



Meetings in America V: Meeting of the Minds
An MCI® Executive White Paper



Meetings in America V: Meeting of the Minds

An MCI Conferencing Executive White Paper

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction **3**
2. Surge in Web Conferencing
 - The Tool of Choice for the New Era **4**
 - Leading by Example **5**
 - Impress With Web Conferencing **5**
3. Senior Management Leading the Way
 - The New E-Leaders **7**
 - Business Communication: The Blended Approach **7**
 - Senior Managers Know Web Conferencing **9**
 - Sales and Marketing Professionals are Least Sold on Business Travel Alternatives **10**
4. The Power of Choice: Rethinking When to Travel
 - The New Road Warrior **12**
 - It's About Time **12**
 - Choosing When To Conference: Meeting Matters **14**
5. Background
 - Objectives **15**
 - Data Collection **15**
 - About MCI **15**
6. Appendix **16**

1. Introduction

A New Era of Communications, a New Era of Collaboration

People have become smarter about how to communicate and conduct business globally. Travel is no longer the first choice, nor the only choice. As the economy rebounds, business travelers will eventually return to the skies. But due to the wide acceptance of conferencing, most will not return to their former road warrior days.

That's because, even if travel budgets increase, no one can buy more time. That will never change and remains the number one reason to use virtual collaboration tools, such as audio, video and Web conferencing. The increasingly virtual workforce is also becoming smarter about the other benefits these tools provide. One is the power of choice. Conferencing offers people the option to *not* be there, but remain productive, maintain relationships, and better balance work and personal activities.

Indeed, as *Meetings in America V* demonstrates, we are entering a new era of communications—one in which business professionals are no longer bound by the limitations of time, location, or the traditional office. The implications are profound, as the very nature of how we work is changing.

Web conferencing use is exploding and audioconferencing is almost as commonly used as mobile phones. Clearly, conferencing is beginning to assume its critical position in the smart worker's communication arsenal. It will never completely replace meeting in person—nor should it—but it can have a significant impact on one's productivity and professional image.

This white paper, the fifth in the series begun in 1998, explores the latest trends in conferencing use and attitudes towards business travel and meeting habits.

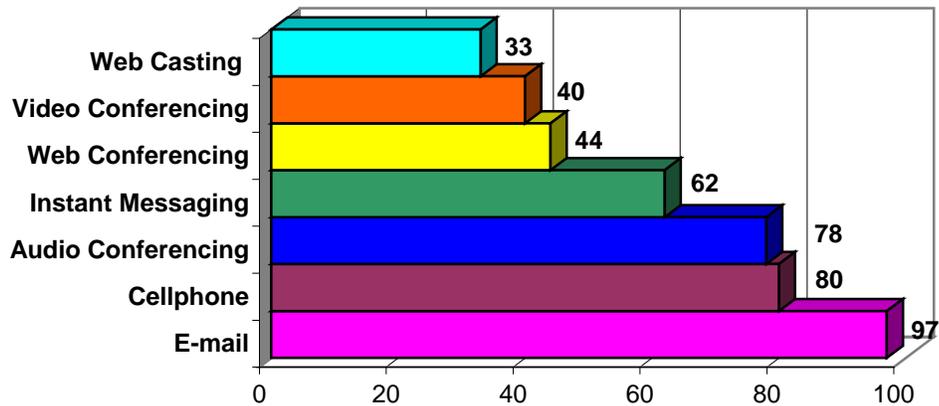
2. Surge in Web Conferencing

1. The Tool Of Choice For The New Era

Communications tools that weren't used extensively five years ago – like E-mail, cell phones, audioconferencing and instant messaging – today have widespread acceptance.

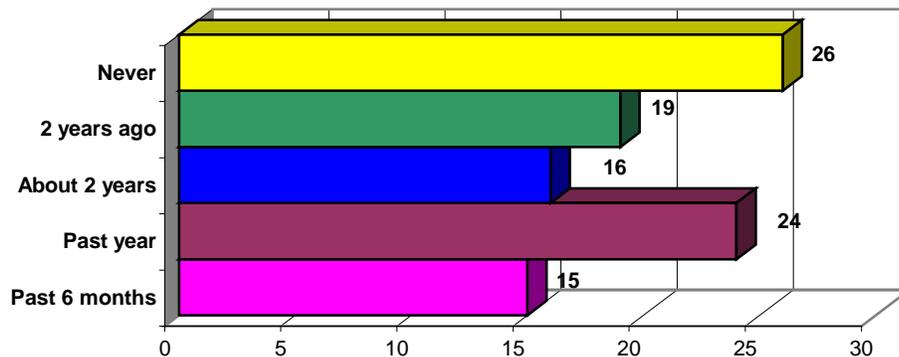
MIA V results indicate that Web conferencing is on a similar path.

