Unified Communications
Telepresence in Focus: Sony

A NEW VISION
Sony Europe leads the field in the growing technologies of telepresence and videoconferencing

Future-Proof
How technology is offering environmentally friendly solutions to connecting people

High Definition
How premium quality visuals and sound are pushing the boundaries of communication
Innovative collaboration

Many of you will know Sony for our great consumer products like Bravia, Vaio laptops, Walkman and Playstation, but you may be less familiar with our group of professionals who are dedicated to bringing this heritage in developing innovative and dynamic audio-visual products to businesses throughout Europe and indeed the world. Headquartered in the UK, Sony Professional Solutions Europe is committed to helping businesses realise the critical benefits that integrated AV/IT solutions like videoconferencing, digital signage and network video monitoring can deliver – namely an increase in time; a streamlining of process; a positive contribution to the environment and a reduction in costs.

By capitalising on the advantages technology offers, corporations are able to address some of the most pressing issues on today’s global business agenda, from carbon neutrality to employee connectivity. The modern IP-network has revolutionised real-time remote communication, transcending limitations that distance and time had previously imposed. The arrival of High Definition (HD) in business has enabled more effective and emotional communication management for small and large organisations alike. Having pioneered HD in the broadcast industry, we have built on our deep heritage and expertise to bring this leading technology to videoconferencing solutions for the business community through stylish desktop and stand alone systems to large integrated solutions. As corporations and CEDs adopt new ways of working, the seemingly limitless possibilities that technology offers are being realised. From industry leading and accessible videoconferencing applications to digital signage and network video monitoring systems, Sony enables businesses to revolutionise the way they engage and communicate with their employees and stakeholders. Working from a core IP network, organisations are harnessing bandwidth to streamline and economise business processes and create an environment that is conducive to sharing best practice and innovation through collaboration.

In a financially volatile and competitive world, it is critical to be stringent with costs. As such, CEDs worldwide are embracing the collaborative benefits that technology like videoconferencing offers. Businesses that actively use videoconferencing benefit from quick decision-making, uninterrupted workflow and ultimately a better work-life balance for employees through the elimination of time-consuming and costly travel. Frequent travellers endure long journeys on the road, queues at airport security, jetlag and time away from family and friends for meetings that could often be achieved virtually.

Reducing the number of flights required for business travel would significantly reduce a corporation’s carbon footprint: millions of tonnes of CO2 would be saved if business travel within Europe was replaced with videoconferencing. As environmental concerns continue to grow, we at Sony are also committed to responding responsibly. Through investing in technology and researching carbon-intensive alternatives, we are aiming to achieve a ‘zero environmental footprint’.

At Sony, we strive to design solutions that give a real sense of presence and collaboration between users. 3D telepresence is the first of its kind to enable people to look directly into the eyes of the 3D life-size image of their counterparts. This is the result of the collaborative effort between Sony and Teleportel, a dedicated distribution company responsible for 3D telepresence solutions, which generate a more interactive and dynamic VC experience compared to any other telepresence solution.

Sony is also pushing the boundaries of what normal videoconferencing applications can achieve. As part of our leading PELA technology, Sony has integrated videoconferencing and IP-monitoring suites to enhance the videoconferencing experience with live audio and video from remote network cameras. This application is limited only by imagination: worldwide manufacturing teams can meet via videoconference to discuss a product, whilst connected to a live IP camera that shows the assembly line, or international property deals can take place with live viewings of the properties themselves.

Videoconferencing and virtual, visual communication has become an essential tool for global industry. From London to Tokyo, it enables geographically distant communities to connect and collaborate in real time. Sony is committed to enriching the modern audio-visual experience at a pace that matches that of a dynamic business world.

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Today's competitive weapon

Whilst freight and cargo were traditionally the commercial drivers for companies and international trade, today's business world is increasingly revolving around an exchange of ideas and services.

There is a world of expectations between the front office and the back office, Capgemini India currently employs more than 15,000 people and it is expected that this number will rise. To promote the cooperation between the front office and the back office, Capgemini was looking for an advanced videoconferencing system that would give physically separated teams the feeling that they were in one and the same room (‘telepresence’).

The human aspect is key in telepresence. In order to understand and bridge cultural differences as much as possible, it is important for individuals who are separated physically to be able to exchange both verbal and non-verbal communication signals. In addition to promoting collaboration between the front office and the back office, Capgemini was also looking for a way to find customers to work together with India. Partly by bringing India closer to its customers via an advanced videoconferencing system, Capgemini was hoping they could show them how capable their Indian employees were. “Here too, the human aspect is again important,” says Capgemini’s Peter Paul Tonen. “We would like our customers to realise for themselves that there are real people and colleagues on the other side of the world.”

