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"Telepresence Revolution:" How businesses can save substantially on travel expenses

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During a difficult economy, business leaders are challenged to "do more with less." At the same time, they face new demands of corporate social responsibility, such as the pressures to run a greener business. Advancements in unified communications and video conferencing technologies have led to the "Telepresence Revolution," which provides businesses the opportunity to realize substantial savings on travel expenses while lowering their carbon footprints.

Telepresence is a higher level of video conferencing that utilizes technology to allow someone to feel as if the people they are communicating with were actually present. Telepresence converges voice, video, and data technologies in a finely tuned way that can bring people together from several geographic points into the same "room" for a rich collaborative experience. Since the mid-2000s, firms have used telepresence systems to conquer geographic distances for both internal and customer meetings.

The environmental and financial numbers are promising. A recent study by the Carbon Disclosure Project found that enterprise-sized companies in the U.S. and U.K. that implement four immersive telepresence rooms can cut CO2 emissions by 10 million metric tons while saving almost \$19 billion in travel expenses between 2010 and 2020. The savings are rapid - firms that invest in telepresence technology can achieve a full return on investment in just 15 months.

The study focuses on global companies with billions of dollars in revenues capable of making technology investments that cost several hundred thousand dollars. But the good news is that telepresence technology is now scalable for the Small-to-Medium sized Business (SMB). Manufacturers such as Polycom, Cisco, and Tandberg offer solutions that suit the needs of home and commercial office users. Systems can be properly sized for virtually any conference room for high definition video and high fidelity audio. Companies across several industries can now participate in the cost savings and carbon-reducing benefits of telepresence technology.

John Allegro is director of marketing for BBH Solutions, Inc., New York, N.Y.

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