

CAN YOU SEE ME NOW?

Finding The Best Angle Of Approach For A Videoconferencing Set-Up



by Steven J. Thorburn

How do we have a good video meeting?

The answer is the same as for a face-to-face meeting—we need to hear and see well in order to communicate and meet effectively. In terms of

videoconferencing, how do we set things up visually to support that goal? This is a challenge on almost every project. For the sake of argument, let's just say the audio is already perfect (nothing to it, right?). Now let's talk about how to make the video perfect as well.

What is important to the video image? Color, resolution, size? Yes, they are all important, but what is the most important aspect of a meeting, whether face-to-face or video? Eye contact. You want to look someone in the eye to see what they are really saying, and to let them know you are listening.

Next on the priority list: proper size of the far-end image. We have all seen video meetings where the far end has the camera in the corner looking down. While that is an extreme example, where does the camera need to be? How do you place the camera to show people at their best and optimize eye contact? It can be done, and for the sake of a good meeting, it should be done.

Think of your experience watching the evening news. As the reporter reads the teleprompter, he or she has powerful eye contact with you, the viewer. The reporter is obliged to look at the lens while reading, and that lens is your portal into the newsroom. If the reporter misses the cue to shift to another camera, he or she is no longer "speaking" to you. We want to replicate that face-to-face intimacy in our video meeting rooms.

A meeting room teleprompter is one possible solution—you will likely see one of these on the exhibit floor at InfoComm—because it induces people to look into the camera,

and provides a reflected image that helps them to make eye contact. It works best for small meetings and costs less than systems that provide life-size presences.

It's mostly in the camera placement. A common default setup is to have one monitor displaying your PowerPoint, another transmitting the far-end image, and the camera in the center. This will work if your subjects are far enough away from the display and the camera—but if the placement of people and equipment is off, you won't have a good visual connection between the parties. Ditto for set-top box videoconferencing units. It is convenient to have everything in a single unit, but it imposes certain geometries on the situation. When we experimented with a set-top box positioned atop a display, the far end stated that we were not "looking" at them. When we put the camera at the bottom of the display, they complained that all they could see were nose hairs.

Most events, attractions, performances, and presentations—concerts, movies, live theatre, dark rides, broadcasts, political rallies—balance a hearing component with a visual component. We have the luxury of taking this for granted when we are passive consumers.

But the situation



Steven J. Thorburn is conducting an educational session on this topic at InfoComm:

VIDEOCONFERENCING FROM THE CAMERA'S POINT OF VIEW

**FRIDAY, JUNE 20
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changes when we are participants or producers, and today's technology puts more and more of us into those roles. To get the real benefits of videoconferencing, we must think like camera operators.

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» In Brief

TV Magic Consults At Lincoln Center

NEW YORK, NY—TV Magic has been selected as the AV and media consultant for the renovation of the New York State Theater, home of both the New York City Ballet and the New York City Opera, and one of the three principal halls of Lincoln Center. TV Magic is working closely with the management and staff of the ballet, opera, and theater to define and engineer a flexible design for the renovated HD facility, which will include multiple cameras, robotics, audio capture, and media asset archiving systems.

Martin Audio Gains UL Approval

KITCHENER, ON—Martin Audio's family of ceiling speakers has been granted a UL2043 listing. This designates that the C4.8T, C6.8T, and C8.1T have been tested in accordance with the standard governing Fire Tests for Heat & Visible Smoke Release for Discrete Products and Accessories Installed in Air Handling Spaces, and fully comply. All feature perforated steel grilles, UL94 VO ABS baffles, thermal fuses, and steel back cans. Thermal fuses are included to prevent the possibility of a speaker exposed to fire creating a short circuit that could damage the amplifier.

Visix Named Awards Finalist

NORCROSS, GA—Visix was named a finalist in the Best Business Turnaround category in The 2008 American Business Awards. The turnaround performance from the company delivered 129 percent sales growth over the last three years. In calendar year 2007, Visix unit shipments were up by 80 percent, training sessions grew by 160 percent, and system deployments increased by nearly 200 percent.