Capgemini found its solution with Teleportel and christened it the “cPort”. “Compared to an ordinary videoconferencing system, our product enables users to look at each other directly eye-to-eye. What’s more, we can work with life-sized images in 3D that increase the feeling of physical presence,” says the founder of Teleportel, Luc De Backer. Teleportel has used its expertise to build this into an advanced videoconferencing system that creates the illusion of real presence. Luc De Backer explains why they opted for Sony: “We did speak to other providers, of course, but there is only one player on the market that offers such good value for money. What’s more, Sony provides excellent support during and after sales, and has top specialists in their professional field.”

Capgemini’s Peter Paul is very happy with the results achieved. “The cPort has shown that the great distance between front office and back office doesn’t impede human interaction – and achieved more personal communication, easily, quickly and inexpensively.” Capgemini is registering good results, both in quantity and quality. The quantitative results are mainly to do with the number of flights between front office and back office, which has been reduced with the use of the cPort. The need for people to meet one another in person remains, but the cPort is often an excellent alternative to a second or third meeting. Thanks to the cPort, an informed decision can be made faster, and where ideas, knowledge, and inspiration can flow securely from colleague to colleague.

The Portuguese Immigration and Border Control Department (SEF) is a security department, attached to the Ministry of Home Affairs, which has administrative autonomy and forms part of the country’s domestic security operation. The department’s objective is to control the movement of people at the borders as well as the residence and activities of foreign nationals in the country. Its job is to monitor and control border procedures, including international areas of ports and airports. Besides performing these functions, the Portuguese Immigration and Border Control Department aims to provide effective management and communication of data relating to the Portuguese area of the National Schengen Information System (NIS). Other information systems under the SEF’s jurisdiction include those common to the Member States of the European Union (SEF’s jurisdiction include those common to the Member States of the European Union regarding controlling the movement of people, as well as the systems relating to Portugal’s passport issue database (BADEP).

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In addition to strengthening relationships through increasing choice and accessibility, businesses operate more intelligently as innovative communications tools are helping in both traditional and non-typical security cultures and time zones. Capitalising on the advantages of videoconferencing offers, Gyeyonggi Do, the largest provincial government in Korea with 17 million inhabitants, has chosen Sony to install a solution to connect its 32 counties. Scheduling to be finished in March 2008, this application will be the largest HD conference system of its kind in the world. The Government of Gyeyonggi Do has invested in 103 HD videoconferencing units to help connect the government representatives across Korea’s biggest province. At the top end, Sony recently launched the first 3D Telepresence solution in Europe. In partnership with Teleportal, a dedicated distribution company responsible for 3D Telepresence solutions, this 3D Telepresence solution delivers audio and video levels on a par with broadcasting standards at a price that makes it available to a much wider market than competitors’ systems. This solution delivers unique eye-to-eye contact and a real sense of presence for an open and collaborative business environment. Well received by large corporate customers, including CapGemiini and ABN Amro, it has already rolled out in multi-national firms. Across a range of industries, Sony is both a leader and partner in helping businesses respond to the challenges of modern business. From environmental issues to fiscal constraints, Sony is helping corporations meet the demands of today’s corporate agenda with its new generation of videoconferencing solutions. As globalisation spreads, it is technology that will lead the way to a more connected future.

Videoconferencing is enabling new communication possibilities and is helping colleagues and clients to interact like never before. Empowering executives with new choices for engaging with offshore clients and colleagues, the quality and diversity of today’s videoconferencing equipment means that corporations can operate remotely and without compromise. Virtual meeting, videoconferencing enables participants to engage and collaborate in a way that is radically different from telephone and email.

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The perception that High Definition is only a luxury for the broadcast industry is changing.

To sell a vision requires great visuals.

As technology evolves and the cost of ownership continues to decrease, High Definition is becoming an increasing reality for businesses of all sizes. As it begins to permeate our everyday lives, its commercial applications are no longer limited to television. Whether you are at home, in the cinema, in operating room procedures from remote locations, consult with colleagues abroad through (wireless) IP connection they are able to view complicated radio and satellite links. Through improved clarity and new viewing possibilities.

