

Exclusive: ROUND TABLE

BEAMING BUSINESS UP INTO THE HERE AND NOW



Only a few years ago, the idea of being able to see and hear people in other parts of the world as though they were all in the same room was one firmly fixed in the annals of science fiction. Today, telepresence is a reality, and more and more companies are using it as a means of organising effective conference meetings without the bother of having to jet across the world to get to them.

Naturally, this saves money and has a beneficial effect on the environment. It sounds like a win-win situation, and there are many positives - not least for the executive who feels like he's spending half his life on the road, in departure lounges and sleeping in faceless hotels. But what's the reality of this brave new world, where distance collapses in the face of technology, and how far has that technology

advanced since the fevered imaginings of the creators of Star Trek?

It's true that an effective telepresence strategy should put human interaction first, focusing on visual collaboration that closely replicate the brain's innate preferences for face-to-face conversation. These include life-size participants, fluid, real-time movements, accurate flesh tones and the appearance of true eye contact.

In this exclusive round table for Eco Executive, representatives from some of the world's leading technological companies discuss the implications for teleconferencing and how we might all be using it in the none-too-distant future.

THE PANEL



Torben Andersen
Senior Director for Unified Communications
Microsoft

Torben Andersen is a Senior Director for Unified Communications at Microsoft. Since 2004 he has built the Microsoft Unified Communications business in Europe, Middle East and Africa, and today he is responsible for UC business development in EMEA. Previously he has been General Manager of Microsoft in the Baltic region and held different positions in Microsoft Denmark. Mr. Andersen has also been CEO of the Danish E-learning software vendor Danish Probe, and worked for IBM in Denmark.



Steve Leyland
Managing Director, EMEA
Polycom

Steve Leyland is the Polycom Managing Director for (EMEA). He has more than 25 years experience in computing and telecommunications spanning both Europe and the United States. He has held senior management positions in engineering, marketing and sales as well as running his own professional services company in the United Kingdom. As Polycom's EMEA MD for more than five years, Steve is responsible for sales, marketing and operations for the region.



Anna Carless
Marketing Director of EMEA
Tandberg

Anna Carless is marketing director, EMEA Tandberg. The company is a leading global provider of telepresence, high-definition videoconferencing and mobile video products and services, with dual headquarters in New York and Norway.



Robert deMontluzin
EMEA services leader for network solutions
Nortel

Robert deMontluzin is EMEA Services leader for network Solutions, Nortel. It does business in more than 150 countries around the world. Nortel's technologies are designed to help eliminate today's barriers to efficiency, speed and performance by simplifying networks 'and connecting people to the information they need, when they need it'.



Mike Landers
GM of EMEA
BT Conferencing

Mike Landers was appointed the GM of Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) for BT Conferencing in 2007 and has executive responsibility for BT's Conferencing and Collaboration businesses within the EMEA region with a turnover of £100+m and 360 people. He has worked in the telecommunications business for 19 years in a number of areas.



Boaz Raviv
CEO
Radvision

Boaz Raviv is the CEO of Radvision. Prior to becoming CEO Mr. Raviv served as the General Manager of the Radvision Technology and Networking Business Units. In this role as CEO, he provides focused leadership, vision and direction for Radvision as it becomes a leading force in the unified communications and developer market.



“The solutions of the past were inflexible, expensive, and difficult to use. The solutions customers are excited about today are just opposite, as they offer a lot of flexibility, are much more affordable and not least much easier to use” **Torben Andersen**

Question: How does your particular solution differ to that offered by other vendors in the market?

ML: Our key difference is in the adoption programme that we offer our customers to help them maximise their investment. By working so closely with our customers, we are able to guarantee the return on investment (ROI) they will see from the service.

As well as our close partnerships with all of the leading global suppliers in the video conferencing market (Cisco, Polycom, Tandberg and Teliris), our customers benefit from our experience of designing, supplying and supporting their video conferencing services.

Add this to our audio and web conferencing services and you've got a conferencing expert on your side.

AC: Since 1989 Tandberg has been a global leader in visual communication and is currently the market share leader in endpoints and infrastructure. From end-to-end High Definition and firewall traversal to integrated desktop solutions for the mobile worker, we are consistently the first to deliver fresh functionality to our users. But how do our solutions differ in reality?

We are at the forefront of the video industry, consistently the first to deliver fresh functionality and release new applications for multimedia collaboration. Our approach to research and development is designed to help customers be more productive. Through innovation, integration, and a commitment to our customers, Tandberg has set the pace for this dynamic industry.

BR: Radvision is the only independent video infrastructure vendor. Our goal is to enable enterprises to experience the power of unified communications in a heterogeneous world. We do this by supplying enterprises with a solution that simplifies the delivery of video-services inside their organisation regardless of what conferencing applications they choose – room video conferencing, desktop, Unified Communications from Cisco, Microsoft, Alcatel-Lucent or IBM – or any combination. We believe video is a value-add for any organisation, regardless of its size, a company can utilise video

conferencing using multiple-devices any time, anywhere.

