Improving the ROI of R&D

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The new global market has forced companies to change the way they do business over the past decade. From increasing supply chain efficiency around the world—to managing multiple, dispersed sales channels—businesses are working hard to keep up with international demands and complexity.

Connecting the disconnected

For manufacturers, spending on Research and Development (R&D) is the way to stay ahead in the global competitive market. Their methods of spending vary, from outsourcing to acquiring other smaller companies. These companies are often overseas in different cultures and time zones, which can be a huge hurdle for integration limiting growth and profit. But this hurdle can be jumped effortlessly if there is an interconnecting video presence, a unified communication system (UC) or a telepresence solution, there is instantaneous collaboration on all levels of a company and its partners. With its collaborative video conferencing products, Polycom offers multi-faceted video solutions that can link all aspects of a company.

The results of unified communication are evident in travel times being cut, time to market being greatly reduced, minimization of downtime, more timely and cost effective training, and dramatically reduced recruitment costs. Even sales-related costs diminish through communication efficiency, allowing for overall increased revenue.

The travel budget behemoth

Research and development, product development, design, implementation, and marketing no longer have one designated floor of a building with everyone located in the same place at the same time. Instead, with conglomerations and mass globalization, most business is practiced over thousands of miles, across culture lines and in many time zones. Vast budgets are spent trying to get people, ideas, research and training to come together to create and to launch new products onto the worldwide market. Significant ROI related to the implementation of a video conferencing system must take into account the recent Wainhouse Research ROI survey that found travel times cut by as much as 30% with the implementation of collaborative conferencing systems. Employees can now see each other through video in real-time. They can collaborate face-to-face with suppliers, distributors, other researchers, the factory floor, the R&D lab, in executive meetings, and in company-wide conferences without having to leave their desks.
“Those companies considered ‘Best in Class’ cut the time needed to develop conceptual designs of prototypes by 23% and those companies labeled ‘Average’ cut their times by 11% with the implementation of a video conferencing presence. Looking deeper this study uncovered that the ‘Best in Class’ are 200% more likely to use video outside their enterprise accessing a larger pool of competencies to create innovative solutions.”

- Aberdeen Group

Shrinking cycles of the product development process
With quality video collaboration tools such as Polycom® RealPresence® video solutions, employees can see body language and critical content such as engineering documents detailed work process flows simultaneously. They can interface personally in real-time without jet lag and the cultural change associated with international travel, giving them time and space to create, innovate and keep vital information flowing. Developmental teams and suppliers get to create without barriers that are impacting their work product. Product development content flows between remote channels without cost or time being lost. Team consensus is built more quickly with multidimensional collaboration (Video, Voice, Content and real-time Mark-ups). Greater insight and in-depth understanding leads to breakthrough innovations.

Managing across borders
A global team needs to generate revenue with the launch of a new product. Effective management for every step of the product development process is streamlined and enhanced with the use of collaborative video technologies. The design stage of a product is one that involves much discussion, testing, results processing, and ultimately development into a ready-to-launch product that will become an asset for the company. In this stage, a collaborative video tool can allow those engineers in far-flung places to converse with their colleagues and with outside partners connected to the product development process.

Many global companies contract out much of the work in the R&D process. With a collaborative video tool, the communication and management of those contracted entities is streamlined. An added bonus is that the contractor feels more connected and better managed through open face-to-face channels of communication.

Virtual project management
For a product to come to fruition and be ready to launch, a company must tackle many avenues of project management. Many companies have multiple design facilities located in different countries, making the coordination of R&D meetings and production cumbersome. A collaborative video conferencing system gives engineers and designers an ideal portal of creative input. Simultaneously they can access recorded video content of previous meetings they could not attend and understand how decisions were made.

In addition, competition is high for technical expertise; companies implementing video as part of their remote worker policy gain productivity by having a more accessible and close collaboration with those workers who are so distant. With Polycom video training for off-site employees in the product development stage, the preparation for new product introductions and how it will be implemented, marketed, and sold, results in quality standards being maintained and exceeded. Research has shown that during the product development period, a video-enabled team can review three times as many ideas in the same time period as teams without video collaboration. This allows for more innovation, faster time to market, lower overall costs, and improved project execution.

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Streamlining sales
Once a product comes to fruition, it has to be sold. Gathering a global sales force together in one place for an integrated educational sales meeting is cost prohibitive. Video collaboration is the perfect solution. A company with locations in all areas of the globe can host several training sessions, in multiple languages, with varied results and save time and money. While this time and money saved are important, it is the sales and support teams’ knowledge that will enable the product to perform in the worldwide market and create revenue for the company. With Polycom collaborative video solutions, support teams provide expert knowledge, assistance, and guidance for the new product. The sales teams have all the answers they need to go to their unique markets and educate their prospective buyers with uniformity and clarity.

A proven ROI for product development
The research reveals that companies with an embedded video collaboration system outperform their competitors in each stage or ‘gate’ of product development. Travel time is reduced, drastically. This time saved is then allocated to more important aspects of the developmental stages. Video collaboration makes it much easier for development teams to access knowledge from different areas, participate in richly connected social networks, and test different ideas more quickly. With an advanced communication system, companies reduce their production development cycles exponentially. Travel, research, design, testing, implementation, training, meetings, and all other aspects of the production cycle are enhanced. The ROI is proven and, once implemented, gives a company the edge it will need to make a name for itself in the global market.

Conclusion
The future of business on a global scale will require widely distributed employees, partners, and contracted entities to come together as a unified whole, crossing time zones and cultural divides. Companies will have to realize that product development solutions are based on eye contact, body language, and other communication cues humans have used for centuries. We need face-to-face time to produce results. And without a doubt, video collaboration will become a silver bullet in this ever expanding world.

About the author
John Paul Williams’ executive experience includes global operations leader with P&L responsibility leading innovations in manufacturing, quality and engineering. His Industry experience includes telecommunications, process controls, military avionics, consumer goods, and medical equipment.

About Polycom
Polycom helps organizations unleash the power of human collaboration. More than 400,000 companies and institutions worldwide defy distance with video, voice and content solutions from Polycom. Polycom and its global partner ecosystem provide flexible collaboration solutions for any environment that deliver the best user experience and unmatched investment protection.