A new era in interactive business communication

In healthcare, where it is critical to have accurate pictures of every patient. Surgery demands extremely clear and accurate images, often surpassing the requirements of most European television channels. The compact High Definition video conferencing system, medical practitioners have been able to do away with 2D images.

Today’s telepresence capabilities

According to Luc De Backer, CEO of Teleportel, it is now possible to be global and personal at the same time, without compromise.

The ultimate experience of telepresence is the live interaction with people from other parts of the world, as they appear before you in the same room, all your senses, three-dimensionaly and life-sized, with correctly aligned eye contact. However, many telepresence solutions are inadequate. Over the years, numerous customers around the world have found that HD Telepresence has met their needs more effectively and has provided a positive ROI along with an outstanding Return on Investment.

An open and progressive corporate culture begins with effective communication, often across continents and time zones.

But communication is about more than meeting, it is about collaborating. Imagine a major multinational car manufacturer is introducing a new model to its range. Following the initial design stages, the company must then look to its local markets to determine how it fits within the region. Will the new model be a success locally, and if not, what can be done to ensure it is? This same example can be applied to companies operating domestically.

Regardless of the industry, businesses must understand regional markets to succeed.

A popular and versatile communications medium for today’s global business world, the new generation of video conferencing applications helps users overcome geographical distances. Through innovative HD applications, Sony is expanding possibilities with tools that provide an interactive and deeply personal experience. With a range of unique applications available, businesses can choose a solution to meet their specific needs.

The industry leader, Sony has pioneered HD technology and the advantages it offers. With HD video conferencing participants enjoy superior audio and video quality, which helps them experience true-to-life detail and the real emotions of face-to-face business communications. On top of that, with Sony HD Telepresence solutions participants enjoy real-eye-to-eye contact and 3D imaging to further enhance the collaborative environment.

A new era in telepresence. Medical practitioners have been able to do away with complicated radio and satellite links. Through wireless IP connection they are able to view operating room procedures from remote locations, consult with colleagues abroad or conduct virtual lectures and training seminars in full High Definition colour and detail reproduction, unsurpassed by anyone on the market. Combine sophisticated High Definition video conferencing with Sony’s new High Definition LCD models or projectors for improved clarity and new viewing possibilities.

From small meeting rooms to boardrooms, auditoriums and hospital operating theatres, video conferencing offers an invaluable time-saving device by making real-time communication and collaboration between large groups possible. Across many industry sectors it rings true that to sell a vision requires great visual. Through premium audio and video quality that brings virtual participants a step closer to reality, Sony is ideally positioned to identify, supply and manage end-to-end, tailor-made High Definition visual communication solutions.
Sony Professional Solutions

A note from Kees Hoogstraate, European Marketing Manager, Videoconferencing at Sony Professional Solutions Europe

Sony Professional Solutions Europe (PSE) is a division of Sony Europe that creates and supplies products, systems, and solutions to the business market.

Drawing on Sony’s audio-visual (AV) heritage, Sony PSE tailors products for the videoconferencing healthcare, media and broadcast, network video monitoring, videoconferencing and retail, transport and large venue industries. Sony PSE is supported by Sony Professional Services, a European team which provides support with designing, financing and installing end-to-end AV/IT systems.

Sony Europe

Sony Europe, a subsidiary of Sony Corporation, handles manufacturing, R&D, design, sales and marketing of European consumer and business products. Established in 1960, Sony Europe operates in 28 countries, with both retail and manufacturing bases growing through consistent investment.

Sony’s MPEG and DV-based products and systems, along with its industry defining Betacam range, have contributed to open and widely adopted broadcast and IT standards. Sony has also played a leading role in networking, disk and file-based technologies for media applications, along with CCTV, medical, educational, video-networking and display systems.

Sony Europe, headquartered at the Sony Center am Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, Germany, is responsible for the company’s European electronics business and registered consolidated sales of €8.22bn (¥1,118 bn) for the fiscal year which ended March 31st, 2006.

Sony Corporation

Sony Corporation is a leading manufacturer of audio, video, communications, and information technology products for the consumer and professional markets.

Its music, motion pictures, television, computer entertainment, and online businesses make Sony one of the most prolific global entertainment companies, employing 156,500 people worldwide.

Sony was founded by Morita Akio and Ibuka Masaru, under a different name, in 1946. Today the company is led by Chairman and CEO Sir Howard Stringer and President and Electronics CEO Ryoji Chubachi.

If you would like further information about any of the products or solutions you have read about in this supplement, please visit www.sonybiz.net/videoconferencing.