TA: The solutions Microsoft and our partners offer support a wide range of usage scenarios ranging from inexpensive desktop systems, over innovative room solutions targeted at any meeting room in the organisation to high-end dedicated boardroom type systems. We believe that having a wide set of solutions covering the entire user spectrum give the best usage and adoption across the organisation.

SL: The Polycom solution is unique in a number of ways. First, it is very flexible - as it allows the executive to attend the meeting by whichever method they have available at the time, whether it is just their mobile phone, or their telepresence suite. You don't have to have video to attend the video conference, which is a big change to the past solutions. We can now mix different classes of users into the same meeting. And even if you do find an excuse to miss the meeting, then we can record it so that it's viewable later – so there is no escape. Second the quality of experience for users is now so much higher, with CD stereo quality for voice, and HDTV quality for video, and really easy ways of getting your PC content into the meeting.

RDM: Nortel has partnered with the industry leaders to ensure a full range solution from desktop through to executive suite. The technology:

- Is the most sophisticated and feature rich that is available.
- Covers the full range of technologies from audio conferencing and video conferencing through to fully immersive Telepresence.
- Is fully interoperable with all other standards based video solutions
- Provides customers with a full range of options on room sizes and finishes.
- Nortel is the only vendor that can provide a comprehensive, end-to-end package to ensure a fully operational solution at any time of the day or night:
- Nortel provides initial consultancy services to establish the full breadth of your multimedia requirements
- Nortel will help to define, design and implement the technology you need.

Question: Can you give an example of a company deploying your solution specifically with the aim of reducing travel within their organisation?

ML: BT's use of conferencing services saves it 860,000 face to face meetings, £135m in travel costs, more than 97,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions and £103m in productivity gains.

In 2006, BT's International Marketing team used video conferencing to hold its "All Hands" event in which the entire marketing department participated. By linking the event to ten video conferencing locations across the globe, as well as using video streaming to broadcast to those who couldn't get to a BT Video Conferencing venue, the organisers were able to save 80 per cent on a traditional conference.

AC: I can give you quite a few! The majority of our customers have also found many additional benefits to the deployment of video, in addition to the reduction of travel, which I think are worth sharing. Here are a couple of examples:

VOLKSWAGEN: Competition in the automobile manufacturing industry is fierce and it is essential to maintain customer satisfaction. By deploying experts and conducting training sessions over video, Volkswagen cut vehicle repair time by over 50 per cent and reduced travel and communication expenses by 30 per cent.

VODAFONE: Vodafone, a network operator active in more than 29 countries, represents superior expertise in mobile telephony. Innovation is the key to its culture. Vodafone implemented video as a way to increase quality of life for employees who spent too much time on the road. At the same time, video helped Vodafone reduce travel costs by 30 per cent.

BR: Yes, Radvision ourselves. For a company our size we are very geographically dispersed. We have major development laboratories in Israel, the US and China and sales offices spread over the globe. Many of our employees telework from home. Our technology allows us operate our business on a daily business without the travel that once would have been required. On a daily basis our employees conduct face to face meetings throughout the organisation and



“Travel will still be an inevitable part of business and when employees have to be away they can continue to meet people or manage a sales or executive meeting via a WiFi-enabled, webcam-equipped laptop from anywhere – even while waiting at the departure lounge for their flight” **Boaz Raviv**

with customers around the globe. We and other organisations are also very aware that air travel is a major contributor to global warming and using Radvision solutions is part of an overall green communications strategy.

TA: Microsoft literally has hundreds of documented case studies from customers around the world saving time and money by using our communications solutions. Take Nissan Motor Company one of the world's largest car manufacturers, as an example. They wanted to help employees in distant locations work together more easily. It also wanted to reduce the cost of business travel by using an affordable Web conferencing tool. Using Office Communications Server 2007 and RoundTable, employees who previously travelled to offices overseas now meet virtually and can see and hear all participants with a 360-degree view of each meeting room. Office Communications Server 2007 will reduce not only the cost but also the time and stress of business trips.

SL: There are many examples from all over the world. One interesting one is from Lex Vehicle Leasing, who were concerned about the level of travel between their UK offices, the lost productivity associated with this, and their travel related carbon footprint. Through the use of conferencing technology, they have taken many tens of tonnes of carbon from their footprint whilst providing a 150 man-week productivity gain from a relatively small deployment of video-conferencing systems.

Question: Which particular types of businesses tend to benefit from the technology you're offering, and has the profile changed of late?

ML: Video is useful in any organisation where face-to-face interaction improves the level of communication. Training and recruitment offer measurable ROI as do engineering (R&D), quality control, and executive meetings.

The key benefits are increasing productivity and reduced time to market, a reduced carbon footprint, reduced travel expenses and a better work / life balance for your employees. Businesses from all sectors

can profit from these benefits and our client base reflects this.

