



Virtual collaboration:

Enhancing your travel program

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Virtual collaboration: Enhancing your travel program

Should I stay or should I go?





Executive Summary

The time for virtual collaboration has come

Virtual meeting tools, allowing people to collaborate digitally instead of face-to-face, struggled for many years to establish themselves within business. Quality was poor in their early days, but the tools were also poorly managed.

Today, we see a much different situation. Virtual collaboration, using digital means to work together, is now firmly embedded in the corporate world. Of 442 travel managers surveyed in October 2015, Advito found 76% working for companies deploying video-conferencing, with 24% using high-end immersive systems like Telepresence. And 81% have access to either video-conferencing or telepresence facilities.

Business is finally embracing virtual collaboration, and the market for these services is set to double by 2020.¹

Successful virtual collaboration needs strategic management.

A number of factors have contributed to its acceptance among business consumers:

- **Realistic pricing**
Prices have fallen rapidly, and some entry-level products are available for free.
- **A complete spectrum of options is available**
There are now tools to satisfy all virtual collaboration needs and price points. These include much wider availability of multi-purpose conference systems, which are proving popular, as they're portable and much cheaper than immersive systems.
- **Meeting by video is normal**
Meeting by video has become the norm, thanks to cameras featuring on most digital devices.
- **Technology has progressed**
Technology has improved the user experience with better audio and video reproduction. The systems are also easier to use, with no need to employ experts to operate the equipment. And cloud-based bridging technology means that different video-conferencing products can now connect much more easily.
- **A solution for multi-locational workforces**
Having employees based across locations (for example, at home or in other countries) is a challenge faced by many businesses today. Virtual collaboration makes it easier for them to work together.



¹ Transparency Market Research, Video Conferencing Market – Global Industry Analysis, Size, Share, Growth, Trends and Forecasts 2014-2020, January 2015

The ICT (Information and Communication Technology) department is typically responsible for virtual collaboration – it owns the tools in 87% of the companies in the Advito survey.

ICT departments tend to focus on operational issues, rather than on wider company strategy. It should be travel managers who manage virtual tools, as they're accustomed to helping employees make the right booking choices. Travel managers could also integrate virtual tools with travel to help employees choose the best form of collaboration for their business need: virtual or face-to-face. We call this total collaboration management. However, today, 64% of travel managers have no or only minor influence over virtual collaboration. This figure needs to fall.

Engaging with virtual collaboration is essential for the success of your travel program.



That's the short version of how to make that happen. Read on to get all the details on integrating virtual collaboration with travel – for the benefit of the travelers and the company.



Introduction virtual collaboration

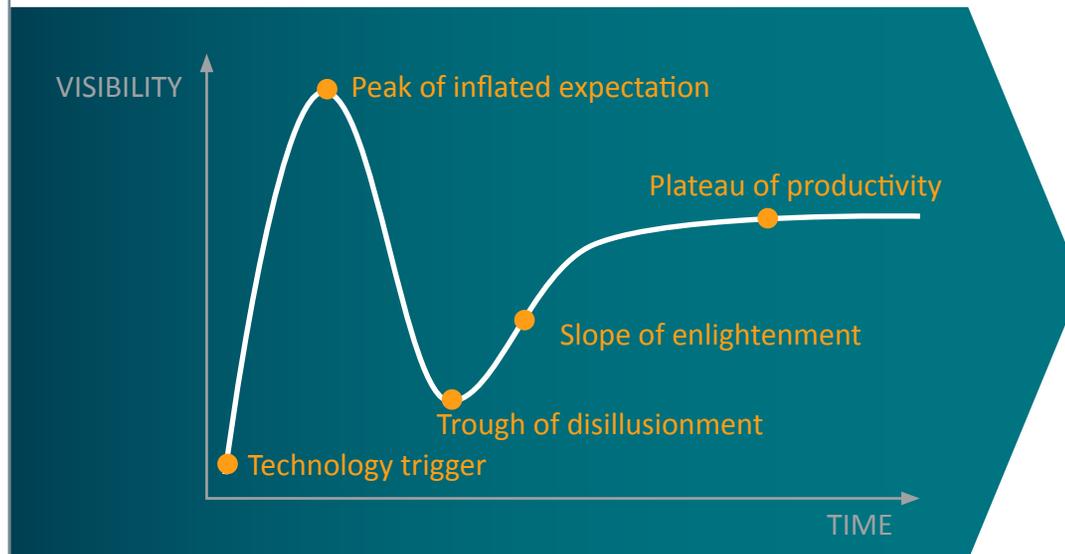


Virtual collaboration – people meeting for day-to-day business online – has largely failed to meet expectations in the 20 or so years since the technology launched. Early adopters of video-conferencing in particular were disillusioned with the results. Not only was the technology initially expensive, it didn't work very well:

- Slow, jerky images didn't synchronize with the audio.
- Sharing data files simultaneously was challenging.
- It required special equipment, kept in dedicated rooms, which had to be scheduled and booked in advance.

On top of all that, companies expecting video conferencing to deliver significant travel savings were usually disappointed. Virtual collaboration certainly can replace face-to-face meetings between colleagues, but it is rarely the right way to meet potential or existing clients. Add in the growing need to travel because of globalization and the net result has been most companies seeing travel costs rise, not drop.

Virtual collaboration has therefore found itself in the *Trough of Disillusionment*, the third stage of Gartner's Hype Cycle (see below) model.² However, we believe virtual collaboration has improved so much that it now deserves a place high up the *Slope of Enlightenment*.



² Gartner, Gartner Hype Cycle

Today, virtual collaboration, including video-conferencing, works very well, and that's why it's time to take another look at introducing, or stepping up, usage of it in your company.

The technology is much better – It's faster, more reliable, and picture and sound quality have improved enormously. Just as importantly, the different systems used for video-conferencing can now interact through the cloud and across platforms ranging from mobiles and tablets to personal computers and high-end, dedicated conferencing equipment.

The technology is much cheaper – Costs are falling by significant double-digit percentages each year. In some cases virtual collaboration can be totally free.

The technology is widely used – At its most basic level, one-to-one video calling (through Skype for example) has become a familiar experience in both the business and consumer worlds.

There is now a complete virtual collaboration spectrum – From simple instant messaging to high-end “immersive” systems like telepresence, there's a virtual collaboration option to fit all business needs and pockets. Perhaps the most important gap to have been filled, just below immersive, is the improved development of “multi-purpose conferencing systems”: Specialized but portable kit that provides exceptionally high quality for a fraction of the price.

In this paper we make the case for travel managers to take another look at virtual collaboration. We also address a major challenge that needs solving: While

virtual collaboration technology is now excellent, many companies lack a strategy to integrate these opportunities into their workflow.

Virtual collaboration is a massive opportunity for travel managers, because they can provide a strategic perspective. Instead of managing only face-to-face collaboration, travel managers should look to manage and integrate all options, of which travel for face-to-face meetings is only one type.

Research by Advito suggests the ICT department owns virtual collaboration in most companies. Travel managers can enhance its strategic value by ensuring it's used to bring people together in the most appropriate way. This can make a huge difference not only to cost control but also to productivity and profitability. Sometimes the best way to meet is through travel. But sometimes it's through virtual means.

Enhancing your role, by integrating virtual collaboration in the travel program, can make you much more important to your business. It extends your reach to include a strategic responsibility for virtual collaboration, which no one else has picked up in most companies. It also presents a new savings opportunity. This white paper offers a starting point to embark on the total collaboration journey.



Increasing virtual collaboration

We think virtual collaboration is currently under-used in business, partly because of outdated negative perceptions, but also because it lacks visibility. Here are eight compelling reasons why we believe the situation continues to improve.

% of total participants who answered (442)



Virtual collaboration: The tools are already here

Virtual collaboration is already used much more widely than you'd think. In October 2015, Advito surveyed 442 people responsible for managing travel within their company. We found many using most forms of collaboration.

Unsurprisingly, almost all businesses use telephone conference calls (92%). Instant messaging, associated more often with the consumer world, is very popular too (74%). And, most revealing of all, 76% use video-conferencing in their business, while another 24% use immersive systems such as telepresence. Altogether, 81% have access to video-conferencing or telepresence or both (the two virtual collaboration tools with the most realistic potential to replace some travel).

