



Read the article about video conferencing. Do you agree that having a video conference is more difficult than having a face-to-face meeting?

Digital meetings: **The growth in video conferencing**

An increasing number of companies are turning to video conferencing to bring people together for meetings. Experts predict that in the next 10 years, video conferences will replace as much as 20% of business travel. So why has there been such growth in digital meetings?

“The key driver behind our use of video conferencing is cost,” says Martin Pile, Director of Corporate Communications with a multinational engineering company. “The technology means that we can save on airfares and hotel bills. Our people can meet more frequently at less cost.

“Video conferences also enable us to bring together people who would never meet if the technology was not there.”

Fiona Clark, a communications consultant who advises companies about digital conferencing solutions, is also enthusiastic. But she sounds a note of caution.

“Companies have to realize that the technology is not free. Video conferencing systems are getting cheaper and more reliable, but companies which want to use them still have to make some kind of investment. This can be a particular problem for small and medium-sized companies,” says Fiona.

“There’s also the problem of people feeling comfortable with video conferencing,” she adds. “Meeting via a video link-up definitely beats

discussing issues via email. But users often find the video conference environment difficult at first.”

Fiona often recommends companies that adopt video conferencing to invest in training for the staff who will meet each other digitally.

“People have to realize that a meeting via video conference is not the same as a face-to-face meeting. People can feel nervous and act in a different way than usual,” Fiona comments.

“We provide training where we videotape users and get them to notice their nervous tics on screen. If people play with their hair or put their hands in front of their mouths because they’re nervous, we can draw their attention to this and

help them to appear more relaxed,” she adds.

“We also advise people to slow down their body language. Hand and body gestures can sometimes seem more aggressive on screen.”

“And don’t forget that everyone should wear name tags during video conferences,” says Fiona.

Having a video conference may not be as easy as going to a real meeting, especially at first. But more of our meetings are going to be held via video link-up in the future. It looks like we’re all going to need some of that training.



Over to you

- According to the article, what are the advantages and disadvantages of video conferencing?
- Can you think of other problems users can have with video conferencing? How could these problems be overcome?
- Have you ever participated in a video conference? If so, what did you like and dislike? If not, would you like to?