AC: Our customers come from a wide range of industries - from health care, manufacturing, financial services and consumer products to distance education and the public sector. They tell us that communicating face-to-face makes their organisations more effective, whichever industry sector they reside in:

BR: All business are benefiting from video conferencing but traditionally certain verticals like government, security, healthcare and distance education have focused more on it. Now what we are seeing is video conferencing being deployed throughout any enterprise. This is because of significant improvements in quality and reductions in cost and because video can now utilise next generation networks which expands the reach to virtually all employees regardless of where they are.

SL: There is a wide range of businesses and non-profit organisations that have reaped considerable benefit from conferencing technologies. In the past the adoption was limited to the largest multinationals, but now the profile is changing so that the suppliers and customers of these MNCs are using the technologies to maintain and build business relations. Schools are using the technology to allow specialist teachers to reach many hundreds of children in schools every day, and attainment levels have been seen to increase as a result.

RDM: Theoretically any business that needs to communicate effectively. But typical profiles include:

- Multinational/multi-site operations and / or dispersed or mobile workforces.
- Inter-dependent operations (functions & departments across multiple sites and countries)
- High travel costs
- High collaboration content in core business processes
- Key verticals: Finance, Professional Services, Retail, Pharmaceutical, Healthcare, Education
- CXO level, including CEO, CFO, CTO, COO, VP, Director of Corporate Responsibility are decision makers

There is an increasing trend towards Green

business and this is being reflected in the number of businesses considering the impact of travel on the environment too.

Question: Ease-of-use seems to be a major issue for time-pressed executives – how have you addressed this?

ML: More than 20 years of experience have shown us that customers often invest in video conferencing which is little used by their employees and so brings them no return on investment.

To help our customers with this, we have developed VideoManager - a web based tool to make the whole video conference experience simple and painless. Customers can schedule video calls easily from the web interface and VideoManager then launches the call automatically. If there are any changes required mid-call - such as adding in another location – or any problems occur, our helpdesk is there to help at all times.

AC: We offer management and scheduling software solutions that allow customers to walk into a room and have the call automatically connected, not requiring any set up, any dialling from the actual room etc. ensuring that for time-pressed executives a video call is easy to use and instantaneous.

We have also developed a very intuitive remote control that is very similar to a mobile phone interface which most people in today's society are very familiar with. Accompanying the easy to use remote control are step by step prompts on the video screen itself, these prompts are available in numerous languages ensuring colleagues around the globe have the same level of information and guidance.

BR: At Radvision we begin with the devices typically found in the office of every executive. Starting with the telephone, we allow executives to use their desktop phone number for both audio and video communications. Moving to the PC, we integrate video-usage with your software scheduler as well as allowing you to easily enjoy video conferencing via an IM session. Our solutions are designed so video is a natural addition to the way users already work.



"In the past, the take-up of videoconferencing was marred by issues with quality but this has changed. The advances in speed, quality and ease of use mean that video conferencing, as well as audio and web, are real options for meeting and speaking with colleagues and customers anywhere in the world" **Mike Landers**

TA: Microsoft is very focused on ease-of-use and it is a key point to reach broad adoption of these solutions. First of all we strive to make communication capabilities available within the environments where users already spend their time, i.e. Microsoft Office, SharePoint and business applications like MS CRM or SAP. From here communications can be launched directly by just right clicking on a name of a colleague. Secondly we have one unified client for all communications from instant messaging, over voice, to video and application sharing. So when you have learned it once it works for all sorts of communications. Finally we allow for meetings to be set up by a different person i.e. an assistant and the executive then just clicks on a link in the invite to join the conference.

SL: We have literally made it as easy to use as a telephone. You see, Polycom has been making great phone systems since its inception in the early 90's, and recently we have engineered our phones and video systems to allow a user to start a video conference as a simple phone call, and for the phones to then invite the user to add video, if they wish. By pressing a single button, video is added to the call, and as an added bonus the voice quality increases at the same time. We also have the technology to allow partners to set up the whole conference remotely for the user, to that the only skill required to attend the conference is finding a seat.

RDM: If a customer is going to replace travel with audio and / or video conferencing solutions, the key requirement is that it's got to work. Immediately. If you have to spend thirty minutes fiddling with network settings, cables, cameras or anything else just to make it work, the magic of the experience is entirely lost.

Question: If it is true that 'executives can look forward to spending less time at the departure lounge', will the benefits filter down throughout the organisation?

ML: They already are. Cisco has installed Telepresence rooms across the company and will tell you themselves that they are seeing a huge take-up (65 per cent) compared to traditional video conferencing.

Typically, there are two key factors to seeing the benefits of video conferencing throughout an organisation: 1) the ease of the solution and 2) its endorsement from senior managers. We help our customers with both of these.

AC: Absolutely and in many cases the benefits have already filtered down through the organisation, a lot of our customers depend on video every day and we're not just talking at an executive level. Take for example Vodafone, the global mobile telecommunications company.