Video-conferencing is on the rise

Use of high-end virtual collaboration is on the rise. According to Transparency Market Research, the global video conferencing market was valued at \$3.31 billion in 2013 and is expected to more than double to \$6.4 billion by 2020.³ Revenue growth is predicted in spite of a dramatic fall in prices for video-conferencing systems.

Use of video-conferencing is expanding within businesses. Cisco told us that while in the past the technology was accessed mainly by senior executives, today the technology is used throughout the organization, partly because access to some form of video-conferencing is available almost everywhere.



³ Transparency Market Research, Video Conferencing Market – Global Industry Analysis, Size, Share, Growth, Trends and Forecasts 2014-2020, January 2015

Increasing virtual collaboration

Again, our own survey supports what Cisco says: 45% of respondents with video-conferencing and/or telepresence (immersive solutions) said these tools are available to more than three-quarters of their employees. Only 10% make the tools available to less than 10% of employees.

The virtual collaboration spectrum has developed

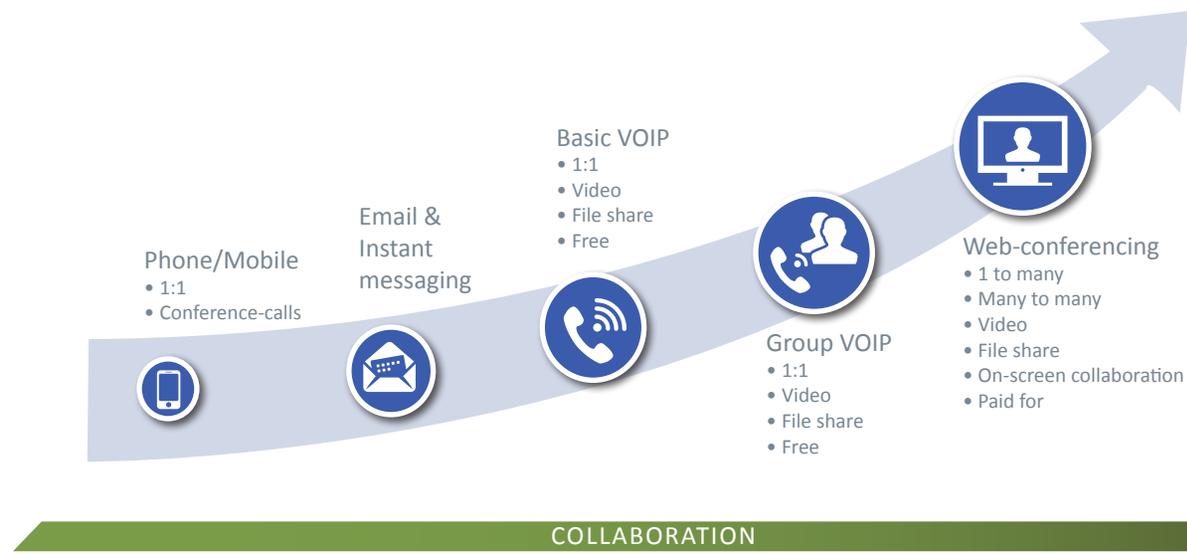
Since the Internet revolution of the mid-1990s, there has been a wide range of virtual collaboration tools available, from e-mail at one end to immersive systems involving many participants at the other.

However, there were gaps in the spectrum where no tools were available. In the last few years those gaps have been filled. What we've termed the "virtual collaboration spectrum" now looks something like this:

New options: Multipurpose conference systems

According to Cisco, the greatest virtual collaboration growth over the last couple of years has been in two areas: free video calling (using Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP), like Skype) and multipurpose conference systems (MCS). For those interested in re-thinking travel as collaboration, MCS is the most important recent development. It's a new generation of very high-quality video-conferencing equipment. MCS is less lifelike than immersive systems, but has two crucial advantages:

- It is much cheaper.
- It is portable. Businesses don't need dedicated rooms as they do for telepresence options. Now the technology comes to the user, not vice versa.



Increasing virtual collaboration

Video meetings are normal

Almost all electronic communication devices – whether mobile or PC-based – now include a camera. This means one-to-one communication enhanced by video has become an everyday occurrence across all platforms. And now the same is starting to happen for communication beyond one-to-one. Unified communications tools, such as Google Hangouts, allow video-conferencing for up to ten people at one time.

