



# The IT Buyer's Guide to Web Conferencing

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As business teams become ever more geographically dispersed, web conferencing continues to solidify its role as a cornerstone of team collaboration. 39% of IT decision-makers plan to move their standalone audio to personal web-based conferencing (PWC) in the next two to three years.<sup>i</sup> New and improved collaboration tools are helping companies big and small in the pursuit of new markets, the shortening of sales cycles, the recruitment of top talent regardless of location and the bridging of gaps between previously siloed teams or departments.

Effective web conferencing can have a time-saving, morale-boosting, revenue-lifting impact on productivity, while simultaneously reducing the burden on IT teams accustomed to spending valuable time and resources on implementation and support. But an ill-fitting solution will just wind up adding another pain point in the end. To determine which web conferencing solution is the best fit, it's critical to ask the right questions, and zero in on the essential features.

IT experts at PGI have identified the make-or-break factors that should fuel any decision to purchase and implement a new web conferencing solution.

“ 69% of people who use desktop video conferencing and 55% of people who use web conferencing say the technologies are effective at streamlining business processes.” ”

## 4 Questions to Ask Before Buying a Web Conferencing Solution

### 1. How Does It Help Me Save Money?

ROI is king. At some point, any new technology or software acquisition must prove its value in dollars and cents, and not just in the intangible benefits offered by conferencing and collaboration tools, like the increase in morale when employees no longer bang their desks in frustration every time it's time to join a web conference. The bottom-line benefits of web conferencing are numerous, and include reduced travel costs, accelerated workforce productivity and greater remote working options.

Additionally, your choice of provider will dictate quite a bit about pricing structure and potential savings. Do they provide a complete bundle with integrated, industry-grade audio, web and video solutions, or will support incur additional charges? Do they charge for mobile licenses, or are they included? Does the product include various avenues of support, such as operators, live chat, email and user communities, or will building out a support system cost your IT department additional money and time? All of these issues can drastically affect the costs incurred when making a web conferencing purchasing decision.

### 2. How Easy Is It To Deploy?

Deployment is frequently a big hurdle with new software, but it doesn't need to be for web conferencing. Cloud computing has all but eliminated lengthy deployment times. There may be some customization involved with your solution, but the tools themselves are easily accessible, and not just for IT professionals.

Even with the ease of deployment in the cloud, your web conferencing provider should work with you to understand your company's unique IT framework, to assess your infrastructure, and to provide a tailored solution that seamlessly integrates with existing systems.

A big challenge for any new software deployment is user adoption; executives consider only 14% of software installations to be very successful.<sup>iii</sup> PGI employs an Implementation Services Team comprised of support and solutions-engineering veterans who will work to customize your implementation and on-board and train your employees to ensure they're making the most of your new collaboration tool.

### 3. How Easy Is It To Use?

Prior to moving to the cloud, web conferencing wasn't widely adopted due to complicated downloads and interfaces. Users tended to get frustrated and guests had trouble entering meetings which caused meetings to start late or not at all. Cloud-based solutions enable guests to join via a web browser, avoiding cumbersome downloads that often require IT help desk involvement.

The best web conferencing tools feature interfaces accessible from any device or location, requiring very little technical aptitude from the end user. Users can even switch devices mid-meeting and go from desktop to mobile without missing a beat. Common features now include single-click entry to make long meeting URLs, dial-in numbers and passcodes headaches of the past. Intuitive tools make it easy for any user to present screens, chat with other attendees, invite additional guests or share files with the group.

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### 4. How Secure Is It?

Security and compliance features are an essential component of any software purchasing decision. Web conferencing solutions include a number of features that pose possible security risks, including file sharing, chat and audio and web recording. The evaluation of a tool should include a thorough analysis of how it meets your own organization's needs for secure and compliant information transmission.