Figure 1, Technologies Business Professionals Used in Past 12 Months



Web conferencing is the fastest-growing business tool among those surveyed. An astounding three-fourths (74 percent) of all respondents have used Web conferencing before—39 percent for the first time within the prior 12 months. As significant, 31 percent of those not currently using Web conferencing expect to do so within the next year.

Figure 2, When Respondents Attended First Web Conference

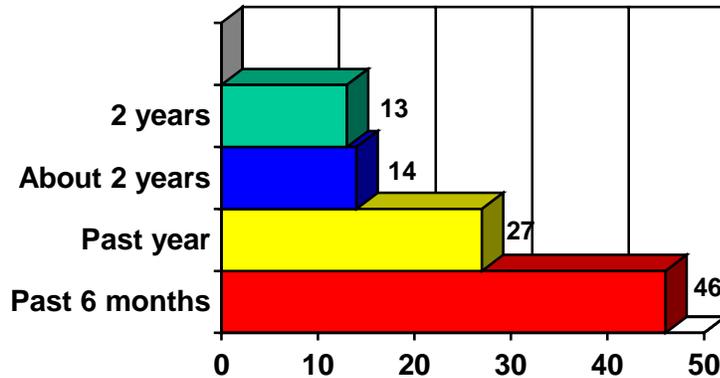


A main reason for the rise in Web conferencing is its simplicity. Most businesses have the essential components of a Web conference – a phone line and Internet connection. Almost all respondents (96 percent) in this study found their first Web conferencing experience to be easier or what they expected.

2. Leading by Example

Of those who have participated on a Web conference, one-quarter (26 percent) have also acted as host. Of this group, nearly half (46 percent) first started leading Web conferences within the past six months and three-quarters (73 percent) within the past year.

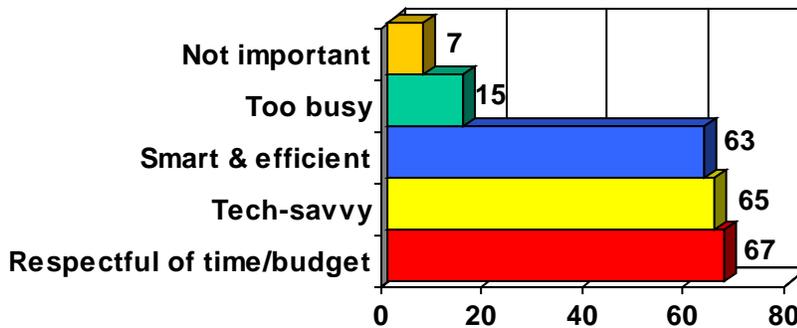
Figure 3, When Respondents Hosted First Web Conference



3. Impress With Web Conferencing

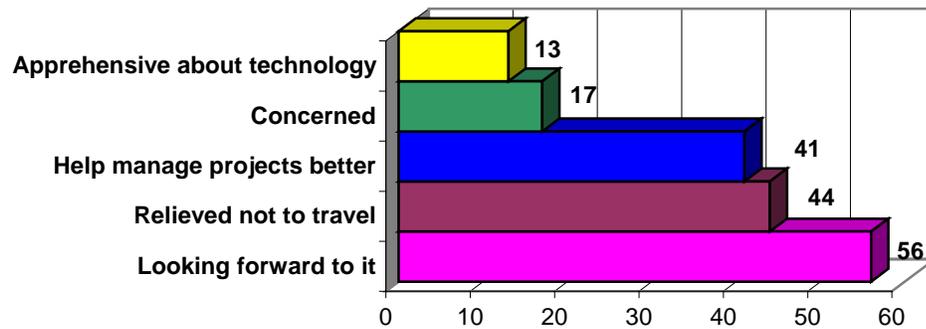
Business people don't always have to meet face-to-face to make a favorable impression. When respondents were asked about their impressions of a vendor from another city inviting them to a Web conference, the great majority viewed the vendor positively. Two-thirds of respondents believed it showed that the vendor was respectful of their time and budget (67 percent), technologically savvy (65 percent), and smart and efficient (63 percent). Less than 15 percent took this to mean they were too busy or not as important as other clients (7 percent).