Vodafone has deployed Tandberg videoconferencing in 50 locations as part of a concerted effort to reduce the time and expense involved with business travel. In addition to the boardroom and executive office video conferencing systems that are now common in a company of this size, Vodafone has built "video lounges" to encourage small teams and workgroups to use video technology to replace some face-to-face meetings. The video lounges are designed to be easy to use and easy to book.

BR: Is it true that executives will spend much less time in departure lounges because the face-to-face meeting experience can be achieved without having to travel? But this is not just true for executives – all employees can reduce travel through the use of video conferencing. However travel will still be an inevitable part of business and when employees have to be away they can continue to meet people or manage a sales or executive meeting via a WiFi-enabled, webcam-equipped laptop from anywhere – even while waiting at the departure lounge for their flight.

SL: Executive productivity is a key concern, especially when you factor in the issue of "dispersal" - workers are dispersed in satellite and home offices, functions are outsourced and placed offshore, and all the time the pressure is on to deliver more results with less resource. So, shaving 10, 20 or even 30 per cent of time from a travel budget can make a huge difference to a business, not only saving travel budgets but allowing people to get on with their jobs of getting products to market and making more customers more satisfied.

And in these days when the organisation is under scrutiny regarding its environmental impact these technologies have a lot to offer

in reducing travel related carbon footprint.

RDM: The technology will not eliminate the need for all business travel but it will definitely play a huge role in reducing the volume of travel for the average executive.

Reducing the volume of travel for the average exec should benefit the organisation overall. For example, reduced travel equals reduced costs and improved efficiency overall as key decision makers spent less unproductive time in departure lounges. It also speeds up decision making as decision makers spend less time being 'unavailable' e.g. during flight time.

Similarly, by reducing the carbon footprint and providing an improved work-life balance, the company overall is being more socially responsible and hopefully a better place to work.

Question: A cynic might say that we've been here before – for example, videoconferencing and telepresence was first demonstrated in 1995 – so how has the segment evolved?

ML: The market has changed considerably from 1995. Bandwidth is much cheaper and more common than ever before. High definition video systems are now more affordable. And the financial and environmental costs of travel are more widely recognised. All these things mean that video conferences can finally be a cost-effective and efficient way of achieving face-to-face meetings, with a much improved user experience.

In the past, the take-up of videoconferencing was marred by issues with quality but this has changed. The advances in speed, quality and ease of use mean that video conferencing, as well as audio and web, are real options for meeting and speaking with colleagues and customers anywhere in the world. And as an additional bonus, it helps anyone with hectic schedules, limited budgets and environmental concerns.

AC: Firstly it's important that I tell you that we believe Telepresence and video conferencing are in fact the same thing! Why you may ask?

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"We also have the technology to allow partners to set up the whole conference remotely for the user, to that the only skill required to attend the conference is finding a seat" **Steve Leyland**

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Well, the general understanding of what Telepresence offers is that it creates the most realistic in-person meeting experience and provides an ideal platform for communication and interaction. It makes meeting participants feel as though they're having a conversation with colleagues right across the table-while being miles or continents apart which is exactly what all our Tandberg video conferencing solutions offer as well!

BR: The advent of cost-effective, user-friendly technology such as Internet Protocol-based communications infrastructures, High Definition video quality and broadband networks means we are well on our way to realising the videoconferencing and telepresence dreams of the '90s. With uptake swiftly increasing, unit costs per device and per video ports are falling, which means the technology will ultimately become ubiquitous.

TA: The solutions of the past were inflexible, expensive, and difficult to use. The solutions customers are excited about today are just opposite, as they offer a lot of flexibility, are much more affordable and not least much easier to use.

SL: The quality of experience has increased in leaps and bounds since the technology first saw light of day. Do you know that the picture resolution is now nine times better than the standard systems available a few years ago? The voice quality has improved to the level of home stereo, surround sound systems. The reliability of connections has increased dramatically with the advent of robust IP networks, and the integration with other significant ICT applications have delivered the ease of use we envisioned, and all these factors have all played a part in making this one of the fastest growing sectors within the hi tech industry space.

RDM: It has increased ease of use in terms of the solutions and improved quality through increased network capacity and management.

Question: What area of conferencing do you see the biggest growth coming from?

ML: All conferencing services are growing at the moment – we're seeing 70 per cent year-on-year growth – but it's Telepresence that everyone is talking about at the moment. What is still unclear is whether this will translate into huge sales, especially when businesses compare the initial investment to the lower cost of good quality HD systems.

BR: Medium to large enterprises.

SL: Although the standard video conferencing products still form a large part of the demand we see, there is a lot of excitement in the areas of HD conferencing, telepresence and real presence systems, and Polycom is proud to say that we have very competitive products in all of these segments.

