

Investigate in-house Web conferencing software with Pixion's Meet America program

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Many companies have been using audio conference calls or direct link video conferencing to allow traveling employees to conduct business. While workable for standard meetings, these solutions tend to pose new challenges when it comes to presentations or collaborative procedures.

To fill in the gaps, some have explored Web conferencing, a collaborative technology that allows users in various locations to simultaneously share documents or view presentations with their computers using a Web browser and a telephone. Web conferencing is very easy to implement. The hard part is choosing a vendor. Hundreds of companies are selling Web conferencing services.

Of course, there are some big players, such as [WebEx](#), which, according to industry analysts Frost & Sullivan, is the dominant company in the Web conferencing arena with more than 50 percent of the market share. Another is [PlaceWare](#), which [Microsoft](#) recently announced it was acquiring in an effort to expand its information worker solutions base.

A handful of up-and-coming Web conferencing providers, such as [Pixion](#), have been on the forefront of developing Web conferencing software that runs on an in-house server, rather than as a hosted service on the Internet. To promote the advantages of using Web conferencing software that runs in-house, Pixion recently announced its Meet America program, which will allow you to download and install a free trial version of Pixion's PictureTalk Enterprise Conference Server.

For companies that want to investigate an alternative solution for business travel needs, this is a great opportunity to experiment with Web conferencing. If your company is already using a hosted Web conferencing solution, this is an opportunity to experiment with an in-house server-based solution. I'll compare in-house server Web conferencing solutions and hosted Web conferencing services. Then, I'll go into more detail about Pixion's PictureTalk Enterprise Conference Server and the Meet America program.

Web conferencing: In-house vs. hosted

The majority of Web conferencing solutions are hosted services. In fact, Pixion offers a hosted Web conferencing solution in addition to its in-house server platform. A hosted Web conferencing service exists on an Internet-based server. Once you and your colleagues have signed up for an account, you simply point your browser to a Web site, enter the account information, and join the conference.

The biggest advantage of a hosted service is that it's extremely easy to set up and use, and it can be implemented immediately—all you need is an account, a computer connected to the Internet, and a Web browser. There's no capital expenditure and no need to get the IT department involved. For small-scale or infrequent Web conferences, a hosted service is an ideal solution.

However, if you're running large-scale or regular Web conferences, a hosted service might not scale well for larger groups and can be expensive when used on a regular basis. Furthermore, if the information disseminated during your Web conferences contains confidential subject matter, security may not be adequate.

In this situation, an in-house Web conferencing solution is definitely the way to go. When you use an in-house Web conferencing solution, you're in complete control of usage and security since the system is installed on an onsite server that is behind the enterprise firewall, insuring full compliance with your organization's security policies. Of course, this moves the system into the hands of the IT department, which must manage the service.

PictureTalk Enterprise Conference Server

The PictureTalk Enterprise Conference Server software package is basically configured as an add-in for a standard Web server, such as Microsoft's [Internet Information Services](#) or the Apache Software Foundation's [Apache HTTP Server](#). The Enterprise Conference Server can be integrated into an existing Web site without dramatically altering any design elements. The Web conferencing features can be made available via the Web site's existing navigation system. Once the Enterprise Conference Server is installed, the Web server will serve up Java-enabled Web pages that can be used by meeting attendees, meeting administrators, and server administrators.

For example, meeting attendees can access Web pages that will allow them to download PictureTalk client software, schedule meetings, and join meetings. Administrators can access another set of pages that will allow them to schedule meetings and configure the Enterprise Conference Server.

The PictureTalk Communicator client software, which can be downloaded from the Enterprise Conference Server, is available on a wide variety of platforms, including:

- 32-bit Windows (Windows 95/98/Me and NT 4.0/2000/XP)
- Macintosh (Mac OS 8 and above, including Mac OS X)
- Solaris 2.5 and above
- Java Applet for any OS with Java Virtual Machine installed

The Meet America program

Playing on rising gas prices and the need for companies to find ways to save money, Pixion has instituted the Meet America program to promote Web conferencing and its Enterprise Conference Server solution. The program offers a free, unlimited usage, three-seat installed server license for the Enterprise Conference Server Web conferencing solution through the end of 2003 for the first 5,000 companies that sign up. To do so, go to the [Meet America](#) registration form on Pixion's Web site.

Once you fill in the form, you'll receive an e-mail message with information on downloading the Enterprise Conference Server installation program. You'll also find links for downloading installation, administration, and user guides. Keep in mind that the Meet America program does not include free technical support. If you need assistance, you can purchase a support contract for \$500.

Technical information on PDF

You can learn more about the Enterprise Conference Server's features on the [Pixion Web site](#) or by viewing an [online product brochure](#) in PDF format. If you want a more detailed technical overview of the PictureTalk Enterprise Conference Server, you can investigate an online white paper in PDF format, "[Web Conferencing Implementation and Security: The Architecture Behind PictureTalk Enterprise Conference Server.](#)" Pricing information for the Enterprise Conference Server is available directly from [Pixion](#).

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