

The basics

Videoconferencing can conveniently be broken down into 3 components:

1. The conference environment, i.e. the classroom or conference room
2. The conference equipment, that converts the images and speech of the participants into a format that enables transmission to a remote site over the network
3. The conference network that links the sites together

All videoconferences must have these three basic elements, however simple or complex; the conference can always be synthesised into environment, equipment and network.

Conferencing is not limited only to talking heads, i.e. the participants; slides from a PowerPoint presentation running on a PC may be introduced to illustrate a particular point, or perhaps moving sequences from a PC application or DVD player. It is even possible for a PC application running at one site to be shared with another site so that either site can annotate and take control of the software. When PC documents are shared in this way it is termed "Data Sharing".

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