



"As Natural As Being There"

World Energy interviews Michael Carson, Energy Strategic Manager, Polycom, Inc.

World Energy: Who is Polycom, beyond the "star" phones we see on the tables in company conference rooms?

Carson: Founded back in 1990, Polycom is the only company today delivering end-to-end rich media collaborative applications for voice, video, data and the Web, from desktop and mobile personal systems to room systems and the network core. Our vision is to enable people to connect anytime, anyplace and with any device in a virtual experience as natural as being there.

In addition to being the worldwide market-share leader for conference-room speakerphones, we are also the largest provider of group and personal video conference systems, video and voice collaboration infrastructures, enterprise and carrier-class multipoint conference bridges. Polycom also has the only solution for delivering truly unified collaborative communications – the convergence of voice, video, data and Web – known as the Polycom Office.

World Energy: How does your technology improve the way energy companies do business?

Carson: What most people don't realize is that 60 percent of their message is delivered and remembered not by what they say, but by their face-to-face interaction and body language. There have been studies done by companies and institutions like 3M, AT&T and Harvard that show roughly a 200 percent increase in retention using video conferencing rather than the telephone. That can equate to reduced repetitive training of personnel, more efficient meetings, shortened time to market, increased productivity and faster reaction times. So from a business improvement perspective, video conferencing has shown to both increase revenues and decrease costs.

World Energy: How much of an impact can these types of communications bring to an organization?



Carson: To cite a couple examples, one of our energy clients was able to reduce travel expenses by more than \$100,000 per month. Another client estimated utilizing video conferencing technology decreased the development cycle and time to market of a strategic product by four months, equating to significant additional revenues. The technology doesn't just help large organizations with hundreds of locations. Video conferencing can expand any company's global reach or provide the ability to bring resources or expertise to a project that, due to geographic location, would have been inaccessible in the past.

World Energy: What groups within a company utilize video conferencing?

Carson: Aside from the traditional business uses such as training, department management and executive staff meetings, the real growth has come from using the systems for design product planning and collaboration, knowledge management, production monitoring and optimization of drilling operations.

World Energy: What are some of the global events that have helped drive an increase in videoconferencing?

Carson: With the SARS outbreak, avian flu, the turmoil and security risks in various regions and the longer security lines at the airport, business travel has lost a bit of its luster. The time spent traveling not only takes you away from your office, but also reduces the time with your family, friends and hobbies.

World Energy: Hurricanes Katrina and Rita are perfect examples of the benefits of video conferencing.

Carson: Companies used video as part of their disaster recovery program. After Katrina, workers from companies in the New Orleans area were relocated to various facilities throughout the Gulf. Some were placed in other existing company sites, while others were located in temporary facilities put in place as part of their disaster recovery plan. By utilizing video conferencing, project members, department staff and executives were able to continue face-to-face communication. This not only assisted in keeping their operations ongoing, the visual contact aided in the human interaction during the stressful period. It continued during the period when travel to the Gulf region was severely limited.

World Energy: Here at *World Energy*, we recently installed video conference systems in our office for meetings. How has the technology changed in the past few years?

Carson: Like any technology based on microprocessors, the improvements have been astounding. The quality of experience we can deliver

is comparable to broadcast television. Specifically, over the last two years the video and audio clarity have tripled. In actuality, the audio clarity on our video systems is more than four times greater than a traditional telephone call. Another recent enhancement is the ability to share live data applications from Visio, PowerPoint and the Internet within the video conference, so you see people and the application content simultaneously. This allows the meetings to be more natural and spontaneous.

World Energy: We can see why better video is important to distance meetings, but how does better audio enhance the experience?

Carson: On the phone, it is hard enough trying to understand what someone is saying when they speak the same language. In today's global world, it's likely that English may be their second or third language. The wider audio range and fidelity of our video conferencing systems provide a crystal-clear natural experience. You can actually understand what people are saying, without asking them to repeat themselves or slow down.

World Energy: What are some of the challenges to the technology?

Carson: Video conferencing requires more bandwidth and is more sensitive to errors than traditional phone calls. In the past, the only transport mechanism available was digital telephone lines – costly and not available in many areas of the world. With the maturity of IP, a company's local and wide-area networks now provide an inexpensive, reliable and secure transport mechanism.

Another barrier is the technology's history. Video conferencing is relatively new compared to other technologies. Like the early computer, the first experiences were hit or miss. Sometimes the call would fail, other times be adequate, but rarely optimal. On top of that, the video conferencing was so complex it required a technician to launch and monitor the entire call. These factors created a negative first impression. However, over the past few years, the improvements made have been dramatic. The ease of use and reliability rival that of the phone on your desk. Once someone experiences these improvements, the past impressions tend to fade.

World Energy: What do you say to someone who says the phone is just as good?

Carson: I ask them why they still have conference rooms in their buildings. People realize that the greatest impact you can have is with direct face-to-face communications. What I find interesting is that no matter how many conference rooms a company has, they tend to be in constant use and rarely available.

World Energy: What changes are happening now?

Carson: From a utilization point, the ability for external communication is driving current growth. As an example, when e-mail first came out, it was used as an internal tool to speed communications. Now e-mail is often the preferred way to deliver a message to someone either internal to your company or, more likely, external. We are seeing video being used more and more to communicate externally with clients, vendors, business partners, technical experts and more.



Another area that is helping change and expand video is the ability to schedule the entire experience in your calendar. You can reserve rooms, invite attendees with e-mail notification and have the video units automatically launch calls to one or more sites. This allows an individual or teams to walk into the conference room with the far site or sites already connected. They can focus on their meeting, not the technology. Integration with the desktop through either the phone system or computer is another example of recent changes combining multiple applications into one interface, providing ease of use and administration-support efficiencies.

World Energy: And on the horizon?

Carson: As with all technologies, we continue to see improvements. First of all, we are committed to improving the user experience by, for example, moving from regular picture quality to high definition, from regular audio to spatial separation that actually can distinguish where you sit in the room and emulate that experience to the far sites. Mobility is another area where we are investing research. Economically providing the ability to have a high-quality unit small enough for one person to carry and move within an area such as a rig or refinery is a huge benefit, as is providing a digital recording to archive and play back the entire experience.

Polycom offers a full range of high-quality voice and video communications endpoints, video management software, Web conferencing software, multi-network gateways and multipoint conferencing to enable organizations of all sizes to increase productivity and agility.

Easy to deploy, manage and use, Polycom products deliver business value by cutting costs, simplifying system management, fostering real-time collaboration and decision making, and improving relationships with employees, customers and partners.

Among Polycom's most significant new offerings is the Polycom Mobile Responder™, a portable conferencing system that delivers TV-quality, 17" widescreen display, a high-resolution built-in color camera, integrated speaker and microphone and a standard IP connection that allows for real-time data sharing – all in a lightweight casing that meets FAA guidelines for carry-on baggage.

For more information, contact Michael Carson at 1-800-383-9469 or at Michael.Carson@Polycom.com