How to Implement Teleconferencing in the Office and at Home

The benefits and drawbacks of desktop videoconferencing was discussed; its cost and applications were demonstrated; and the hardware and software that is needed was reviewed.

BY DONALD J. MARTIN, CRP, RAA, GAA

Presenter

Dr. Elmer Poe
East Carolina University
Greenville, NC

Highlights

Dr. Poe discusses technology issues for Internet teleconferencing in a nontechnical way. As compared to commercially available videoconferencing, which, at around $250 an hour, is expensive, Internet teleconferencing has become a viable economic alternative. Commercial videoconferencing also requires advance scheduling and reservations and travel both to and from the location.

- Desktop videoconferencing using basic hardware requirements is comparatively inexpensive but has some minimum requirements and software that should be compatible with H.323, which is the standard for most software today.
- Current hardware requirements include a Pentium II or III, AMD K2/K3, or Cyrix 686 with at least 200 mhz speed, 64 megabytes of RAM, and at least 100 megabytes of available hard-drive space.

If your computer does not have a sound card, one will cost about $20. Full duplex external speakers with external volume control also are recommended at around $40, and a microphone is about $20. The microphone should be hooked into the "line in" not "mic in" for videoconferencing.

Also required are a color videocamera in the range of $50 to $150, and, at the very least, a 56K modem, which is standard in most computers today.

- The videocamera purchased should include three specifications: color, image size in CIF and QCIF, and a speed of 15 to 30 fps (frames per second). The camera should be hooked to either the parallel port or, in newer machines with *Windows 98*, to the USP (universal serial port). A camcorder could be used, but would be more expensive. A good video capture card can run from $100 to $400.
- At a minimum, the modem should be 56K. Faster is

Dr. Elmer Poe