Chapter 3.12
Web Conferencing in Distance Education

M. Michelle Panton
Bemidji State University, USA

INTRODUCTION

Web conferencing is a technology that allows groups of individuals in a variety of diverse locations to communicate and share information without having to leave their desks. It provides features such as whiteboarding, screen sharing, chat, and polling. It eliminates the need to travel, reduces downtime, increases efficiency, and reduces costs. AT&T worked on proofs of concepts and prototypes for personal conferencing systems for 20 years and finally released its product in 1993 (Perey, 2003). Microsoft released NetMeeting in about 1995. Wooley now lists 95 real-time collaboration products and Web sites on his Web site, *ThinkofIt.com*. The growth of real-time collaboration has grown significantly and been more successful in the last few years, as the CPUs in PCs are faster, the PCs have more memory, and more bandwidth is available and cheaper. Frost and Sullivan's 2002 report estimates that by 2008, $2 billion will be spent on Web conferencing (as cited by Perey, 2003). This technology allows a business to conduct training simultaneously, globally creating a collaborative learning environment while keeping costs down.

Wintrob (2003) cites an example provided by Sam Mazotta, WorldCom Canada's director of product management, where it costs $2,000 per person to fly 50 people to an in-person meeting for travel, hotel, meals, and related expenses for a total of $100,000. For a Web conference for the same 50 people, plus an additional 100 people watching live in the same location: $4,100 for audio-visual production, $1,100 for signal capture, $12,800 for streaming, $500 for 180-day archiving, for a total of $18,500 or $370 per person.

This article will discuss two Web conferencing tools: Microsoft® Office Live Meeting and IBM Lotus Instant Messaging and Web Conferencing.

Microsoft purchased PlaceWare in February 2003 and developed a new business unit, the Real Time Collaboration Group. At the time of purchase, PlaceWare was offering services to 3,100 enterprise accounts (Perey, 2003). These accounts include companies such as BASF, Computer Associates, TD Waterhouse, Siemens, HP, Cisco

Figure 1. Administrator's conference center; fields required to create a meeting
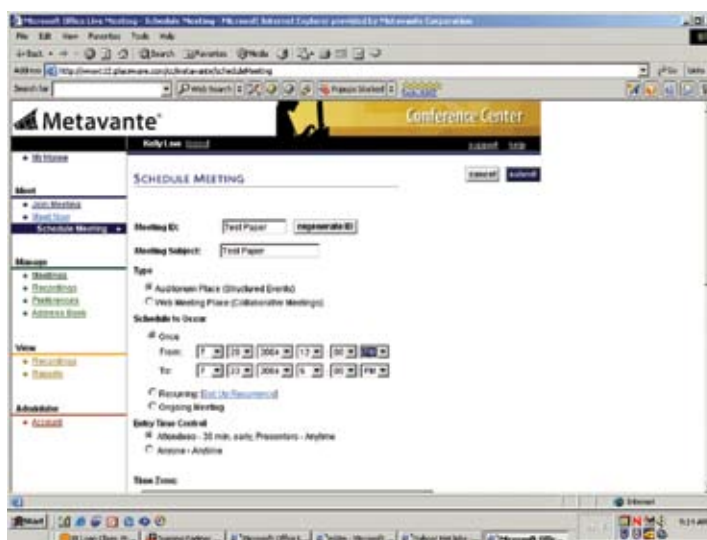
Systems, and Bristol-Myers Squibb Company. The 9/11 incident made travel safety issues for corporate America look into alternative solutions for training and meetings with clients and global offices. The 2003 SARS epidemic was another incident that escalated the use of Web conferencing. PlaceWare, now called Live Meeting, is a hosted Web conferencing service. It requires a telephone and a PC with a Web browser and an Internet connection.

Presenters (meeting facilitators or trainers) develop their presentations in a presentation program such as Microsoft PowerPoint, upload the slides into the application from their desktop, set up a conference call, invitations are sent via e-mail to the participants with a logon and password, and the presenter logs on as the host. Live Meeting Now appears to be a feature recently added to Microsoft® Office Live Meeting. This capability allows the presenter to schedule a meeting on the fly from either Outlook or Lotus Notes. This feature is not used in Metavante Corporation, as sufficient licenses are not available to provide this feature to the general population.

The second Web conferencing tool available to all Metavante employees is IBM Lotus Instant Messaging and Web Conferencing. This tool was released to the general public in the second quarter of 2004. The instant messaging portion of this tool was previously called Sametime, which has been available for a few years, but only available to Metavante employees for approximately one month.

LIVE MEETING

Live Meeting is available for a free 30-day trial evaluation. It is available via purchased seats at a yearly rate or at $.35 per minute per user. It can handle groups from two to 2,500 without leaving their desks. It consists of two meeting environments: the Auditorium Place and the Web Meeting Place.

The Auditorium Place is intended for training and seminars up to 2,500 individuals. The Auditorium Place allows for multiple presenters to present simultaneously to a large group. At

Related Content

Ranking the Difficulty Level of the Knowledge Units Based on Learning Dependency
Jun Liu, Sha Sha, Qinghua Zhengand Wei Zhang (2012). *International Journal of Distance Education Technologies (pp. 31-43).*
www.irma-international.org/article/ranking-difficulty-level-knowledge-units/62286

Relationship Between Learning Styles and Learning Objects: A Systematic Literature Review
Luciana Assis, Ana Carolina Rodrigues, Alessandro Vivas, Cristiano Grijó Pitangui, Cristiano Maciel Silvaand Fabiano Azevedo Dorça (2022). *International Journal of Distance Education Technologies (pp. 1-18).*
www.irma-international.org/article/relationship-between-learning-styles-learning/296698

Using iPads in University Mathematics Classes: What Do the Students Think?
Rim Gouia, Cindy Gunnand Diana Audi (2015). *Assessing the Role of Mobile Technologies and Distance Learning in Higher Education (pp. 60-77).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/using-ipads-in-university-mathematics-classes/121226

Female Lecturers' Perception of ICT Integration for Teaching and Learning in University of Ibadan, Nigeria
Airen Adetimirin (2016). *International Journal of Information and Communication Technology Education (pp. 11-21).*
www.irma-international.org/article/female-lecturers-perception-of-ict-integration-for-teaching-and-learning-in-university-of-ibadan-nigeria/143148

Exposing Mental Models to Accelerate Distance Learning Environments
Mario Andrade (2022). *Designing Effective Distance and Blended Learning Environments in K-12 (pp. 73-88).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/exposing-mental-models-to-accelerate-distance-learning-environments/292175