RDM: Clearly, the transition to HD video will drive significant growth from the desktop to room based systems to high end Telepresence suites. Beyond dedicated end user systems, there will be significant integration work to extend desktop based Unified Communications solutions (e.g. OCS) into an end-to-end conferencing solution. To achieve this transition, existing customer networks will need to evolve to support greater deployment of SIP based networking equipment (to support the HD video endpoints) and next generation MCUs to support HD video conferencing. Nortel Global Services is uniquely positioned to provide networking expertise to support this transformation.

Question: Unified Communications and enterprise Mobility are important for today's 'Road Warrior' – explain the benefits for companies looking to expand their teleworking and telecommuting workforce in order to improve their environmental footprint?

ML: Unified Communications and Enterprise Mobility are productivity tools. Video conferencing complements them both by allowing people the flexibility to meet "face-to-face" without travelling. And less travel makes for a greener environmental footprint.

Taken together, Unified Communications, Enterprise Mobility and Video are re-writing the rules of productivity.

AC: Organisations these days are expected to articulate a corporate statement on industrial environmental protection and to take specific action to put this credo into practice. Image campaigns, product advertising, and annual reports all emphasise environmental protection as a distinguishing feature of market-oriented companies.

Business partners (customers, suppliers, employees, stockholders, etc.) and a critical general public are all taking an increasingly hard look at organisations' processes and the consistency of their commitment to the environment. Environmentally "responsible" policies can even improve an organisation's rating with certain investors. There are a number of steps an organisation can take to improve its standing as an environmentally conscious organisation, focusing on manufacturing processes, recycling and disposal, product design, and employee-oriented programs such as telecommuting

BR: As we discussed before, video conferencing can be a significant contributor to the reduction of a company's environmental footprint. But the good news that while becoming more environmentally friendly companies are becoming more competitive and saving money. To be competitive in today's global economy workforces are become more mobile and dispersed and video conferencing allows them to have a global footprint without the cost and carbon impact of travel.

SL: Allowing your workers to work from the location they choose, close to customers, and in a manner which is sympathetic to the family and caring responsibilities that many people have today is important. The most progressive and the most attractive companies allow this sort of flexibility and gain great benefits in recruiting and retaining the best talent. But it can cause issues with team working, with issues of "connectedness" with the organisation, unless you put the right tools and policies in place to allow people to come back together and collaborate, whilst working at a distance.

RDM: The technology provides a mobile



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workforce with improved communication capabilities and ensures they are kept in touch with the broader organisation. The technology enables mobile workers to communicate effectively and efficiently with others in the organisation. And having a more mobile workforce can be beneficial to organisations by ensuring:

- Closer customer contact
- Reduced office overheads
- Improved access to scarce / specialised skills

Question: Do you see Desktop video conferencing becoming as mainstream and ubiquitous as web-based and voice solutions in the workplace?

ML: Definitely. The latest generation to join the work force is using the technology all the time on mobiles, IM, YouTube... To them, video is just another tool and they will expect to be able to use it at work.

Desktop video is also a low cost, easy way of creating face to face meetings without the need to travel, building on the widely used audio and web conferencing tools. This allows for faster decision making and increased productivity, not to mention the environmental benefits of reduced travel.

AC: Absolutely, we believe desktop video conferencing will actually become more ubiquitous than web-based and voice solutions in the workplace in the future, because the business quality it offers is far superior to those offered by web and audio based communications. Along with the other communication tools that are already in use in an organisation, such as e-mail, instant messaging, mobile and IP phones, and web conferencing, desktop videoconferencing can and will become as widely used, see the Vodafone customer example above on how this is already a reality.

BR: Yes. The value of video is very real but until recently it has been mostly confined to the conference room. Now there are real cost effective and deployable solutions for the desktop. This expands the value of video beyond the conference room to users who are at their desks, or working from home or from the road. And it is not just the desktop in terms of the traditional PC. Video will be

available on all types of devices – phones, PDAs, mobile devices, etc.

TA: Over time video will become more and more mainstream as ease of use increases, bandwidth issues disappear, and quality continue to increase. However we will continue to see that different forms of communications suit different situations. It is all about giving the users a wide choice of modalities and making it simple to switch between them as needed to get your message through.

SL: Yes – because desktop video is growing fast within youth culture, with MSN, Skype, gaming, mobile telephony, and social networking sites all allowing a video component to the interaction. I am told by my kids that email is “something only old people do” so the world is changing fast. Now when the teenagers of today hit the workforce and are asked by their bosses to go and build customer relationships through phone calls and email – its not going to be met with a positive response. Instead they will ask ‘where’s my video?’

RDM: Yes. It’s essentially just another phase of Unified Communications.

Question: Communication between proprietary systems seems to have been historically overlooked in this arena – is there an industry move for interoperability?

ML: Yes, there is a move towards this, although interoperability isn’t possible with all of the emerging Telepresence systems. However, we believe that we have a major role to play in make this possible so that we can offer a “multi-tenant capability” that we can manage on our customers’ behalf. To do this, we are working with our partners to make it possible to video conference between suppliers e.g. Cisco and Polycom / Tandberg. We’re expecting to make a lot of progress on this over the course of this year.