Figure 4, How Respondents View Vendors Who Invite Them to a Web Conference



From the respondent's point of view, more than half (56 percent) said they looked forward to participating in a Web conference. In fact, nearly half (44 percent) said they were relieved not to have to travel. Less than half (41 percent) thought that this would help them manage the project better. Less than two in 10 respondents were concerned about missing the opportunity to meet face-to-face (17 percent) or apprehensive about using the technology (13 percent).

Figure 5, How Respondents Feel About Attending a Vendor-Sponsored Web Conference



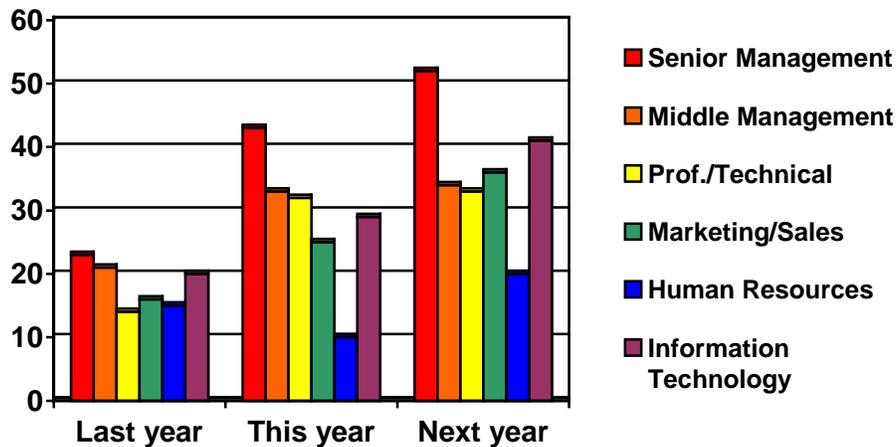
3. Senior Management Leads the Way

1. The New E-Leaders

If organizations are to fully embrace meeting virtually as an alternative to in-person meetings, senior management must lead the way. MIA V shows that they are.

Compared to other groups, senior management appears to be traveling more frequently. Two in ten (23 percent) saw increased travel in 2002, 43 percent traveled more in 2003, and 52 percent anticipate traveling more in 2004. More than one-third (36 percent) took ten or more business trips in the past year, the highest percentage among all groups.

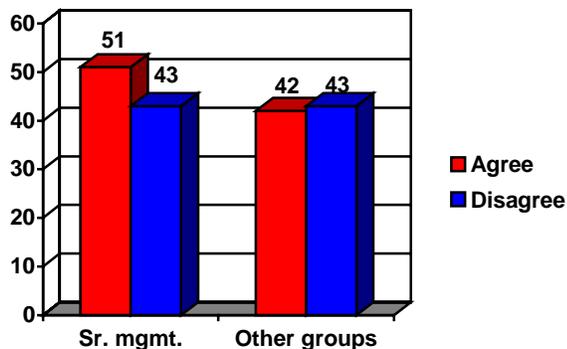
Figure 6, Increase in Number of Business Trips



2. Business Communication: The Blended Approach

However, these new “E-Leaders” are not returning to the traditional habits of a road warrior. Now they’re blending their approach to meetings, using travel *and* technology. More than half (51 percent) of senior management said they are more interested in business travel alternatives since September 11. Only IT personnel are more apt to look into other options. While the top reason to consider these alternatives, including conferencing, is saving time -- the same as other groups -- the second most cited reason is work-life balance (38 percent).

