



TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY STRENGTHENS PERFORMANCE THROUGH WEB CONFERENCING:

Compelling Results in Sales, Marketing, Training, and Support

The technology industry is prone to rapid, continuous, and often disruptive change. Companies must be agile and responsive to survive, much less thrive, in this hyper-competitive arena.

With new product releases continually being developed and introduced (often across widely dispersed customers, employees, and partners), as well as new market opportunities frequently emerging, there's nothing more critical to success than open lines of communication and clear channels for collaboration. Leaders in technology, perhaps more than in any other industry, must have a strategy for effective communication and collaboration.

However, the new strategy for success can't be accomplished through old, conventional approaches. Today's companies aren't willing (or able) to allocate travel dollars for sales, services, training, or other interactions that don't need to occur in person. Technology companies – whether hardware, software, or services – must themselves capitalize on technology to meet objectives in this fast-paced era.

Not surprisingly, technology companies tend to be early adopters of other technologies. At present, the industry is rapidly embracing Web and audio conferencing technologies to drive significant performance and productivity gains. Companies that have deployed such solutions expansively are even deriving notable competitive advantages.

Those fully leveraging investments in Web and audio conferencing are applying it to challenges in sales, marketing, training, support, and team collaboration. Specifically, they're using it to generate more qualified leads, accelerate sales conversions, increase the performance of support teams, strengthen product development, and enhance the effectiveness of training efforts.



Market Drivers: Mega-trends in the Technology Sector

What are the key market factors driving the rapid pace that characterizes the technology industry? There are several to consider:

+ Accelerated Speed to Market.

While the demand for continuous new product and service introductions has always been a core part of the technology industry, the pace of such moves continues to accelerate. Product designers, marketers, and other parties must collaborate rapidly and effectively in order to meet brief windows of opportunity. And technology is constantly changing, creating new demands for knowledge. Every time there is a new release or rollout, salespeople, partners, and customers all must be educated and retrained.

+ Heightened Customer Expectations.

In today's competitive markets, customers have increasingly high expectations with regard to how they should be managed and treated. They want their suppliers and solution providers to be easy to do business with. This factor has implications not only in how sales and account managers engage customers, but in how service and support personnel handle challenges as they emerge. Customers want their suppliers to accomplish more, more quickly, and in a less disruptive fashion.

+ Pressure to Remain Innovative and Differentiated.

Technology companies must stay on the cutting edge to remain competitive. This applies not

only to products, but business processes and practices as well. Sales and support departments, for example, lend themselves to valuable improvements because of their customer-facing positions. Companies that incorporate collaborative technology into customer-facing processes have the potential to increase business value.

+ Demand for Efficiency.

While the technology industry continues to outpace other sectors, demand for efficient operations are now greater than ever. Companies must reduce costs and save time, but deliver more. Whether the challenge is in marketing, sales, support, product development, or team training, companies are meeting additional goals with fewer resources. They are even expected to “go green” by reducing material usage and travel, thus heightening interest in remote demonstrations, online collaboration, and distance learning.

+ Companies Becoming Increasingly Distributed, Decentralized, and Global.

“The world is flat,” argues best-selling author Thomas L. Friedman. Now, organizations draw talent from around the nation and globe. They often handle development, service, and support from abroad. Dispersed sales teams must jointly assemble forecasts and commit to objectives. The question technology companies must face is: How do we effectively manage and leverage our distributed resources without diminishing performance or disappointing customers?

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Looming Business Challenges in an Accelerating Era

As the pace of competition intensifies and customer expectations increase, technology executives confront an array of critical business challenges. These challenges – all related to collaboration and communication – must be addressed if companies are to thrive in the years to come.

Consider the key issues faced by technology executives:

Training/Development Executives Face Demands for Accelerated and Effective Learning. With people dispersed geographically, training leaders struggle to rapidly and cost effectively develop the skills necessary to address market demands. Training may once have been delivered on-site, but such approaches are no longer feasible. Traditional training methods can no longer keep pace with the rapid movement of markets.¹

At the same time, training leaders must ensure the effectiveness of their efforts. Are salespeople actually developing the knowledge and skills necessary to sell a complex new offering? Are partners aligned with a new initiative? Do service and support people possess the insights needed to rapidly solve customer problems? These are just some of the questions that training executives must try to answer.

Sales Executives are Expected to Reach More Customers, More Effectively in More Cost-Effective Ways. Sales expenses are increasingly under the watchful eye of budget cutters. They are no longer willing to invest as heavily in field sales forces that depend on face-to-face meetings (and significant travel expenses) to move a prospect through the pipeline. Instead, companies now expect a great deal of sales activity to occur online or over the phone. The question for a sales executive is:

How can we engage in compelling sales interactions without being face-to-face?