When choosing a collaboration provider, don't forget to involve your security team in the decision-making and implementation planning. To protect all of the data being sent across networks, security will need to establish a comfortable

relationship with your vendor; the sooner this connection is forged, the easier your deployment will be. Security protocols should address the following:

- Security infrastructure, including topics like firewalls, intrusion detection systems, ID management, data loss prevention systems, antivirus and WAN data
- Data security, including security for web-based communications and auditing permissions
- Physical security; how are data centers and hardware stored and protected?
- Application security and the ability to adjust product settings and features to meet your security objectives

### Technical Difficulties

According to Wainhouse Research, more than half of web conference meetings start over 5 minutes late because of:

- Software download/install delays
- Difficulty joining the meeting
- Missing login credentials

Over a third (34%) of users are incorporating live video or web cams in more than half of their web conferences.<sup>19</sup> With this additional requirement

comes a demand for easy, fast troubleshooting for unexpected issues during meetings.

The cost of a single sub-par meeting is hard to quantify, but it's estimated that ineffective meetings carry a whopping price tag of 37 billion dollars each year.<sup>20</sup> That's why survey respondents rank ease of use as the most critical web conferencing component — even above reliability, price, features, vendor support and brand.



## Essential Web Conferencing Features

### Audio Quality and Integration

Don't overlook the importance of a reliable, consistent and easily-accessible audio experience. Many web conferencing providers outsource their audio to third party vendors, often sacrificing consistency and quality. You don't need a behemoth of a business to benefit from having a globally-available, enterprise-quality audio experience with multiple points of access. Whether callers are dialing in on phones via PTSN (public switched telephone network) or through Internet connections via VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol), clean, clear audio can be the difference between a productive meeting and a disjointed one.

### Presentation and Participation

Presenters must be able to share their desktops or applications with participants; this is a baseline requirement for web conferencing. While some meetings may be one-way broadcasts, the most productive web conferences are often more collaborative, and it's critical for web conferencing tools to help facilitate this teamwork.

Key collaborative features include real-time text messaging between attendees, shared

annotations via whiteboard applications, and the ability for presenters and participants to join live video feeds via webcams and mobile devices.

### Administrative Controls

Maintaining control over your company's software is essential for IT teams to ensure the safety and stability of your entire network and, frequently, the security and compliance of your employees' information. A flexible web conferencing solution provides full administrative access, allowing you to grant access to specific features across departments or even at the individual employee level. Highly regulated industries such as financial services and healthcare particularly benefit from this extra layer of control.

### Mobility

80% of enterprises provide employees with access to a mobile conferencing app.<sup>vi</sup> More and more is happening on mobile, and for adoption rates to get off the ground, your web conferencing tool must be able to support your flexible workforce on smartphones and tablets. You don't have to settle for a cut-rate mobile version of the real thing, either; the increased power and sophistication of

mobile device hardware means that a web conferencing app should include all of the key capabilities of its desktop counterpart, including video streaming, file sharing, chat and more. Your road warriors and digital nomads should have access to the same collaboration tools as their in-office colleagues.

“75% of people with access to desktop video conferencing use it on a daily or weekly basis.”<sup>vii</sup>

