the world. For example, it should integrate with existing legacy H.323 videoconferencing systems and with the public switched telephone network (PSTN).

- **Broad Operating Platform:** Ability to work with a broad embedded base of PCs and operating systems for the desktop and compatibility with a broad array of servers if needed.
- **High Security Integration or High Levels of Corporate Security:** Flexibility of design implementation to meet the internal security requirements of customers for firewalls, Network Address Translation (“NAT”) and security within the enterprise, behind the firewall.
- **Bandwidth Efficiency:** Ease of use in various bandwidth environments and enabling administrators to control the usage of their networks.

Market trends indicate that the next evolution in videoconferencing will be from the conference room to the desktop. As end-users discover that desktop video quality equals or exceeds room-based video and that it is easy to use with low budgetary impact, teleworking adoption will continue its phenomenal growth rate within the Senior Executive level employee.

## **Teleworking Benefits for the Senior Executive**

### *Introduction and Overview*

As technology has continued in its advances, more companies are leveraging the many benefits of Teleworking. The Gartner Group estimates there are now over 137 million global teleworkers working remotely today. This growth will mushroom as companies learn more about work benefits and its highly advantageous return on investment. (InnoVations, Canada 2006).

This document explores the benefits of teleworking within an organization and how it directly relates to its executive level employees. Whilst outsourcing continues to provide much debate on a global scale, this paper is focused on the benefits of implementing a

telework strategy within their corporate management structure to provide more efficient business processes whilst saving money, ensuring business continuity in the event of an unexpected emergency, hiring key personnel based on qualifications (without regional limitations) and enhancing employee retention strategies.

In the first instance, it is important to understand what 'teleworking 2006' really is. Teleworking focuses on the basic philosophy that people should be allowed to work where they are the most productive. (Bigley, Nancy 2005). According to the Telework Exchange, teleworking - also known as telecommuting, means using information technology and telecommunications to replace work related travel. (Telework Exchange, 2006). Emerging next generation applications and tools enable productivity gains across the enterprise and create new agility in business communications. Teleworkers will find their communications tools to be expanding to include VOIP (voice over IP), videoconferencing, web conferencing and live online data collaboration along with new features to support these platforms.

#### Market Drivers for Teleworking

The dominant market accelerators, according to a recent report from analyst firm Gartner, titled 'Teleworking: The Quiet Revolution' are as follows:

- The increasing availability of high-bandwidth access to homes in the more developed industrial nations will drive the spread of new teleworking programs and the extension of teleworking programs as a result of faster access options to a wider range of applications.
- Greater carrier and operator investment in suitable access infrastructure in the less technologically developed areas of the world.
- Increasing pressure, in terms of national and regional legislation, for businesses to offer the option of flexible working.
- Increasing pressure from employees for flexible working options to improve their effectiveness and work-life balance. Employees will put increasing pressure on companies to work at least one day a week from home.
- Increasing environmental pressure, both globally and nationally, to reduce congestion and pollution caused by mass commutes, coupled with the inability of transportation infrastructure to keep pace with the urban

population.

- Reduction in the total cost of ownership (TCO) for equipment and services required for secure remote access to corporate networks.
- Increased availability of secure, reliable national and international managed access services from operators and service providers.
- Employee demand — most of the teleworking groups or associations around the world, with incisive knowledge of how teleworking is developing within their area, highlight a wide chasm between the enthusiasm of the workforce for teleworking and the degree to which management will allow them to telework.
- Continued or increasing political unrest, particularly where it includes a possible threat to the security of those in areas of greatest population and business density. This is rather a secondary effect. For example, following incidents like the Oklahoma bombings in the United States, remote working increased in the area as a means of keeping businesses going while buildings were restored. Once order was restored, a proportion of "emergency teleworkers" continued to operate in this way for part of their working week. (Jones, 2005)

Teleworking is most certainly not appropriate for every company and equally, not right for every employee. Organizations may feel they lose a certain amount of control within their corporate structure and may struggle with trust related issues. Employees may feel a sense of isolation, grow unmotivated and as a result, productivity may decline.

Teleworking will continue its growth and development with the rate of technological advances, enabling more and more companies and employees to take advantage of the numerous benefits gained from teleworking.

No longer considered to be just an alternative to travel by senior level executives, videoconferencing and collaboration has become a core, mission critical business tool for both large and small organizations.