In order to cultivate more leads, set up more appointments, and close more deals, sales forces must wean themselves from traditional sales approaches.² After all, salespeople can triple or quadruple the number of credible conversations they can complete in a day when no longer required to drive or fly to customer sites.

At the same time, distributed sales teams can heighten their alignment and ability to engage in team selling, when no longer tethered to a particular office location for a sales planning or forecasting meeting. Leading companies are also radically enhancing and increasing sales training by delivering it through virtual methods.

Marketing Executives Challenged to Build Trust and Deliver Measurable Results. In the past, market growth cemented a perception of marketing success. Now, profitable growth is harder to come by. Marketers must act with greater precision and measurably demonstrate the impact of investments. Under the circumstances,

¹ Claire Schooley, Forrester Research, "Knowledge, Learning and Work Unite!," Feb. 14, 2007

² Geoffrey James, Selling Power Magazine white paper, "The Business Case for Web Conferencing in Sales Environments," http://www.sellingpower.com/webconf/includes/Business_Case.pdf.



it's no longer acceptable to throw money at activities that don't lend themselves to clear measurements. Marketers need customer feedback. They also are expected to position their companies as "thought leaders" or "trusted advisors" capable of guiding customers through complex decisions.

Such trends have diminished the impact of advertising and even direct mail. Now, prospective customers want high-value content from their solution providers. They respond to high-touch marketing. While likely to ignore product pitches, they will attend insightful webinars. Similarly, they may attend fewer tradeshows, but engage in more online demos. Technology marketing, in other words, must be engaging, build trust, and lend itself to performance measurement.³

Service and Support Executives Must Cost Effectively Enhance the Customer Experience.

Typically understaffed and under-funded, customer support teams are expected to turn trouble tickets more quickly without raising costs. Unfortunately, they often struggle to solve today's complex technical problems using conventional methods. The old practice of asking questions and directing customers over the phone is not only slow, cumbersome, and costly, it also lends itself to miscommunications, errors, and inaccuracies.

Increasingly, customer support organizations are examining screen-sharing technologies that enable a support professional to take over a customer's desktop. This accelerates the rate at which problems can be remotely diagnosed and solved. And, the experience of viewing a shared

screen practically eliminates the possibility of miscommunication. Further, such approaches promise to address other problems under the purview of customer support organizations: frustrated customers, long wait times, excessive call times, poor customer service, and dropping satisfaction levels. By rethinking the way they deliver service and support, companies have an opportunity to enhance the customer experience and strengthen loyalty.

The Smart Solution: Web Conferencing

If technology companies are to strengthen collaboration, communication, and training, as well as meet growing demands, they should explore the value of enterprise Web conferencing solutions. Such solutions leverage the immediate, interactive, and engaging aspects of the Web to deliver higher levels of performance.⁴

Companies that continue to shoulder the high costs of in-person meetings actively undermine their own profitability. Or, because high-touch interactions are often high-cost, others simply cut back on face-to-face communication and collaboration, which results in under-trained people, under-served clients, and decreased performance overall. By contrast, Web conferencing enables rich and effective interaction without high costs. It draws on interactive, multi-media capabilities to provide an engaging, collaborative experience.

³ Elana Anderson, Forrester Research, "Making B2B Marketing Work," Apr. 13, 2005.

⁴ Jeffrey Mann, Gartner, "Choose the Right Model When Deploying Web Conferencing," Dec. 2, 2005.

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Full and expansive Web conferencing solutions encompass multiple components:

+ Sales and Small Group Communications:

If you are seeking ways to improve group meetings and enhance interactions with prospects and clients, you need dynamic, real-time capabilities that allow small groups to share insights, brainstorm, and collaborate on documents and/or in applications. This type of session imparts the same value as a face-to-face meeting, but eliminates the associated costs and inconveniences.

+ Marketing and Event Communications:

If you are looking for compelling, cost-effective, and measurable ways to reach prospective clients, you need the capability to hold events – even large-scale events – on the Web. Now practically ubiquitous in the technology industry, online events such as webinars enable marketers to generate leads and impress current customers with informational (rather than overtly sales-focused) seminars. What's more, these events can be recorded and posted online to attract additional leads without utilizing additional resources.

+ Training and Development:

If you have a highly dispersed workforce, it's very difficult from a time, efficiency, and cost perspective to bring your people to a central location for training. You can't do that continuously without massive cost and disruption. Addressing this challenge, Web conferencing enables you to create virtual classroom training environments – drawing on

a rich array of tools that facilitate interaction and enhance the participant's experience. Participative metering even allows the event leader to track – moment by moment – the effectiveness of the learning session based on audience response.¹

+ Service and Support.

