

Interior Room Design is Essential to Effective Telepresence

By Susan J. Campbell, TMCnet Contributing Editor March 12, 2010

As the global marketplace continues to grow with the expansion of multinational organizations, the demand for streamlined communications and collaboration is emerging as a key focus. Face-to-face communications are still a vital part of communication and collaboration, but geography is a consistent obstacle.

To overcome this challenge, more and more companies are implementing telepresence into their communications strategy. It is not enough, however, to simply offer telepresence technology. To optimize on the communication and collaboration experience, the company must also consider the design of the room.

In a recent podcast on the [Telepresence channel](#) on TMCnet, TMC spoke with Bob McCandless, CEO of BrightCom, a provider of [integrated telepresence](#) and videoconferencing solutions, and David Benz, president of Vaughan Benz, a BrightCom client and a manufacturer of high-end, custom made wood and upholstered furniture for the hospitality industry.

Benz especially focused on the importance of the environment of the room and the role lighting and room accessories play in a quality telepresence interaction. He noted that the telepresence implementation should aim to create one of the important elements: “a seamless experience that is intuitive for the customer.”

Sound and lighting are both important, as both should be natural to create an experience that is as close to in-person face-to-face as possible. The company should ensure the lighting does not make individuals appear harsh or unnatural as it can interfere with effective communications.

Ease of use should also be a priority as it contributes to the overall use of the product. It should be seamless and very intuitive. The image captured in the technology should be clear and the furniture should be well designed at the proper height to be easy to ease and grant the ability to spread out. The distance between the desktop and the chair should be natural and comfortable.

Asked if there are other best practices for lighting, room structure, acoustics and furniture for large, custom made telepresence suites, Benz noted that when something works well, the customer doesn't even think about it as it is a natural element within the process.

If you think about lighting, if you are in a telepresence experience that makes you look pallid and unnatural, it is not a good experience. Same thing with audio, as sound should be very natural with no echoes. In reality, it simply comes down to ease of use. The experience should feel natural, sound natural and enable participants to portray

themselves in the best possible light. When this is accomplished, the telepresence process is a success.

Listen to the full podcast on the [Telepresence channel](#).

Susan J. Campbell is a contributing editor for TMCnet and has also written for eastbiz.com. To read more of Susan's articles, please visit her [columnist page](#).