Figure 7, More Interested in Travel Alternatives Since 9/11



Not only is senior management more interested in business travel alternatives, they have adopted them at a higher rate. They rank the highest as far as having used audioconferencing (89 percent), Web conferencing (64 percent) and videoconferencing (57 percent) – even higher than the IT department. Senior executives also rank among the highest in expected use of these technologies in the coming year:

- audioconferencing (95 percent)
- Web conferencing (75 percent)
- videoconferencing (67 percent)

Figure 8, Respondents Who Used Conferencing Technologies in the Last 12 Months

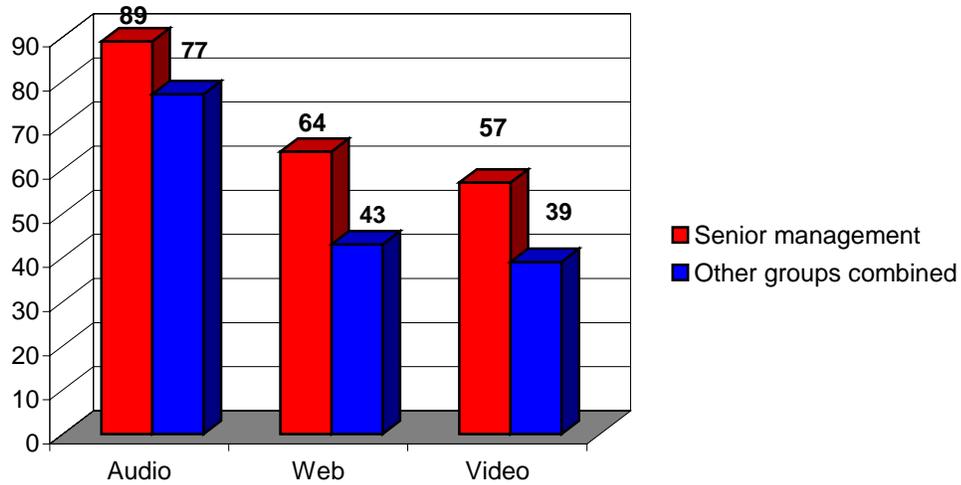
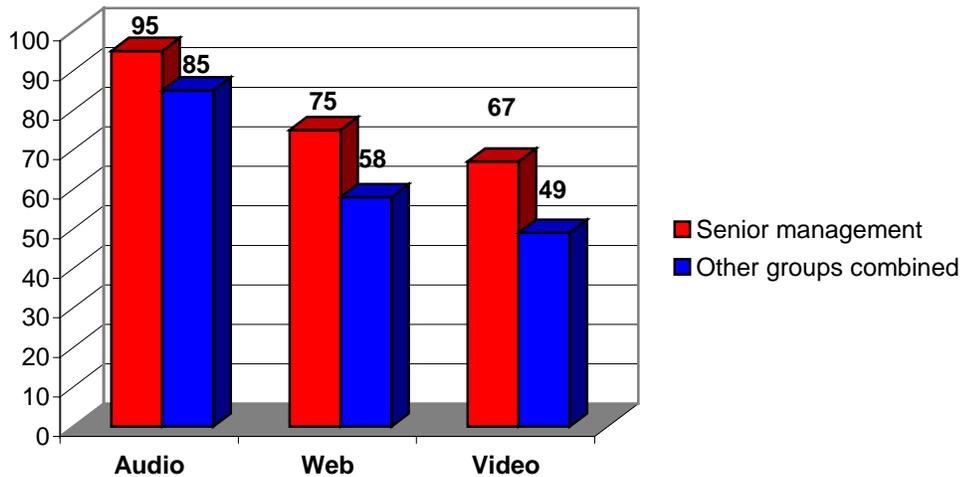


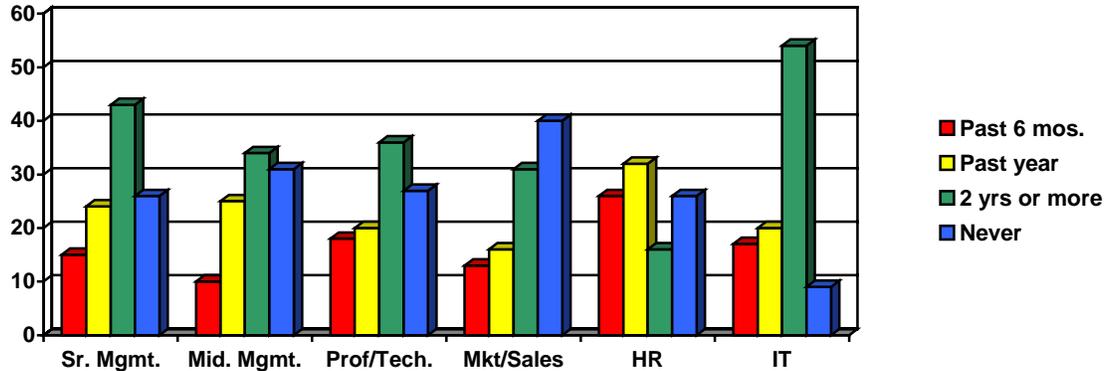
Figure 9, Respondents Who Expect to Use Conferencing Technologies Next Year