If you strive to deliver a more valuable customer support experience, you need to be able to engage customers online and even remotely take over their desktops. This not only expedites the diagnosis and resolution of customer problems, it also enables you to record sessions – building a valuable archive of support solutions accessible to both employees and customers. Ultimately, online service and support is a win-win situation for you and your customers. For them, this level of service is a faster and more convenient way to get problems solved. For you, it's highly beneficial in terms of time and cost savings.

Through a deployment that encompasses multiple areas, technology companies can more fully leverage investments in Web conferencing. Enterprise solutions enable you to use the same infrastructure to address an array of business challenges – whether they revolve around sales, marketing, training, support, or other forms of team collaboration.

You should expect a Web conferencing solution to include centralized management of content, bandwidth, and security settings. In terms of security, the solution should enable you to create permission levels that correspond with existing



levels of authorization.⁵ Another key source of value is relevant access to a library of presentations, events, and recordings that allows content to be reused and further leveraged. You should also expect the solution to be available for purchase on a hosted or an installed basis, enabling you to choose the deployment most appropriate to your objectives and IT environment.

The benefits of such as a solution are clear and compelling:

+ Increases Revenue.

By moving beyond the face-to-face marketing and selling model, you can generate more leads and increase the quality and quantity of interactions with prospective clients. In essence, Web conferencing extends your reach, enabling you to contact more customers and close more business.

+ Reduces Costs.

Companies can reduce the hard costs associated with travel, meeting, and training by leveraging virtual communication capabilities.

+ Improves Productivity.

Through Web conferencing, companies can accomplish more with less. Rather than forcing people to spend time in traffic or on airplanes to meet, sell, or train, you offer a more productive way to meet objectives.

+ Enhances Live Communication.

Technology companies often must convey difficult ideas and concepts, while presenting complex products. Web conferencing enables you to put your product right in front

of prospective clients to provide real-world demonstrations and facilitate demanding conversations.

+ Supports the Full Customer Life Cycle.

By capitalizing on Web conferencing applications, you can more effectively manage the customer through each stage of your relationship. You can improve performance in marketing and sales at the outset of a relationship. Then, you can strengthen the relationship through above-and-beyond levels of service and support. Smart training ensures that your workforce stays up-to-speed and that your client's workforce continues to maximize and expand their investment.

Success Criteria: What to Look for in a Web Conferencing Solution

Technology companies considering an investment in Web conferencing solutions should consider the criteria now guiding many of their leading peers:

+ Common enterprise platform.

Look for solutions based on a common platform that supports a broad range of functions – whether training, marketing, sales, or support. The modalities of the solution should be tightly integrated instead of bolted together. Ask yourself: Are users and content centralized on one system? Is everyone logging onto a single system? Will my system administrator have centralized control over users, permissions, security, and other critical settings?

⁵Jeffrey Mann, Gartner, "Information Exchange is the Top Security Issue for Web Conferencing," Sept. 9, 2005.

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+ Compliance with key security and bandwidth requirements.

One should seek solutions that deliver a high level of performance in a secure environment. You should be able to block any part of the system from individuals who do not have necessary authorizations. You should also be able to dynamically adjust bandwidth settings to ensure your network is used most effectively.

+ No Plug-ins.

The ease of participating in a session is critical to administrators, session leaders, and participants. Some Web conferencing solution providers require third-party plug-ins to make sessions accessible. IT shouldn't have to surrender control and accept plug-ins merely to allow users to access a session. End users shouldn't have to endure cumbersome joining processes that may hinder the overall Web conferencing experience.

+ Deployment options.

Web conferencing vendors should offer deployment choices that serve a broad array of organizational needs including high security requirements and limited in-house resources. You should have the ability to deploy on-premise behind your firewall or take advantage of a hosted model if you prefer a hands-off approach.

+ Pricing options.

While some solution providers only allow their customers to rent their software through subscriptions, many organizations can realize the highest return on investment and lowest total cost of ownership by purchasing their software licenses. Vendors should extend this option.

These are some of the core issues decision-makers must consider as they look to maximize the value of their investments in Web conferencing. By ensuring these criteria are met and by making smart investments, technology companies like yours can take the key steps necessary to improve communication, enhance collaboration, accelerate learning, cut costs, and strengthen valuable relationships.

About BroadSoft iLinc

Phoenix-based BroadSoft iLinc Communications, Inc., a subsidiary of BroadSoft, Inc. (NASDAQ: BSFT), provides advanced web conferencing services for businesses, governments, and educational institutions around the world. For more than a decade, the company has specialized in helping organizations leverage virtual events and conferencing to reduce travel time, expenses and environmental impact. iLinc and its respective logo are the registered trademarks of BroadSoft, Inc. www.ilinc.com.

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