The technology is much better

Better functionality – Pictures are now high-definition quality, and sound has improved to match. Sharing documents during a meeting and working together on one screen have also become much easier.

More user-friendly – Video technology used to be so complex and unreliable that sometimes a trained person was needed on-site to make it work. Now, like good mobile apps, it is intuitive. For example, speaker tracking – when the camera automatically zooms in on the person talking – is becoming standard thanks to biometrics and noise triangulation.

Ever-improving broadband – At the same time that broadband speeds have accelerated, streaming services are placing less demand on bandwidth. So there’s now a bigger pipe with less going through it. It means that high-quality conferencing, even from home, is a reality.

Cross-platform connectivity – Video-conferencing bridging technology has moved into the cloud, which means it has become much more interoperable. For example, high-end video-conferencing system

competitors like Cisco and Polycom can connect with each other through third parties such as Blue Jeans Network or telecoms providers like AT&T and BT. Users can also connect easily across technology platforms. Today, someone using a PC can video-conference with someone on a tablet or a desktop video-conferencing unit.

Costs have plummeted

For many years, video-conferencing prices stayed constant. But entry-level video-conferencing is now free, and this in turn – along with increased user numbers – has forced down the price of paid-for video-conferencing facilities. Cisco says its prices dropped 30-60% year-over-year in 2014. The higher the specification, the steeper the drop in price.

Cloud-based bridging has also made a difference. Previously, users of specialized video-conferencing equipment needed their own bridging hardware plus a corporate firewall, which meant that, according to Cisco, 40% of video-conferencing costs were eaten up by infrastructure. Those costs have now disappeared.

Finally, substituting MCS for immersive systems saves costs in two ways:

- The equipment is cheaper.
- No dedicated rooms are needed, saving real estate costs.

Sample comparative video-conferencing list prices:⁴

High-quality desktop	MCS	Immersive
US\$2,000	US\$3,000-\$40,000	\$150,000 plus real estate costs

⁴ Provided verbally by Cisco. Prices are approximate.



Increasing virtual collaboration

Practice what you preach

Five years ago, employees at Cisco were conducting 8,000 weekly meetings using more than 2,000 telepresence rooms – that’s a bit less than four meetings per room per week; not even one meeting per day. Such low usage levels raise questions about a purchaser’s return on investment on telepresence.⁵ Each telepresence room carries “a price tag of over US\$100,000.” And a telepresence suite is largely unusable for other types of meeting, due to the nature of the room’s furniture.

Colleagues don’t work in the same location

The need for virtual collaboration between colleagues is increasing because they are less likely to work in the same location than ten years ago:

- Companies are becoming more globalized, so colleagues increasingly live in different countries.
- Growing numbers of employees work away from company-owned locations, known as teleworking. 20-25% of the U.S. workforce does some teleworking every week, and 80-90% would like to telework. In the United Kingdom, 13.9% of the workforce does not work at an employer location. That number comprises 5.0% who work predominantly at home and 8.9% who work in different locations.⁷

Video conferencing may offer better value than travel: It’s accessible to more people and enables hybrid conferences.

Do immersive systems have a future?

Thanks to its much lower price, MCS is selling very well in a market that immersive systems previously tried to fill. However, Cisco believes there is still a small but reliable demand for elite products such as TelePresence, which create the impression users are sitting in the same room as each other. A useful analogy to air travel is that immersive is like first class, for which there is always some demand, while MCS is a much more popular business class.



⁵ No Jitter, [Telepresence usage statistics: where is the ROI?](#), April 13, 2010

⁶ [GlobalWorkplaceAnalytics.com](#)

⁷ [Office for National Statistics, Characteristics of Home Workers 2014](#), 4 June 2014

Increasing virtual collaboration

Virtual collaboration is up and running, and there is demand for it. But one piece in the jigsaw is missing: Virtual collaboration isn't being integrated with travel. Our survey points to why companies aren't yet making the most out of collaboration: 87% of respondents with video-conferencing and/or immersive said these tools are owned by their ICT department. And a whopping 64% of travel managers have no or minor influence over virtual collaboration.