3. Senior Managers Know Web Conferencing

Senior management has embraced Web conferencing more than any other segment in this year's study. They were the earliest group to use Web conferencing with nearly half (43 percent) having done so two or more years ago. Nine in ten (87 percent) have previously participated in a Web conference. Overall, only IT professionals have a higher rate of Web conferencing attendance.

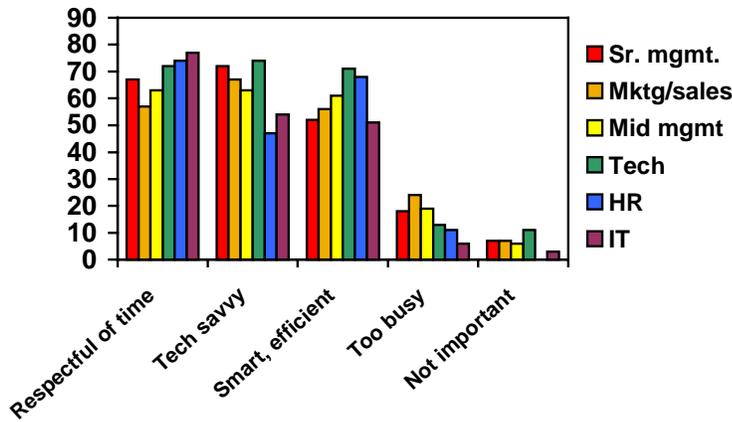
Figure 10, When Respondents Attended First Web Conference



Senior management is also the group to most often lead a Web conference. In fact, almost half (43 percent) of those who had participated on a Web conference have also hosted – the highest rate among all groups.

Not only do executives use the technology, but they also think highly of others who use it. A significant number thought that a vendor who invited them to a Web conference was technologically savvy (72 percent), respectful of their time and budget (67 percent), and smart and efficient (52 percent). For the first time since virtual teams made the scene, people that are not on site to present to the leader have an advantage when they link through Web conference technology.

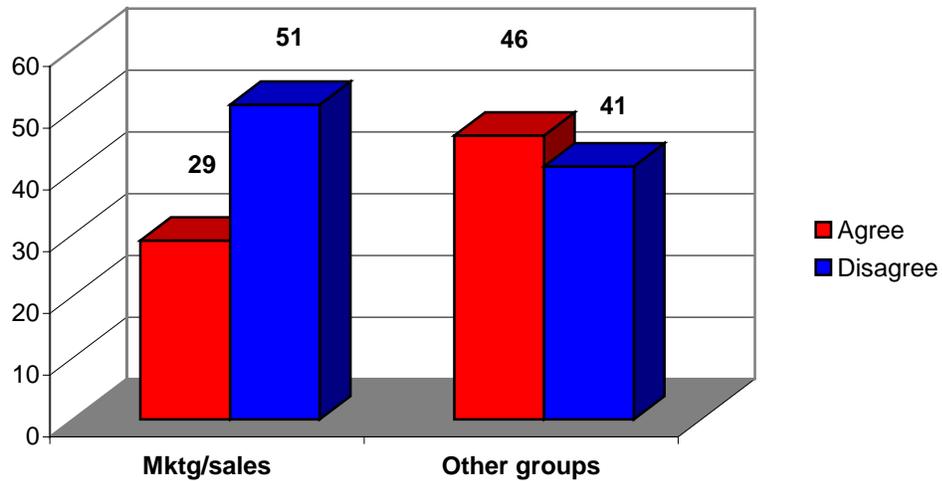
Figure 11, How Respondents View Vendors Who Invite Them to a Web Conference



