



VBXcast™ Simple Streaming

Better than being there

There is an old expression that suggests there is nothing like “being there”. Unfortunately for many of us, this truism has become a sarcastic reflection on the unpleasant experience, high cost, and lost time required for business travel. Let’s face it; any trip to the airport is at least one lost day, often more.

For reasons of cost, security, and inconvenience, business travel has been cut back. It is increasingly unusual to assemble a worldwide sales team for quarterly meetings. Managers travel less to regional offices, customers have less opportunity to meet company executives, and there are fewer marketing “road shows”, trade shows and conventions.

Less human contact means less effective communications, and the resulting inability to focus a team is not what anyone wants but is an enviable outcome in a world without alternatives.

Is Video the Answer?

Before VBrick introduced VBXcast, the answer may well have been “no”.

Sending video to employees and customers worldwide had been a special event, sometimes requiring weeks of planning, technical complexity, and last-minute breath-holding suspense. The top reasons companies give for not implementing streaming include concerns about bandwidth, difficulty, and compatibility.

Streaming Challenges

- **29% - Bandwidth**
- **23% - Difficulty & Compatibility**
- **21% - QoS Issues**
- **12% - Limited Use**

Source: Perey Research

At the same time, those who have implemented streaming video report faster communications, global reach, increased sales, and other important benefits. Until now, these benefits have only been available to companies with a sophisticated IT staff or those who could afford the outsourcing of the complex set up.

TOP STREAMING BENEFITS

- 54% - Faster Communications
- 52% - Global Reach
- 42% - Increased Sales
- 42% - Better Time To Market
- 40% - Save Money

Source: Forrester Research

It is easy to understand how Streaming Video reduces costs through the reduction in the need for travel. Table 1 illustrates the estimated costs to hold a 5-day sales training event where 20 people travel to corporate headquarters. It can easily cost more than \$24,000 for a single event, not including lost time. The same people who would otherwise travel could view live video from their offices, right on their desktops, and reduce or eliminate the need for travel. Importantly, the “event” need no longer be a “big deal”; rather, the company can deliver live video to the team every quarter, every month, every day, or any time there is a need to communicate a compelling message. Using a VBXcast and their existing corporate network, the savings are dramatic. They remain dramatic even if the corporate network cannot handle the video streams and an external reflector service, such as PowerStream, is used to provide enhanced distribution.

Sales Meeting	Item	Cost Total
Number of people traveling	20	
Average Airfare	\$500 x 20 =	\$10,000
Number Of Days	5	
Average Hotel	\$100 x 5 x 20 =	\$10,000
Average Meals, Misc.	\$40 x 5 x 20 =	\$ 4,000
Total Cost		\$24,000
Streaming Video		
Number Of Viewers	20+	
VBrick Cost	\$4,995	
Camera Cost	\$1,200	
Microphone Cost	\$ 100	
Misc. Cost	\$ 100	
Bandwidth	\$ 0	
Total Cost		\$6,395
Total Savings		\$17,605
Reflector Service Option (see text)	\$ 500	
Total Savings		\$17, 105

Table 1 – Streaming Video For Sales Meeting

Simple Steaming

There are only a few steps needed to instantly stream live, high quality video everywhere:

1. Power-up the VBrick VBXcast Video Network Appliance.
2. Plug your VBrick into your Ethernet LAN
3. Plug in a camera, microphone, or other audio/video source
4. Set a few simple configuration options, and you are streaming

The VBrick VBXcast is very powerful. It simultaneously sends your video via multicast to everyone in your local network; it sends a stream to an external reflector server outside of your network to provide bandwidth scale, and it sends streams to those in your network who may not be multicast-enabled. In other words, there are very few external dependencies.

A non-technical business executive, an English teacher, a medical professional, a student, an Army private, and virtually everyone else can use VBXcast. They need no “Windows” or “Linux” or “Streaming” expertise. If they can perform the above four steps, they can send live video to virtually everyone, anywhere in the world.

Viewing Simplicity And Flexibility

VBrick VBXcast video is easily and instantly viewed with VBrick StreamPlayer software. The viewer need not enter a complex URL, rather the merely click on an automatic Program Guide and they instantly view the live video.

Importantly, no web authoring skills are needed. The system is fully distributed and completely automatic and enterprise users can view a live video within minutes of any VBrick becoming activated and without increasing the IT staff workload.

Of course, the live video may also be viewed using existing desktop players such as QuickTime, RealOne, and Microsoft Media Player with the VBrick plug-in. What's more, VBrick's standards-based MPEG-4 video may be embedded in a web page for customers who wish to create a fully customized viewing experience.

Portability

"Servers" tend to live in the data center – not usually a source of compelling live audio/video content. This leaves only two alternatives: run analog coax cable from cameras to a "capture card" in a server, or place the server at the source of the video.

One can quickly dismiss the notion of running analog coax cable down elevator shafts to reach a server room. But placing fragile servers at every possible source of video – conference rooms, manager's offices, sales centers, training rooms, the CEO's office, and boardrooms – presents difficulty too. Servers tend to be noisy, require management, are prone to viruses, and are expensive "overkill" for the need.

A portable appliance that can be easily moved as needed makes video easy. In addition, a small, quiet appliance that is fully managed over the network allows it to be placed in unobtrusive locations throughout an enterprise.

Quality

VBXcast delivers crisp, 30 frame-per-second, full motion color video with CD-quality stereo audio using the latest MPEG-4 technology. Supporting streaming rates from dial-up to 2 Mbps, VBXcast produces world-class video with perfect lip synchronization.

Reliability

Many video products were designed to encode a 2-hour movie. The designers of these products may not even test the product for continuous 7 x 24 live streaming because that is not their design goal. Indeed, such systems tend to be tested up to the maximum capacity of a computer's disk space. VBXcast is designed for 7 x 24 reliability and is a fully embedded design that does not rely on Windows or similar multipurpose operating systems. It has a very high Mean Time Between Failure and is intended for carefree continuous operation.

No More "Magic Rooms"

In the late 1990's, corporations began to install expensive "video conference rooms". These rooms were equipped with cameras, monitors, and videoconference equipment. Use of the room became an event, requiring trained staff and scheduling difficulty. While streaming video easily fits into such a facility, the "magic room" is no longer the exclusive domain of video. VBXcast goes anywhere, allowing Product Managers to broadcast from their offices, training staff to broadcast from their classrooms, engineers to broadcast from their labs, and even allows an executive to broadcast from a hotel room.

The notion of streaming video being viewed everywhere is not new. The reality of streaming video *from* anywhere, with amazing simplicity, is groundbreaking.

Costs

For live video streaming, VBXcast costs less than Windows Media, Real Networks, and similar proprietary solutions. The illusion of "free" or "software only" streaming solutions rapidly evaporates when one considers the costs of the mandatory computer hardware, installation, setup, and management complexity. What's more, some streaming software solutions are licensed on a "per stream" basis while VBXcast costs the same if you are streaming to 1 or 1,000 viewers.

A VBXcast appliance is the most cost effective solution for reliable, portable, live video streaming. Server-based solutions suffer from classic stranded investment economics. Multipurpose servers are designed primarily to deliver stored, not live, content and you pay for disks, operating systems, PCI bus, keyboard, mouse, monitor, and more even though you do not use it (hence, the stranded investment). For the cost of one server-based video streaming solution, an enterprise can deploy many VBXcast appliances and enjoy higher quality, greater reliability, a fully distributed architecture, and very rapid return on investment.

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