

VIDEO CONFERENCING CASTS DOUBTS OVER THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS TRAVEL



webcam.

The phenomenon started a number of years ago; inventors of video conferencing were convinced they had thought of an ingenious way to save businesses time and money, whilst giving a more modern atmosphere to business meetings and conferences. This idea involved two parties talking to each other by means of the very latest modern technology via huge TV screens, without being physically in each other's company. It is something like using the latest equivalent, the

After years of being in the doldrums, video conferencing seems to be making a recovery and more and more businesses around the globe are employing such a method of communication with clients and colleagues. It seems logical as the 'telepresence' means that nobody has to do any travelling, thus saving a lot of time. Furthermore, there are no travel costs involved whatsoever. There is a third, somewhat overlooked, plus in that less travelling means that the emission of carbon into the atmosphere is significantly reduced.

On the negative side, 'telepresence' is not as advantageous as it may seem at first glance. We have already mentioned saving money, yet at \$300.000 a piece, the system is far from cheap. Let's not forget that it is necessary to have it at both ends. Perhaps more importantly, businessmen still crave the opportunity to meet people face to face. A lot is learnt from bodily language, a warm handshake and personal meetings.

When we weigh up the pros and cons of using video conferencing, we find that it most probably depends on the company whether it wishes to employ such a system or not. The only certain result is that predicting the future of business travel has become extremely difficult. We simply have to wait and see if video conferencing has the effect it threatens to have.

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