AC: Interoperability is imperative for full market acceptance and deployment of visual communications. Tandberg has consistently delivered solutions that are standards based and are therefore non-proprietary – in order to facilitate interoperability.

Customers want and should have the ability to schedule video resources and / or launch a video call with familiar desktop tools from Microsoft and IBM such as Instant messaging etc. and we are keen to ensure our customers video conferencing solutions can interact with all communication tools in the market place.

BR: There is a move toward interoperability and most video devices to adhere to standards. However we will probably always live in a heterogeneous world and that is where Radvision is focused. Our video infrastructure solutions are designed to allow connectivity and interoperability for any type of device regardless of its capabilities or what network it’s on. Many organisations have multiple vendor solutions deployed and want them to interoperate.

TA: There is a lot of good work going on in this area and standards which make interoperability possible continue to evolve. At Microsoft we are working with a broad set of partners to insure interoperability not only with new systems, but also with the legacy systems customers already have deployed today.

SL: There is for sure and Polycom is in the vanguard of the move. We have been offering standards based video for years, and even our most recent HD products will talk to systems with shipped a decade ago – because we understand the importance of universal interoperability for communications tools. We will continue to push the quality bars higher in the industry and work with other vendors to ensure interop.

RDM: Like everything else in the hyper-connected world, every system has to be able to talk to every other system. The industry is moving towards solutions that are fully interoperable with all other standards based video solutions.

Question: In your opinion, how important a consideration is ‘eye contact’ to a system’s success?

ML: Eye contact is very important as the Telepresence experience aims to be as similar as possible to being in the same room as the people on the other side of the screen. Most Telepresence solutions are restricted in some way by having to choose

a fixed position for the cameras. This means that not all users round the table will achieve real eye to eye contact.

It must be remembered that eye contact is not the only key to the success of Telepresence meetings. The real test is how quickly the people in the room forget that they are using video / Telepresence and just get on with having their meeting.

AC: Critical! As much as 93 per cent of communication between people is determined by non-verbal cues such as tone of voice and body language. Therefore, 'eye contact' meetings are indeed essential. A few years ago we commissioned a survey with RoperASW to explore just how valuable eye contact/face to face is over traditional audio conferences.

The findings were very interesting and essentially showed us that the methods businesses use most heavily to communicate outside the office - e-mail and phone - are insufficient to establish the foundation for smart business decisions.

BR: Eye contact is important in every personal interaction; indeed this is an inherent benefit of video conferencing.

SL: This is a very important in certain applications – e.g. studies of teamwork have defined different phases in team formation, from Forming through Storming and, eventually, Performing phases. Now in the early stages the team dynamic is all about understanding the personalities of the members- so that it is said there is a relationship orientation. During this phase, the barrier of distance can be very high, with people struggling to get comfortable with the team without face-to-face, natural contact. Later as the team move to a task orientation this will be less important. So, eye contact is part of this perception of naturalness that is very important in certain, relationship forming phases of work. And anything which adds to the naturalness of a technology, will lead to greater adoption and usage rates, and with communications technologies, this means greater benefit as more people use it.

Question: Similarly, is audio quality a defining factor?

ML: Audio quality is probably the most important factor in the success of a video conference. If the picture quality wanes then the meeting can still continue - but if the audio fails, then the whole meeting will become difficult as communication suffers.

We have noticed that most people who use Telepresence for the first time are genuinely amazed at the quality of the audio in the rooms – it really is like being in the same room together.

AC: Yes, audio quality is critical for a successful video experience with premium audio quality allowing you to communicate clearly: as if you were all in the same room. High performance audio provides a richer, more complete visual communication experience.

BR: Certainly - poor audio quality negates any value-add you can get from a video-conferencing infrastructure. Imagine having to hone the fine points of an agreement by holding up scraps of paper with messages scrawled over them simply because the audio quality of your video conferencing system is poor. When delivering video infrastructure solutions we ensure the technology is rolled out to conform to both human subjective testing and objective input obtained according to international ITU-T G.1070 standards.

SL: Great quality voice is the hallmark of Polycom systems, and recent additions such as Soundstructure have pushed the bar even higher. The phenomenon of "conferencing fatigue" is well known, with people finding it difficult to maintain concentration during long audio conferences. This is often due to the poor fidelity of the voice in these situations (it's actually about a sixth of the fidelity compared to being in a room with someone).

RDM: Both "eye contact" and audio quality are critical factors to a system's success. Both factors enable the immersive nature of the experience.

Question: Would you please describe your strategy to deliver your offering to the widest potential network of businesses?

ML: Our strategy is to make video conferencing as easy as possible for our customers which we do in several ways:

We provide a complete end-to-end solution. This ranges from providing and deploying the hardware to managing the service to increasing usage to improve our customers ROI.

We guarantee the usage levels and benefits that their video conferencing solution will deliver through our adoption and service management programmes.

