High Definition at the Desktop: Making the Most of the Experience
By Melanie Turek, Industry Principal, Frost & Sullivan

High definition (HD) videoconferencing has long been the trend for room-based systems. The technology offers a superior visual experience, allowing meeting participants to better see the details of one another's body language and facial expressions, PowerPoint presentations, and physical models, production parts and devices.

As a result of the better visual experience, employees can use high definition videoconferencing for strategic meetings, collaborative product development, and customer engagements. HD makes videoconferencing a true alternative to more types of in-person meetings—at a cost far lower than that of so-called "telepresence" systems, which are often more robust and complex than most companies, and users, need.

Desktop HD conferencing allows more people within the organization to take advantage of the technology, more often, and from more places than ever before. No longer do employees need access to a room-based system to participate in critical company meetings; now, they can be productive members of the team from anywhere they can use an Internet-enabled PC.

But although it's been available for a while, high-definition videoconferencing at the desktop hasn't been as appealing as it is for room-based systems. Without the right controls, bridging software and application intelligence, desktop HD can overwhelm a company's network, negatively impacting other important communications and business applications. This is especially true in today's application-heavy world, in which organizations are running more and more real-time, bandwidth-intensive software on their networks.

Given these challenges, to work in a typical organization, HD desktop videoconferencing must be designed to be manageable and scalable. It can't be allowed to consume critical desktop resources or dominate the network so much that other business applications cannot run.

Companies that opt to deploy HD at the desktop should partner with a vendor with a long history of experience and expertise in bandwidth management and media-processing logic. The technology should be built to give administrators full control over their desktop videoconferencing environment, while lowering operating costs and management headaches. That's the only way to ensure a seamless, reliable and truly valuable end-user experience.