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WebRTC – So what's all the hype about?

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What exactly is WebRTC?

WebRTC, web real-time communications, is one of the hottest topics in the video communications industry, and for good reason. In a nutshell, WebRTC enables a user to connect over video without having to download a software client or plug-in, and no username or password is required.

Basically, all you need is a webcam, an Internet connection and the right browser (for example, the latest versions of Mozilla® or Chrome™), and you can connect over video with colleagues, partners, vendors and customers at the touch of a button. Simple!

> In concept, if you're using a WebRTC-capable browser and visit the proper web page, you can participate in a video call. It's just that simple. Given that there are ~ 2.4 billion Internet users around the world today* and the current list of WebRTC-capable browsers (Opera™, Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox®, Internet Explorer®, etc.), WebRTC has the potential to video- and audio-enable more than 2 billion people!
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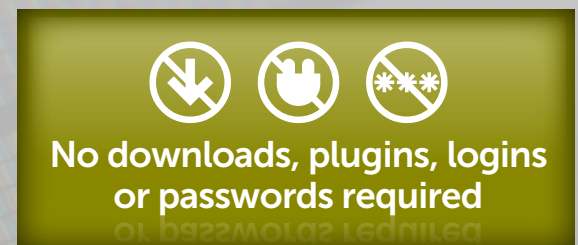> Ira M. Weinstein, Wainhouse.
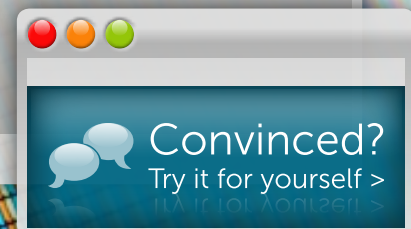
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* (source: internetworldstats.com, June 2012)

Face-to-face **video** communication

2.4 Billion Potential Users

No downloads, plugins, logins or passwords required
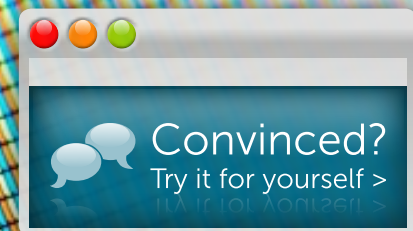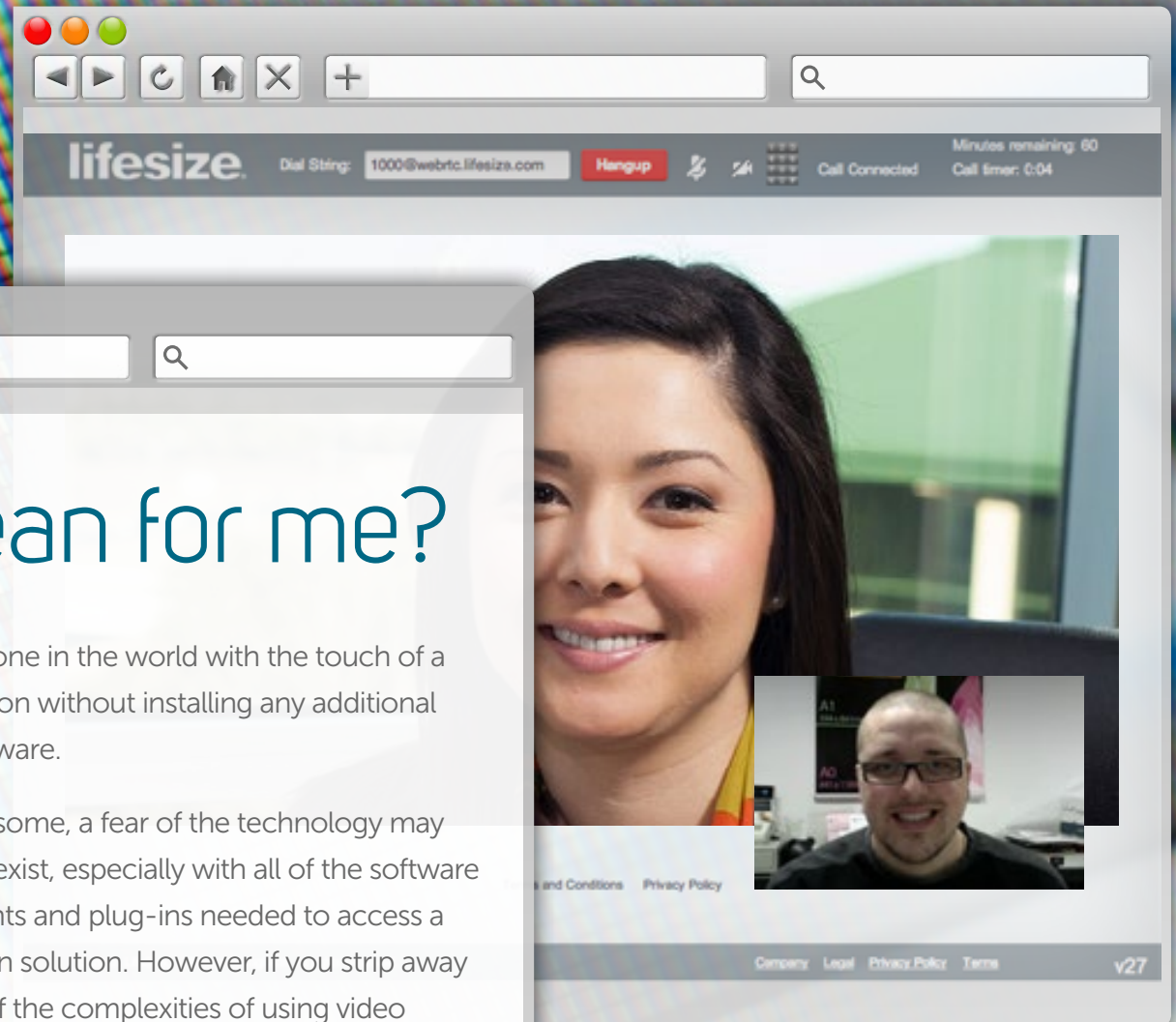
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What does it mean for me?