We have a "service provider model" where we take care of the service among several customers to create an 'inter-company' or B2B service so that they can share the benefits with their partners and customers. This will be one of the next big things in Telepresence too.

BR: As business are deploying unified communication solutions today they are utilising components from major vendors like Cisco, IBM, Microsoft and Alcatel-Lucent, all of whom have video solutions. In addition businesses might have room video conferencing devices from LifeSize, Aethra, Tandberg, Sony or Polycom. Radvision solutions support all these environments. We are Cisco's video networking partner, we provide solutions that add or enhance video in IBM, Microsoft and Alcatel-Lucent. We are partners with LifeSize, Aethra and Sony and fully support Tandberg and Polycom. No other company is as broad in their support of video than Radvision.

SL: We work with certified partners to deliver our systems to the end user, and we have been working hard to ensure that our partners receive the best training on video and voice applications so that they can build custom, integrated solutions for their clients. We will continue to help expand their capabilities to deliver real business benefits to the end user.

RDM: We're working with a range of partners – including conferencing technology specialists Polycom and Tandberg - to ensure that we have the



"Technologies are more accessible to the average person on the street as they become easier to use, cheaper in price and more integrated into every day life."
Robert deMontluzin

right solution for each customer's individual requirements. We also offer a range of technologies and services to ensure we have a solution to meet each business scenario and application. And it's integrated into our broader solution set within Nortel to ensure that we can integrate and transition your video and Telepresence solutions into a comprehensive unified communications enabled business.

Question: Because of their high up-front and operating costs, Telepresence systems, in particular, are likely to remain an industry niche suitable only for large enterprises for some time. Would you agree with this statement?

ML: No because we see Telepresence differently – and will even guarantee that using these systems is cheaper than face to face meetings at conventional costs. That's not to say that Telepresence will replace all other video conferencing solutions – they both have a role to play in customer's business strategy. However it is very easy to be distracted by the higher initial cost than traditional video conferencing systems.

We believe that the quality of the experience and the benefits - such as life size screen images and eye contact – mean that the service is taken up much more readily by employees and so the ROI can actually be much more attractive. Cisco is probably one of the largest users of Telepresence with 175 rooms worldwide and they tell us that they have achieved payback in less than one year, which is incredibly impressive.

AC: No. The video/telepresence solutions we offer range from the lower cost price of a desktop telepresence solution to a higher price point for a fully immersive telepresence solution. Telepresence quality is therefore available across our entire product range which subsequently allows telepresence implementations to go far beyond a niche market size.

BR: Telepresence systems are video conferencing systems with all the components very closely controlled – the highest resolution video, the best audio, high quality and high bandwidth network and special room environments. This provides the best video conferencing

experience there is. To provide all this costs a lot of money today but costs will come down as more of these systems are deployed and we gain the benefit of volume.

TA: For a long time to come that will be the case. That is why customers are so excited about our more affordable RoundTable solution which can cover any meeting room in the organisation at a very affordable price.

SL: It is likely the largest, most dispersed organisation will be the early adopters of the systems. But we are seeing some organisations consider different deployment models, with service providers considering per use rates, so that smaller organisations can use the technology as required rather than owning it.

RDM: Yes, in the current environment that may well be the case. But technology costs always decline and so the uptake into smaller businesses increases. Similarly, as services become more sophisticated, the number of businesses offering their Telepresence suites out to small businesses, for a price, is likely to increase.

Question: Moving away from the work arena, do you foresee a time when your technology will move into education or even the home?

ML: It already has. We offer a number of video solutions, in conjunction with Polycom and Tandberg, which are tailored to sectors such as education. Even with restricted budgets, we can help meet stretching educational standards through our interactive video conferencing services. These can be recorded for replay so that students benefit from much larger number of tutors on a regional and even global scale.

AC: Yes, we explored the increased uptake of telecommuting programs in a previous question so you can see already that the technology of today readily allows home or teleworkers to collaborate visually as if they are actually in the office. Using the same technology for personal use is the natural next step and many people forget that we are all actually doing this today using our 3G phones!

Using video for personal use from home will definitely become more ubiquitous... I for instance have a video system at home which I frequently use to call my brother who is living in Buenos Aires, Argentina. There have even been Christmases' where we have been sat around a dinner table in the UK enjoying our turkey, connecting to my brother in South America tucking into his Argentinean steak and enjoying a simultaneous dinner along side him!

BR: Video conferencing technology is already entering these environments. Many of today's low cost laptops have built-in WiFi and webcams. The One Laptop Per Child project, for example, is aimed at delivering technology that could enable video conferencing for educational purposes in developing countries, in some of the most remote environments.

TA: We already see a lot of interest and actual adoption of our solutions with academia and we expect to continue to see this over the coming years. In the home millions of people use products like Windows Live Messenger to conduct video calls every day. We anticipate home users will be able to connect with business users in the very near future – even with video.