4. Sales/Marketing Professionals: Least Sold on Business Travel Alternatives

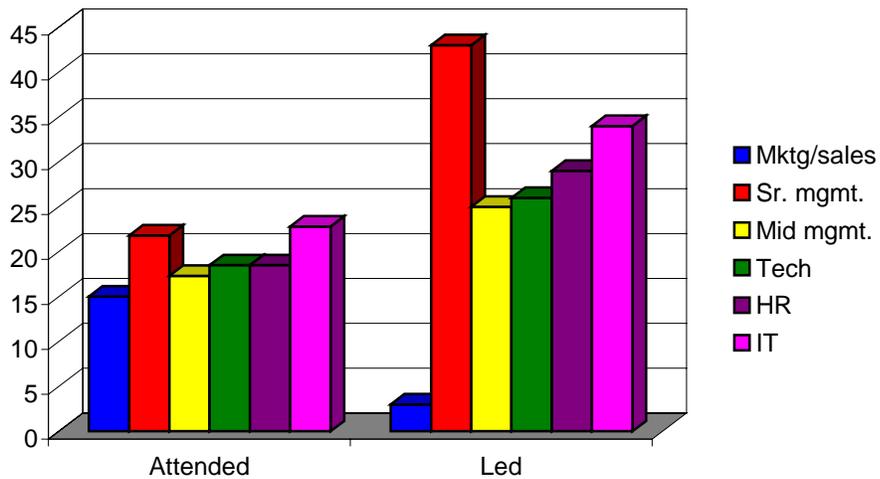
Like other groups, sales and marketing professionals anticipate increased business-related travel. However, they are the group *least* likely to seek business travel alternatives (51 percent not interested). Not coincidentally, they rank last among all groups in conferencing usage.

Figure 12, Respondents More Interested in Travel Alternatives Since 9/11



They are also late adopters of new technology such as Web conferencing. Four in ten (40 percent) have *never* attended a Web conference, the lowest percentage among all groups. Furthermore, only three percent have ever hosted a Web conference – again, the last among all groups.

Figure 13, Respondents Who Attended and Led Web Conference



These results defy common perceptions that younger, communications-oriented groups are always technologically savvy. In this case, sales and marketing divisions could learn a lesson of efficiency from senior managers. They must understand that conferencing can help them maintain client relationships; it doesn't replace the need to meet in person.

4. The Power of Choice: Rethinking When to Travel

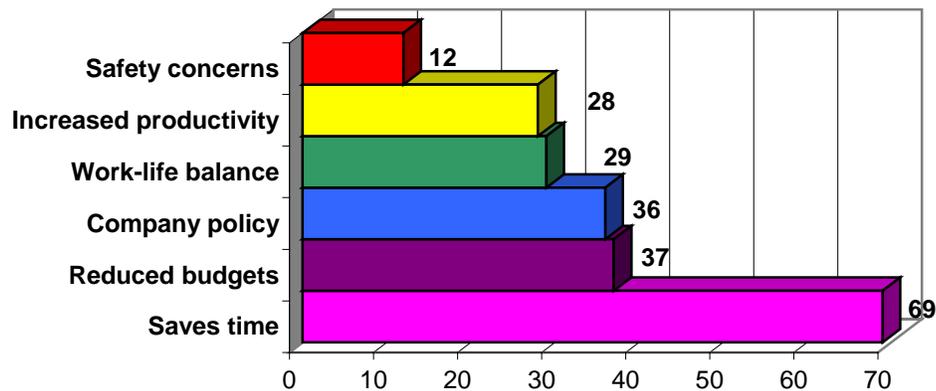
1. The New Road Warrior

Traveling by plane for face-to-face meetings used to be the standard. MIA V shows that, for many leaders, this is no longer true. Even if business travelers return to the skies, as this study anticipates, they will continue to use collaboration technology – especially conferencing – in tandem with travel. Nine in ten respondents (87 percent) expect to use audio, video or Web conferencing in the coming year.

2. It's About Time

By a landslide, the main reason why respondents preferred conferencing to traveling was because it saves time and is a more efficient way to meet (69 percent). Other reasons for choosing to conference instead of travel were reduced corporate travel budgets (37 percent), company policy (36 percent), better work-life balance (29 percent), increased productivity (28 percent), and concerns about travel safety due to SARS and terrorism (12 percent).