Treating virtual collaboration simply as technology means ICT takes an operational approach. But this is old-fashioned, over-cautious thinking. Now that most virtual collaboration logistics are managed in the cloud, ICT has far less need to be involved in sourcing, operating or maintaining hardware.

Moving control of technology out of the ICT department is an established enterprise-wide trend. Today, 40% of ICT spend is controlled elsewhere. That figure is expected to hit 90% by 2020.

ICT does of course still have a major support role to play because of technical issues, such as managing bandwidth and integrating tools with other company systems. It also needs to help, when users don't understand how to operate virtual tools or the technology malfunctions. Facilities management may also need to be consulted, if rooms need to be booked for conferencing. But, once again, these are all operational issues.

The natural home for virtual collaboration is travel. Travel managers can manage the integration with travel to create something powerful and productive: Strategically managed total collaboration.

The virtual collaboration spectrum then evolves into a total collaboration spectrum (see page 13).



⁸ Forbes, [40 Percent of IT Spending Is Outside CIO Control](#), December 2, 2013

⁹ Gartner, [Gartner Says Every Budget is Becoming an IT Budget](#), October 22, 2012

Should I stay or should I go?

The target is to encourage employees to choose the most appropriate form of collaboration based on their business need and the strategic goals of the organization. This is not as difficult as it sounds. The farther to the right of the spectrum they go, the more impact travel managers can have. So there's little need to spend time managing the tools to the left of the spectrum. In fact, these can perhaps be left under the control of ICT and also to the common sense of employees to decide when to use them.

The collaboration tools in the immersive field of the spectrum are where you'll likely spend most time and add most value. These tools cost the most, too, but they may also lead to the greatest productivity gains for the business.

All you need is a strategic plan for this new concept of total collaboration management. The next section helps you build one.



Create a total collaboration management strategy

There's no single correct path to total collaboration management. In fact, a perfectly executed strategy at this time is arguably impossible. For example, online booking, which fully integrates travel and video-conferencing reservations, is not yet properly established.

That's why communication is probably the most important part of your strategy. Changing mindsets is likely, at this stage, to prove more effective than changing processes.

Collaboration management doesn't even have to be total at this stage. If it proves hard to tie travel to virtual ways of meeting, then simply making it easier to use some of those virtual alternatives will be a good start.

Step 1 – Research

Step 2 – Make the business case

Step 3 – Improve the virtual collaboration basics

Step 4 – Integrate virtual collaboration with travel

Step 5 – Communicate



Create a total collaboration management strategy

Step 1 – Research

First, you need facts.

Audit your current virtual collaboration capabilities

Useful questions include:

- What virtual collaboration tools are used in the business today?
- What kind of meeting are the tools appropriate for?
- What kind of meeting are they not appropriate for?
- Do you have video-conferencing or telepresence rooms and where are they located? What are the utilization figures (the percentage of working hours that the tools are used)?
- How many employees in the business have access to the tools?
- Which employees have access (e.g. is there differentiation by seniority, by department, etc.)?
- Do those employees know they have access?
- Can employees use those tools to connect to people outside the business?
- Survey both current and ex-users of the tools to find out what they did and didn't like about them.
- Are any additional tools required?

Audit your travel spend

- How much does your business spend today on travel?
- Where do you spend it?
- Most crucially, why do your people travel? If you don't yet capture reasons for travel at point of booking, do this for say six months before taking this project any further.

Understand your company's strategic goals

Remind yourself what your company's core aims are, then figure out how a total collaboration strategy would relate to those goals. Cost containment is the most obvious goal, but there are others:

Staff retention and recruitment – Improving work/life balance may be a key corporate target to help attract and retain the best talent. Reducing time spent traveling could play a key role in meeting this ambition.

Increasing productivity – Meeting face to face is generally considered the most productive form of collaboration. But that's not true for all travel. Some trips are more routine, perhaps a habit rather than a necessity. If employees replaced some of those trips with virtual collaboration, they could potentially be far more productive with the time saved by not traveling.



Create a total collaboration management strategy

Define your objectives

Once you have all this information at your fingertips, it's decision time:

- What is the scope of your ambition? Do you simply want to improve category buying and adoption of virtual collaboration, or do you want to aim for a more ambitious collaboration management strategy that integrates with travel?
- How much room do you see for improvement?
- How challenging will it be to persuade the business to work with you, senior management, ICT and end-users (the people who meet)?