SL: It has already moved into my home, and into the homes of many of my team members. The network to the home is improving rapidly, and the entry point for Polycom videoconferencing is about £100, so it is very feasible now to consider this sort of solution for home and mobile use. And remember the youth culture argument above – they are using it now and will continue to use it, but for business purposes, in a few years time.

RDM: Without a doubt. The blurring of the line between commercial and personal utilisation of technologies is continuing to increase. It's becoming commonplace for the latest technologies to become increasingly used in a personal capacity as well as a business one. Technologies are more accessible to the average person on the street as they become easier to use, cheaper in price and more integrated into every day life.

Question: What is your strategy for making your systems publicly available on an ‘internet café’ type-basis and what do you see the price point for such a service?

ML: We have access to a network of public video conference rooms across the world and can reserve them for BT customers who don't have their own facilities. The price point for these depends very much on the location. At the moment, we are deciding whether to make our own Telepresence type facilities available on this kind of basis.

BR: Radvision delivers the infrastructure that enables Service Providers to enable these types of services, if that is THEIR market focus.

SL: The modern nomad is a class of worker now – people who have no office, or home office but who occupy seats in WiFi enabled coffee houses. This is their working space, even inviting people to meetings there. Again we have products that can enable video conferencing from these spaces.

RDM: Nortel is not currently planning to make systems available on an “internet café” type basis. Instead, Nortel will support our customers who want to provide such a service. For example, this could be customers who provide high end hospitality services (e.g. seven start hotels).

Question: Do clients bring up the issue of security – and how do you meet their needs?

ML: Very much so – security is a major issue for many of our customers, and as such it is an important area for us to address.

We generally recommend that customers use an MPLS network for their video services to ensure a higher video quality. BT's MPLS network allows each customer to have their own virtual private network (VPN) which is separate from all other customers. This means that it is impossible for another customer to listen in to a call.

AC: Yes, customers who require high security levels do indeed ask us about the security of their video communications. We show them that Tandberg is a pioneer in developing solutions to resolve security

concerns and we do this by addressing the issue of security at three levels – authentication, policy and encryption.

BR: Yes they do. For example one of Radvision's largest customers is the US Department of Defence and security is critical to them. We have special products that allow end to end security in their environment. Other industries such as the Financial Services industry also require security as a requirement and our solutions meet their needs through encryption.

SL: Security is always a concern for organisations, particularly government, healthcare and finance related environments. We protect data using Advanced Encryption Standards, and we can provide access security via password protection as appropriate. The issue of data firewall traversal has also been tackled, so that calling between the IP networks of different organisations is now far easier, and we can facilitate the move away from a time when most video calls are within the same organisation, to one where inter-company calling is the main call type.

RDM: Nortel Global Services provides a range of security services and solution in our security practice. The technology required to support HD Videoconferencing is not inherently insecure. When designed and deployed correctly, enterprises can use this technology to effectively communicate within the enterprise, with employees who are remotely accessing the enterprise (home workers, road warriors), and with partners running their own standards based multi-vendor conferencing environment.

Question: Finally, looking to the future, how do you believe the market will progress over the next five years?

ML: We believe that video conferences will become an everyday activity. Video conferencing, and any other conferencing service, benefit the customer financially and environmentally as well as improving employees' productivity and work-life balance. These are factors that affect all businesses everywhere and are only going to become more important.

AC: Fast and furiously! It's a very exciting industry to be in right now.

BR: In recent years, endpoint vendors have started to provide high-end video conferencing clients built into LCD monitors to executives. As technology becomes cheaper, they will start providing these monitors to all employees - not only to executives.

On the other end, the LCD vendors are facing fierce competition with ever-shrinking margins. This competition has forced these vendors to search after added value features they can bring out to increase their revenue. Video conferencing is a compelling feature for the enterprise market.

TA: There will be a wide adoption of these types of solutions in the years to come. This will be driven by factors like: desire to reduce carbon footprint, continued globalisation, as well as a need to improve communication and speed-up decision making to remain competitive. The technology will continue to evolve at a very rapid pace making solutions even more effective while reducing cost. We are only at the beginning of a communications revolution.

SL: It is a really exciting time now for voice and video conferencing, and some large players in the ICT space have recently entered the market, a sign that there is confidence in its future. We expect an ever larger number of people to embrace the power of visual communications as we make systems easier to use, more natural, and more scalable across thousands of office and home office desktops. The culture of video usage within young people will drive growth. How will they use the technology – well who knows? The preponderance of texting and IM, rather than speech communications in youth culture is interesting. Shall we move to a video+text mode of comms in the next 10 years? Only time will tell!

RDM: The move towards UC will contribute to the growth in conferencing across the board. And conferencing will be a significant component in communications enabled business processes.

Specific solutions like Telepresence will continue to gain momentum and we're predicting it will be a significant communications platform in large enterprises over the next five years. Basic audio conferencing will be enhanced through audio-web, collaboration and Telepresence solutions. ■