Figure 14, Reasons for Using Conferencing Over Travel



In some cases, saving time by meeting virtually occurs before the meeting. Nearly six in ten respondents (59 percent) have wasted time waiting for others to arrive. Almost half (45 percent) felt conferencing could alleviate this problem. In addition, half of the respondents (50 percent) felt that the face-to-face meeting itself was time wasted. One in three (35 percent) said that conferencing could make these meetings more productive.

Aside from using conferencing technologies to be more efficient, respondents noted other advantages to meeting virtually. Respondents felt conferencing could alleviate worries over their appearance (41 percent); reduce nerves when presenting (39 percent); and even help negate boredom with poor presentation skills (25 percent).

Figure 15, Experienced in Face-to-Face Meetings

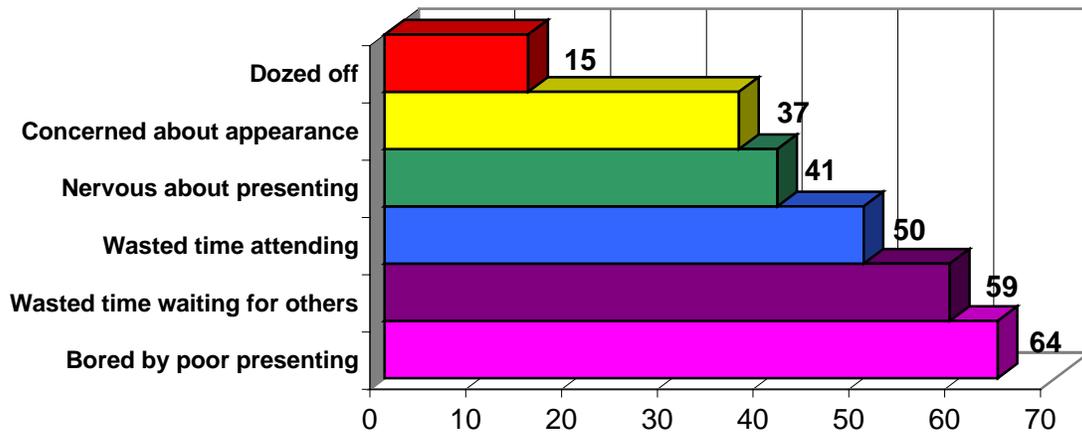
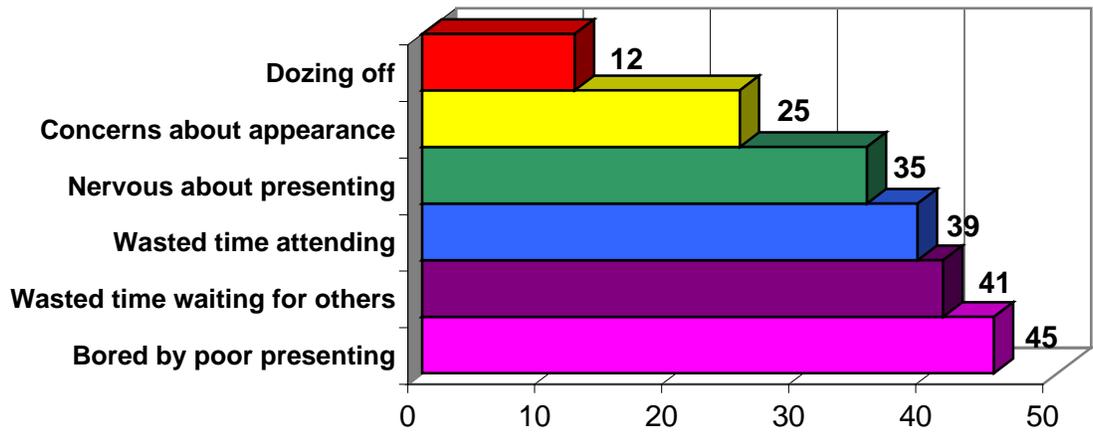


