



Video Conferencing for Churches

The Time Is Now

Recently we had a fairly new company come into our office and demonstrate for us their new videoconferencing equipment. I was amazed at its potential and capabilities. HitCast Unified Conferencing is one of the new players in the video conferencing field. HitCast can operate on regular high speed internet. This saves you money on phone line and usage charges. I like to think of HitCast as video conferencing on steroids.

It is easy to understand why businesses would want to do video conferencing, but why a church? As I watched the demo, I came up with several different ideas.

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1. If you have multiple sites, you can use HitCast to send the video to those locations. At the same time you can have interactive services by showing the other location on the screens and having a conversation with them. How great would it be to have the different locations up on the video screens and be able to share information back and forth?
 2. It can bring in on the system missionaries from foreign lands being able to converse from there and be an active part of your service on special days. Even with missionaries in places where security is of major importance, HitCast uses special tools to keep security at a maximum. What better way to keep your church informed and updated with mission works around the world. Then missionaries can also watch your live services while they are going on.
 3. HitCast makes it easy to record and archive services. Anyone can easily log in and watch services they have missed or if they are home with an illness they can log on and watch the services. If the pastor is away, he can come on and greet the congregation with a laptop and webcam and it still looks great.
 4. If you have a school of ministry, HitCast can let you take it around the world by allowing people to become a part of the class and still interact with one another no matter where they are. You can have guest teachers teach the class without paying for the expenses of travel.
 5. You can have board meetings and if some members are away but they still want to be a part of the meeting they can be. These are just a few of the reasons, and I am sure there are many more that you can think of.

With HitCast, you can have up to 14 different sites all interacting at the same time. You can have almost unlimited participation web conferences with recording and archiving. You can share content with each other with Remote Application Control. In other words, you can share a program such as MS Excel and both are able to make changes, annotate on it, with a virtual flip chart. You have a secure connection to send files or chat. You can do polling/testing and voting with on the fly results. HitCast is also able to connect with other legacy style video conferencing systems, and because of HitCast power, it will enhance everyone's capabilities.

I am not big about giving out a lot of technical specs, but for this I am going to give out some of the highlights of HitCast.

Video:

- Up to 60 frames per second, user definable
- 300 MS maximum delay (audio + video with lip sync)
- MPEG4 encoding
- Dual & multi-monitor support, dual monitor emulation

Audio:

- 20 kHz sample rate
- MP3 encoding format
- Echo cancellation
- Full or half duplex

Content:

- Sharing via XGA or native resolution
- Remote control of any PC application
- Annotation tools for any PC content
- Virtual flipchart

Chat & File Transfer:

- Integrated messaging with 256-bit AES encryption

Additional Features:

- Video meetings (up to 15 endpoints) with local and far end control of PTZ camera, and changeable video positions
- Media Conference (Unlimited participants)
- Supports VoIP and PSTN telephone calls
- H.323 gateway to connect to legacy equipment

Bandwidth:

- 128 kbps to 4MBps per endpoint

Security:

- Multi-level permissions, password protected domains
- Ultra secure 256-bit AES encryption on all streams
- Integrated network security

Recording & Archiving:

- Server, NAS/SAN, no post-production required.

Minimum System Requirements

Client:

A PC running Microsoft Vista, Windows XP Home, Professional or Media Center. Internet Explorer or Mozilla Firefox, with a Pentium IV 1.8 GHz DuoCore or 3.0 GHz single core CPU, a discrete graphics card with 128 MB RAM, a sound card, speakers, video camera or web cam, and mic. Plus the following amount of RAM based on the PC operating system:

- Windows XP (Home, Professional, and Media Center)
1 GB RAM
- Vista (Home Basic, Home Premium, Business and Enterprise)
2 GB RAM
- Vista Ultimate
3 GB RAM

Server:

Server running Microsoft Windows 2000 Advanced server or 2003 Server + SP3 (or later), with a Pentium IV 3.1 GHz or greater CPU, 2 GM RAM and two 1 Gbps network cards.

HitCast supplies all of the software for the system plus support to make things function correctly.

All hardware which includes, server, computers, cameras, webcam, and audio will be supplied by the end user.

HitCast will set up the server and get you up and running with great customer support.

Now is the time for your church to start considering video conferencing. The ideas and usage are limitless.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me!