

Conference Paper Proposal

15th Annual Multi-Organizational Partnership, Alliances and Networks International Conference

Paper Title: Telepresence Systems: Expanding Social Interaction
in a Dispersed Virtual Workplace

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Alignment with Conference Sessions and Themes: 1. Inter-Organizational
Knowledge Creation Through Informal Organizing, 2. Leadership in Collaboration, and 5.
Creating Collaborative Social Technologies for Profound Social Innovation

Paper Description: Telepresence Systems: Expanding Social Interaction in a Dispersed Virtual Workplace

This conference focuses on promoting dialogue among academics and professionals from diverse disciplines and backgrounds on critical topics regarding collaboration in organizations that function in an international context, and have integrated electronic information and communication technology into the core of their operational infrastructure.

Globalization has thrust the business enterprise into a world-wide arena, causing it to structure itself in a distributed manner. For many companies, the workforce is dispersed, inter-cultural and highly sociotechnical in nature, being a dynamic weaving of people and electronic information and communication technology into an effective collaborative system that shares knowledge, problem-solves, makes decisions, and accomplishes tasks without being hindered by distance, time zones and cultural perspectives.

While such enterprise structures and processes enable organizations to greatly benefit from a global workforce and “follow-the-sun” operational practices, they decrease the quality of social capital in the daily work environment, making it challenging to effectively establish strong, open, and trusting interpersonal relationships among team members.

“Telepresence tools,” though, are changing the face of virtual meetings and teamwork, making more natural, “across-the-table” meetings and collaboration possible. This digital telecommunication technology when strategically integrated into the physical and social work environment can enable organizational leaders and teams to meet in an interactive and more “person-to-person” manner, even though they are not co-located, or physically in the same room.

Analyzing telepresence principles and tools developed by Cisco, Hewlett-Packard and Teliris, this paper constructs a case study that:

- Profiles the emergence over the last five years of workplace telepresence tools, and discusses the rationale behind their use.
- Critically assesses the strengths and limitations of this approach to meetings and team member engagement, including how effectively telepresence principles, tools, and collaborative strategies a) create a “person-to-person” work experience, and b) can raise the presence of body language and other critical workplace social cues in a technological workplace.
- Outlines ways that organizational leaders and teams can expand the current use of telepresence tools, and establish workplace cultures and practices that utilize telepresence tools in deploying collaborative systems to a) build trusting relationships among internal and external colleagues that foster risk-taking and safe venues for disagreement, b) create forums so socializing in a dispersed work environment can more regularly take place, and, thus break down barriers between culturally diverse workplace members, and c) lead dynamic meetings to innovatively solve problems and complex issues.