Figure 16, What a Virtual Meeting Would Alleviate



3. Choosing When To Conference: Meeting Matters

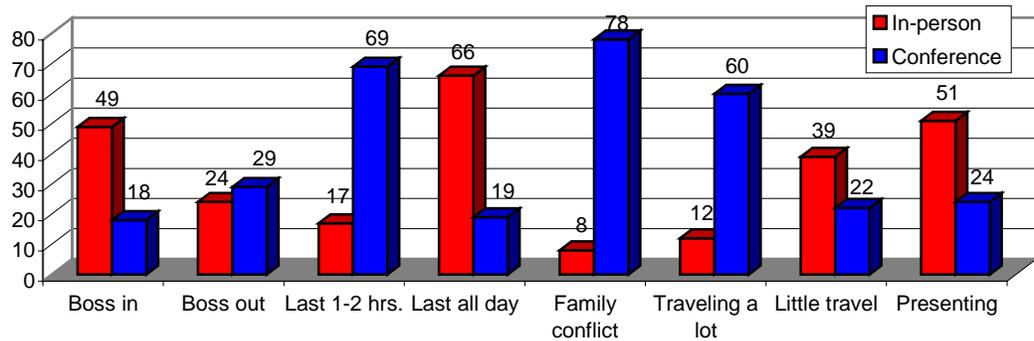
In addition to saving time, several other factors influence the decision to conference versus flying to meet in person. The most important criterion was meeting length. Seven in ten (69 percent) preferred to conference rather than fly when the meeting was less than two hours. Conversely, if the meeting lasted all day, two in three (66 percent) preferred flying instead of conferencing (19 percent).

The second most common factor cited for preferring conferencing to flying was recent travel history. For those who flew often, six in ten (60 percent) would rather meet via conferencing than fly to meet in person (12 percent).

The third most common factor concerned their boss. A significant percentage of respondents were swayed by whether their boss was attending the meeting. If so, two in ten (18 percent) would conference rather than fly (49 percent). This number jumped to three in ten (29 percent) when they knew their boss would not be attending.

Finally, in addition to saving time, several other factors influence the decision to conference versus flying to meet in person. The decisive issue in favor of conferencing was *family*. If a meeting conflicted with a family obligation such as a wedding or graduation, eight in ten (78 percent) preferred conferencing to flying to meet in person (8 percent).

Figure 17, What Would Affect Attending Meeting In-person or Via Conferencing



5. Background

1. Objectives

MCI commissioned Impulse Research Corporation to understand the current needs and perceptions of business people about meetings and travel as they relate to the use of conferencing technologies.

Specific objectives for the research were to:

- Determine how business needs such as travel for meetings, budgets, increased productivity, personal time constraints, etc., may impact or influence the use of new virtual technologies
- Understand perceptions of business people about the need for in person vs. virtual meetings
- Understand perceptions about conferencing technologies for business meetings: convenience, effectiveness and efficiency of business meetings

2. Data Collection

Impulse Research Corporation, in close conjunction with MCI, developed the survey instrument used for this study.

Data collection was conducted in August 2003. A total of 1003 qualified people from Impulse Research's CyberPulse™ responded to and completed the survey online.

3. About MCI

MCI is the world's largest and most experienced provider of conferencing services. Its products include audio, video, and Web conferencing and related streaming services, which help organizations worldwide to meet more productively without the time and costs associated with business travel. To learn more, visit <http://www.mci.com/conferencing>.

6. Appendix

Characteristics of the Survey Sample

The sample was drawn from Impulse Research Corporation's CyberPulse, a registered database of people who have volunteered to take part in online research projects. All respondents passed a screening procedure to ensure who went on at least one business-related trip and had used audio, web or video conferencing in the past year.

Demographics

Age

20 to 24	7%
25 to 34	43%
35 to 44	31%
45 to 54	14%
55+	5%

Gender

Male	49%
Female	51%

Region

Northeast	22%
S. Atlantic	20%
N. Central	20%
S. Central	18%
West	20%

Marital status

Married	57%
Cohabiting	13%
Single	20%
Widowed	0%
Divorced	9%

Children

Under 6	25%
6 to 12 years old	25%
13 to 18 years old	17%
Over 18	7%
None	48%

Income

Under \$25,000	2%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	6%
\$35,000 to \$44,999	12%
\$45,000 to \$59,999	16%
\$60,000 to \$74,999	19%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	19%
\$100,000 or more	25%
Average (000's):	\$85