There are many benefits that have fueled teleworking's growth; productivity gains, decreased facility overhead, improved technology, business continuity, environmental issues and reduction of fuel requirements. Teleworking will offer

organizations many advantages, however, in this paper we will explore how teleworking relates to its key corporate resource, its workforce; and investigate the theory that - *people should be allowed to work where they are the most productive.*

## **Job Security**

Over the past decade, more and more attention has been placed on companies implementing business continuity planning to ensure their organization has contingencies in place to recover quickly from a disaster and continue operating. A company's ability to continue with near normal operations during a disaster can be the difference whether a business succeeds or fails. In a recent survey conducted by the American Red Cross, it was estimated that "as many as 40 percent of small businesses that experience a disaster never reopen". In a further study by Datapro Research, the findings were reinforced, confirming, "43 percent of companies hit by severe crisis never open their doors again. Worse yet, the crises have a ripple effect, which causes another 29 percent to fail within two years." (ITAC, Exploring Telework as a Business Continuity Strategy 2004)

Telework provides companies with the ability to ensure workers maintain their productivity during times of disaster recovery and organizational downtime, providing successful business continuity to support corporations for the long term.

## **Better Environment For Productivity**

Many companies and workers believe that one of the main benefits of telecommuting is the increase in productivity. Productivity gains have been linked to many variables that include, for example, the reduction of traditional commuting resulting in a telecommuter's willingness to work longer hours (Mariani, 2000). "Several other factors contributing to the increase in productivity of telecommuters include the distraction-free environment, the possibility of choosing more convenient working hours, more time spent working, and a stronger focus on achieving the required results rather than simply being physically present at work (Givson, Blackweel, Dominicis, and Demerath, 2002, Harpaz, 2002, Potter 2003).

## **Employee Satisfaction**

Telework is regarded as an attractive work option for many executives. Working from a home office can alleviate stress factors, brought on by, for example, driving in dangerous traffic conditions. Work induced illnesses such as the easily spread flu and the common cold are less of a concern. Aside from stress reduction and decreased access to office spread illnesses, probably the most attractive 'perk' is the flexibility that teleworking provides. Attending a son's baseball game, for example, can be worked into a schedule with more ease whilst still meeting corporate deadlines. The ability to work from home or a convenient remote office location, at any time, helps executives create more balance in their lives, and improved morale will result in better work performance and attitude.

## **Supporting Research**

In 2005, 44 percent of U.S. companies offered at least some teleworking options, according to a survey of 1,043 large employers by Mercer Human Resources Consulting, up from 32% in 2001. (Foss, 2006)

Maryella Gockel, who oversees flexible work scheduling at Ernst & Young in New York, believes it is the employees who are driving the teleworking trend. (Foss, 2006) More senior level executives are demanding flexibility and technology advancements such as high-speed Internet connections make it easier than ever to ensure a close-knit relationship between teleworkers and their colleagues and clients.

In a recent case study on Bank of America's teleworking initiative, published by Telecommutect.com, it states; "The program has led to increased productivity and morale, reduced absenteeism and of course, holding on to the talents of qualified people."

Further research conducted by GlobalMedia on senior level executives who have utilized teleworking for at least two years provided the following results.

The executives were asked to confirm the top benefits to them that included:

- Independence
- Flexibility
- Cost savings in clothes and gas
- Job satisfaction
- Ability to focus – less distractions
- Opportunity to work globally
- less travel time
- Time effectiveness (Time driving to the office is now productive work time)
- Less stress
- Better work-life balance
- Not having to move residence to be located near the corporate HQ

When asked what were the key benefits to the organization the answers varied and included:

- To provide more accessible regionalized customer support by having employees at dispersed remote locations.
- The corporate business model simply could not function without it.
- A huge benefit due to the fact it provides more flexibility in organizing work around personal commitments, meaning less time off.
- “Absolutely. My company gets an additional ten hours of work out of me and I get this same productivity gain from my employees.”
- “Yes, very much so
- “Yes, but it only works for those who are self-motivated and disciplined. It is not for everyone.”

In all those surveyed, lack of face-to-face interaction was the key disadvantage to teleworking.

When asked how they saw communications changing in the future, the responses focused around the increased development of technology and the decrease in its costs. The format becoming more real-time, so, for example, IM'ing or videoconferencing instead of email and the tools used to communicate will become increasingly more portable, making it possible to work remotely from anywhere, 24/7.

## **Conclusion**

Teleworking provides many benefits to the organization as well as to the employee. Most executives now desire the option of teleworking to be included in their benefits package and companies are now taking a more flexible management approach to gain the full benefits of a successful teleworking initiative.

With the increase of 'Social Richness', described as 'how personable the technology medium appears to the user (Lombard and Tilton, 1997), workers feel more like they are at the office instead of being at home in front of their computer. Technology has virtually caught up with executive and organizational requirements and the pricing for the technology has dropped considerably, making it more feasible for organizations to implement a teleworking initiative.

Improved reliability and quality, lower equipment and bandwidth costs and the migration to IP networks are increasing the rapid deployment of videoconferencing and collaboration, laying the foundation for organizations to conduct business anytime, from anywhere without compromise.

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