Step 2 – Make the business case

Depending on what you decide your objectives are, you will potentially need to make two related business cases to senior management:

- Why the company should step up its investment in virtual collaboration tools.
- Why you (as travel manager) should take over management of virtual collaboration.

In both cases, explain how senior management approval would empower you to meet the business's strategic goals you researched in Step 1.

Don't ask for immediate investment – Instead, present conclusions about the potential scale of benefits and then request permission to research your proposals as a formal project.

Don't oversell – Be honest about the limitations of virtual collaboration. For example, virtual tools will not replace travel-related sales and after-sales activities.

Try to quantify financial savings – There is no escaping the fact that projects offering a direct return on investment are most likely to win senior management approval. If virtual collaboration replaces a trip, then clearly that can be a financial saving. After all, the cost of a single MCS unit could easily be recovered the first time it's used to replace a long-haul trip.

The challenge is proving a trip was avoided by using virtual collaboration instead. It is very difficult to verify something was going to happen, but didn't.

But there is a way. This is why it's essential to track the reason for travel for every trip for six months or more. Once you have this information, focus on the top 10 routes travelled by employees for internal meetings – these are the trips with the most potential for meeting virtually instead. If high-end virtual collaboration tools are available in each of these locations, the chances of a fast return on investment would be very high. It would be easy enough to produce figures showing that only a very small proportion of trips on the top ten routes need to be converted to a virtual meeting to achieve the return on investment (ROI).



Create a total collaboration management strategy

Example

Total annual cost of travel for company:
US\$80 million

Total annual cost of internal meetings on top 10 routes:
US\$ 12.75 million

Cost of installing MCS at 8 locations:
US\$48,000

Number of trips that need to be converted to virtual meetings to achieve ROI:
32

Percentage of trips that need to be converted to achieve ROI:
0.3%

That should be a very easy target to exceed and on which to start making major savings.

Top 10 routes traveled for internal meetings:

London-Frankfurt

London-Paris

Frankfurt-Paris

London-New York

New York-San Francisco

New York-Phoenix

San-Francisco-Phoenix

San Francisco-Frankfurt

San Francisco-Mumbai

Frankfurt-Moscow

Number of destinations: 8

Number of trips: 8,500

Average trip cost: US\$ 1,500

Cost is also about efficiency

The ROI figures look good, but they won't be achieved if no one uses the virtual collaboration facilities available, which is where things have often gone wrong in the past. That is why the business case should also explain how, through active, co-ordinated management for the first time, you will optimize ROI by boosting high levels of utilization.

Do virtual alternatives reduce or increase travel?

Some claim virtual collaboration makes employees travel more, instead of persuading them to travel less. According to this line of thinking, colleagues who meet virtually realize they can achieve a lot working together, and that they want to meet face to face to be even more productive.

The Advito survey suggests this theory is outdated. Only 3% of respondents with video-conferencing and/or immersive systems believe using these tools led to more travel. On the contrary, 55% believe it reduced trip numbers. More worrying, however, is that a large minority (42%) saw no change in trip volumes.



Create a total collaboration management strategy

Step 3 – Improve the virtual collaboration basics

Improving procurement

Potential issues to examine include:

- If basic procurement strategies have not been used before, now is the time to start by consolidating suppliers.
- Review what is on the market to assess which level of quality will meet employees' needs.
- Compatibility is less of an issue than it used to be thanks to cloud-based bridging. However, check that you have a bridging provider able to solve your particular needs.

Make the tools easy to use

- Address the challenges uncovered in your user survey.
- Replace out-of-date kit.
- Create an online booking schedule for shared (MCS and immersive) units. Put the schedule on the company intranet and, ideally, a company app.
- Communicate: Let employees know what options are available, what they can be used for, how to use and how to book them.

Step 4 – Integrate virtual collaboration with travel

Even if you only go as far as Step 3, the chances are you'll already achieve major improvements for your business. Step 4 adds a completely new dimension to your travel strategy.

