

newsworthy trends

Web Conferencing: Essential For Today's Workforce

(NAPSA)—When busy executive Kim Burchett had her third child she didn't worry about whether she would be able to return to the workforce when maternity leave ended. She knew there would be a place for her at the company because of computer-based Web conferencing software.

Web conferencing software allows Burchett to work with colleagues in San Francisco and elsewhere from her home in the Southwest. While she keeps an eye on her children, she also is able to attend meetings, collaborate on business documents and proposals from afar and chat with co-workers via her computer. She never has to worry about being out-of-touch or missing a meeting—or not being around to check on her family.

"I can be a mom and do what's important for my children and be a thriving part of the workforce because this technology allows me to do my job" says Burchett, adding that her company **Corvent's** mission is to help everyday businesses learn how to use Web conferencing solutions.

Burchett and others like her are part of a trend that is quickly changing the modern workforce. A recent Harris Interactive Poll indicated that 30 percent of employees are working from home at least once a week and that e-mail has surpassed the telephone as a preferred way to collaborate.

While flexibility is a must for businesses, the need to be competitive and stay in touch is perhaps greater than ever. Web conferencing is an excellent solution to seemingly competing needs.

Necessity For Work

Web conferencing isn't a luxury in today's workplace; it's a neces-



sity. Increasingly, employees need to be allowed to work remotely. Companies are also cutting business travel and related expenses in a tough economy without reducing their expectations.

Web conferencing helps employees adapt to this changing workplace. Employees can work remotely on an important business presentation, review contracts and proposals, or even hold training sessions without booking an expensive flight.

Web conferencing also helps businesses go green without sacrificing productivity.

Reducing business travel cuts the amount of gas and oil used. Working together on electronic files cuts down paper use. And allowing an offsite employee to work from home or even at a coffee shop reduces the need to rent remote offices.

There are other benefits that have less to do with the bottom line: Conducting employee training via a Web conference has been shown to be quicker, more efficient and easier to understand than training in a conventional office setting.

How To Use It

Web conferencing might seem like something out of the future, but it can be easy to set up with a

computer and an Internet connection. With a few simple key strokes, people can work together with colleagues in another state or even abroad.

Software such as Adobe Acrobat Connect Pro lets users enter a "virtual meeting room" that is accessible with one click on a Web link. Web conferences provide far more options for collaboration than a simple e-mail exchange about work or even an online chat.

Web conferencing allows remote workers to share their computer desktops, chat via instant messaging, work together to edit documents and even share presentations or slides. It's a terrific tool from the boardroom to the classroom and can allow any work normally handled in a corporate office.

Personal Touch

Some employers worry that the increased use of Web conferencing means the personal relationships that are the glue of workplaces and business will go away. Burchett says Web conferencing software is so advanced now she was able to become friends with her colleagues and learn about their families via computer.

The company even held a "virtual" baby shower for a colleague via Web conference: The employees all connected to the same Web conference room, a manager ordered pizza for all the employees in different regions and the mother-to-be opened her gifts from colleagues via Web camera.

Burchett says the tools help companies keep employees and let them do their best work regardless of where they live. "It tells people you value me enough to give me this flexibility, and I'm going to value you back," she says.