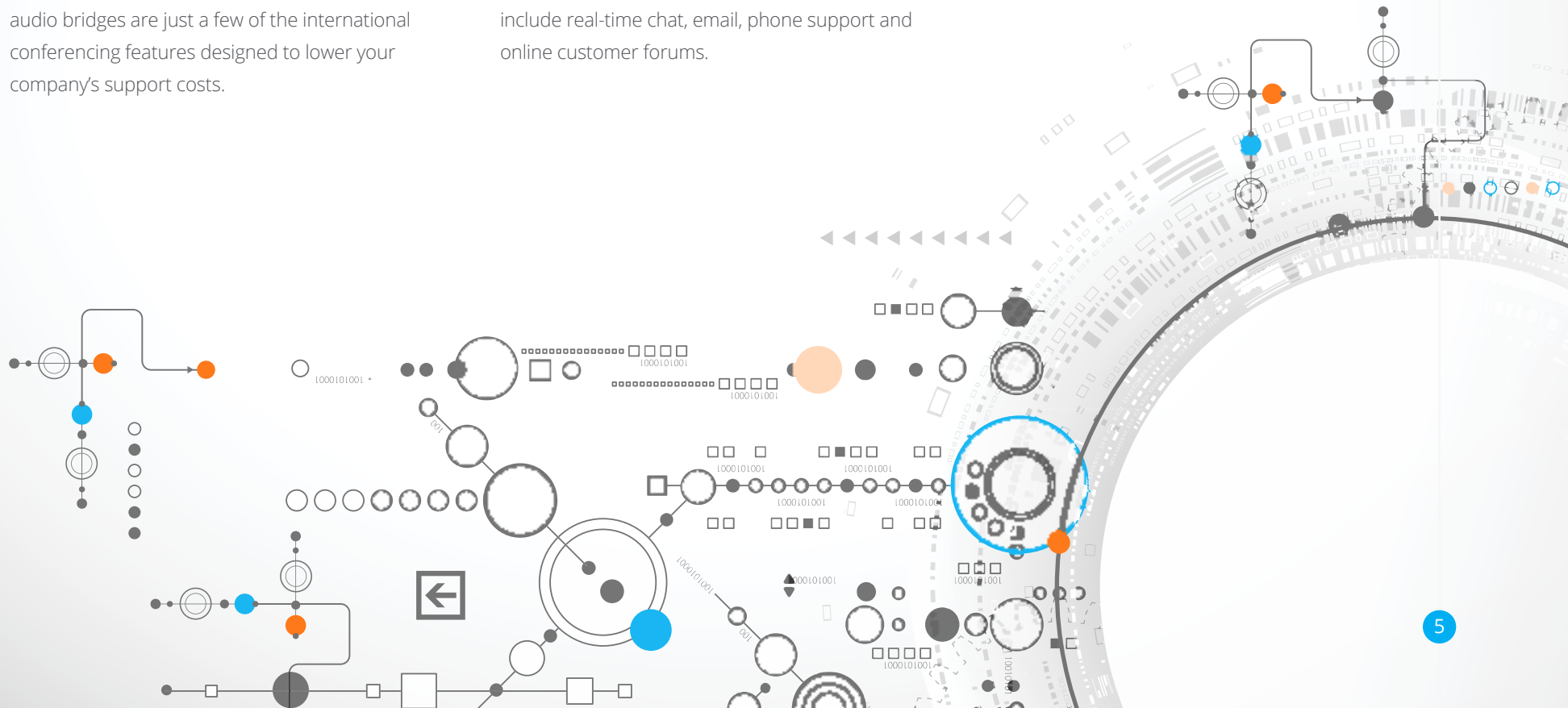
## Additional Features

### Global Reach

If your employee or customer base spans multiple countries and languages, your collaboration provider should be able to offer a variety of services to facilitate your company's global presence. Localized software versions, native language support and local dial-in numbers and audio bridges are just a few of the international conferencing features designed to lower your company's support costs.

### Multiple Avenues of Support

Users are accustomed to quick and easy access to information, especially for support and troubleshooting. It's vital for both your employees and your meeting guests to have multiple avenues of support for any meeting problems that may arise. Common support avenues you can expect include real-time chat, email, phone support and online customer forums.



## About Premiere Global Services, Inc. | PGI

PGI is the world's largest dedicated provider of collaboration software and services. For more than 25 years, our broad portfolio of products has served the end-to-end collaboration needs of enterprises. Accessible anywhere, anytime and on any device, PGI's award-winning collaboration solutions drive productivity and teamwork for approximately 50,000 customers around the world. To learn more, visit us at [pgi.com](http://pgi.com).

- i. Wainhouse Research, "2015 Audio Conferencing IT Decision Maker Survey Summary Results."
- ii. Frost & Sullivan, "Understanding the Evolving Role of IT: Are You Enabling Collaboration."
- iii. J.B. Wood, Todd Hewlin and Thomas Lah, *Consumption Economics: The New Rules of Tech*, 2011.
- iv. Wainhouse Research, "WebMetrics: First Half 2016."
- v. Drake Baer, "\$37 Billion is Lost Every Year On These 12 Meeting Mistakes," *Business Insider*, April 9, 2014.
- vi. Wainhouse Research, "2015 Audio Conferencing IT Decision Maker Survey Summary Results."
- vii. Frost & Sullivan, "Understanding the Evolving Role of IT: Are You Enabling Collaboration."