Integrate policy

Say farewell to your company travel policy as you know it: It's time to integrate virtual collaboration. What's even more important than the content of the new policy is the communication value. Issuing a document covering both travel and virtual collaboration is a powerful statement of intent that employees will in future consider the two together.

Create guidance – In theory, an ideal policy would include a “should I stay or should I go?” algorithm – a clear, rule-based decision matrix to decide whether a meeting should be face-to-face or virtual. In practice, this is very hard to achieve, because every meeting has so many variables that decisions need to be weighed up case by case. However, it's certainly possible to provide guidance. A simple example would be to say teams currently meeting monthly should only meet face to face twice per year; the rest of the time they should connect virtually.



Create a total collaboration management strategy

And there is nothing wrong with adding a matrix to the policy. However, it would be difficult to force users to comply with its recommendations. Once again, the value lies in making potential travelers think about alternatives before they book. Examples of questions they could be asked to consider include:

- How often do I travel to this destination? Could I reduce the frequency of my trips?
- How many people from the company are traveling? Could fewer of us travel?
- What will this meeting achieve face-to-face that cannot be achieved through other means?
- Who am I meeting? Is it a client, or a colleague who I could meet more easily virtually without damaging our relationship?
- Am I aware of the extra cost, both financially and in terms of emissions, and are those costs justifiable?

Create rules around guidance – Add supporting rules around your guidelines. For example, if employees want to travel more often than the guidelines suggest, they can do so, but must provide a written justification to their head of department. Or make it policy that, before booking any trip, employees must discuss with their line manager whether travel or virtual is more appropriate.

Virtual collaboration rules – Employees are accustomed to rules about what they can and cannot do when travelling. But if virtual collaboration has previously

gone unmanaged, important rules about its use may be missing. For example, most travel policies cover security issues. Rules are also needed for safe and secure behavior when using virtual collaboration tools, especially non-enterprise tools like Google Hangouts.

Integrate booking

According to the Advito survey, a small but significant proportion of companies (21%) already integrate virtual collaboration options within their travel booking process. Another 5% plan to do so within the next 12 months. There are three stages of integrated booking maturity:

Simple booking integration

The simplest and most common form is to ask travelers while they're booking a trip if they've considered virtual alternatives. This can be done either via a pop-up message on an online booking tool or when talking on the phone to the travel management company (TMC) consultant.

Intermediate booking integration

A prompt to consider going virtual is only really effective if supported by a channel that makes virtual meeting booking easy. If the employee is booking offline with a TMC, the TMC consultant needs to know which virtual tools are available (both for the traveler and the person they're visiting). Online, the situation is similar. The traveler should be able to click a button on their travel booking tool that connects to a video-conferencing booking system reservation tool.



Create a total collaboration management strategy

Advanced booking integration

In an ideal world, you'd book virtual meetings within your online booking tool. It'd be even better to compare and book travel and virtual alternatives on the same screen, including highlighting (or exclusively showing) the policy-compliant options. A few service providers have attempted a booking tool of this kind, though so far with very limited success. Although the technology is viable, the concept has failed to sell well.

To make virtual collaboration booking work online, you'd have to bring together various stakeholders. Internally, these might include the ICT department plus whoever manages the schedules for conferencing equipment and rooms. Externally, stakeholders could include video-conferencing suppliers, TMCs and booking tool providers.

Integrate reporting

Finding a reliable way to report on integrated total collaboration is challenging. How do you define success, and how do you measure it? As already discussed, it is difficult to track when a trip is replaced by a virtual meeting. However, there are some key performance indicators, which could be helpful for a collaboration manager:

- **Virtual collaboration usage**
How many video-conferences are booked?
- **Virtual collaboration utilization**
What percentage of available hours for video-conferencing facilities are actually used?
- **Travel productivity**
Have travel costs as a percentage of sales revenue fallen?
- **Reasons for travel**
Has the percentage of trips made for internal meetings fallen? This could be a particularly significant KPI.
- **Switching to virtual**
How often has someone not completed a travel booking, when offered a virtual alternative? In these cases, cost avoidance can also be measured successfully: The cost of the trip that was not taken minus the cost of the virtual meeting set up instead.
- **User satisfaction**
Surveying employees is another useful measure to expand overall understanding. How easy are they finding virtual tools to book and use? And when they do use them, how well are they achieving the goals they originally had for their meeting?



Create a total collaboration management strategy

Step 5 – Communicate

Integrating travel and virtual to create total collaboration is important. Telling your company it has progressed to total collaboration is even more important. If you reach the stage where employees instinctively consider virtual meeting options every time they think about travel options, then that's more than half the battle won.

A white paper from sister company BCD Travel, [Traveler Management – How to influence your employees to plan, book and travel smarter](#) – provides tips and case-studies on using marketing and communications techniques to encourage the switch from travel to virtual.

We have already seen some tactical forms of communication in Step 4 above – promoting total collaboration thinking at the policy and booking stages, for example. But a complete communications strategy is also very important.

Some companies have taken this idea as far as branding their total collaboration program. For example, IKEA markets its program internally as “Meet More, Travel Less.” A single department (formerly the travel department) controls both travel and virtual alternatives, and is also responsible for promoting the joined-up thinking. The branded message is also reflected structurally within the organization: Meetings (that is meeting virtually as well as face-to-face) management is a mandatory leadership role for management and yearly departmental business plans must include a meeting plan.¹⁰

Employees instinctively considering virtual meeting options is a milestone for progress on total collaboration.



¹⁰ BCD Travel, [Traveler Management – How to influence your employees to plan, book and travel smarter](#), January 10, 2013

Making total collaboration a reality

Like all digital technologies, virtual collaboration is evolving fast. For example, Harvard Business School has created HBX Live!, a virtual classroom where a lecturer teaches up to 60 students remotely. They watch the lecturer and the lecturer watches them on 60 different screens.¹¹

Interacting with a person beamed into a room as a hologram is also now a reality. It is very convincing, but still extremely expensive: around \$20,000 a time. For the future, even more immersive technology, using virtual reality visors, is a possibility.

But for the immediate future, over the next couple of years, we believe the most important changes will be improvements to existing commercial technology. Cisco forecasts virtual collaboration tool costs will halve every 18 months over the next few years. Watch out too for even more connectivity between different technology platforms. For example, Cisco and Apple announced a strategic partnership in summer 2015.

As virtual collaboration tools continue to get cheaper and better, that should lead to increasing adoption within companies, and in turn a greater need than ever to manage how they are used. Meanwhile, demand for business travel has the potential to increase as globalization continues unchecked. Pressure will grow to manage that demand downwards for financial, environmental and quality-of-life reasons. Now that virtual collaboration works well, it has become the solution to travel demand management. The immediate future will be all about marrying virtual and face-to-face meetings to create total collaboration management.

Virtual collaboration becomes the solution to travel demand management.



¹¹ Poets & Quants, [Harvard Business School's Classroom Of The Future](#), August 25, 2015

For more information

Please contact

500 West Madison Street
Suite 1200
Chicago, Illinois 60661

(888) 812-8725
advice@advito.com
www.advito.com

About Advito

Advito is the travel industry's most progressive consultancy, enabling procurement leaders to modernize their approach to managing the travel and meetings spend category. Led by a unique team of multi-disciplinary experts and thought leaders, we work with both clients and suppliers to push the boundaries of traditional air and hotel sourcing and strategic meetings management for higher program returns. We provide advisory, procurement and outsourcing services in the area of corporate travel sourcing, expense and meetings management, along with RFP development and management; benchmarking and vendor management services. We minimize our clients' travel spend and maximize their travel program value in a data-rich, consumer empowered world. Headquartered in Chicago, Advito operates in key business markets around the world. For more information, visit www.advito.com.

About BCD Group

BCD Group is a market leader in the travel industry. The privately owned company was founded in 1975 by John Fentener van Vlissingen and consists of BCD Travel (global corporate travel management), Travix (online travel: CheapTickets, Vliegwinkel, BudgetAir, Vayama and Easytobook), Park 'N Fly (off-airport parking), Parkmobile International (mobile parking and traffic applications) and joint ventures Airtrade (consolidating and fulfillment) and VakantieXperts (leisure travel). BCD Group employs more than 13,000 people and operates in almost 100 countries with total sales, including franchising, of US\$22.8 billion. For more information, visit www.bcd-nv.com.