Even though video communications is booming in popularity, adoption has not yet become ubiquitous. To date, you still need a software client or browser plug-in in order to make video calls from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

Though this process is getting simpler every day, WebRTC allows for a click-to-chat application on PC and Mac Internet browsers, which could make video communication easier—and more accessible—than ever before. Imagine opening Google Chrome and being able to make a high definition video call to anyone in the world with the touch of a button without installing any additional software.

For some, a fear of the technology may still exist, especially with all of the software clients and plug-ins needed to access a given solution. However, if you strip away all of the complexities of using video conferencing and turn it into a task that is as easy as making a phone call, usage will skyrocket. If it worked for the phone, why wouldn't it work for video too? WebRTC could quite simply revolutionize video communication adoption.

lifesize   Dial String: 1000@webrtc.lifesize.com   Hangup   Call Connected   Minutes remaining: 60   Call timer: 0:04

Company   Legal   Privacy Policy   Terms   v27

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WebRTC and the "Facebook® effect"

Metcalfe's Law

The value of a telecommunications network is proportional to the square of the number of connected users of the system (n^2).
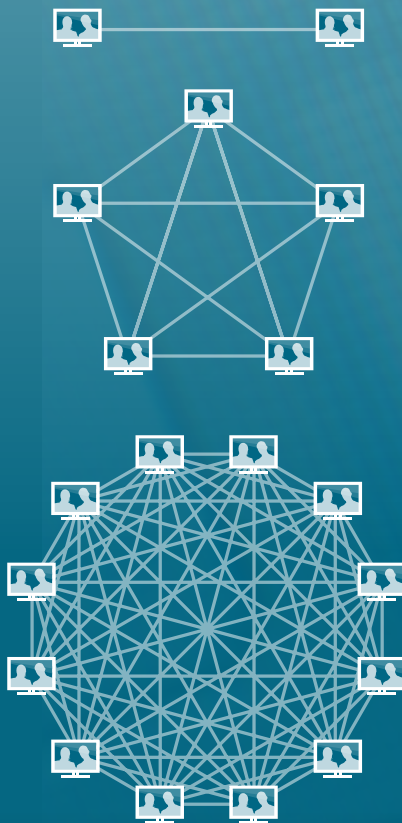
According to Metcalfe's law, "the value of a telecommunications network is proportional to the square of the number of connected users of the system." Basically, in order for video collaboration to truly take off, more users must be utilizing the technology. Think of it as the "Facebook effect."

When Facebook started in 2004, only Harvard students were able to create profiles and interact with other members. Even if Facebook had been open to users at other colleges, the average person wouldn't have found much value in it because they simply wouldn't have known the other people on the platform. Why bother with social networking if you don't know anyone on the social network? However, once the platform skyrocketed, it became commonplace to have a profile because everyone else did. Simply put, the value of Facebook is in the fact that you can interact with almost everyone you know. You are on it because everyone else is on it.

Video collaboration works the exact same way. The more people you can call, the more you will use the technology. WebRTC breaks down the barriers of usage and makes it easier than ever before to call anyone, anywhere.

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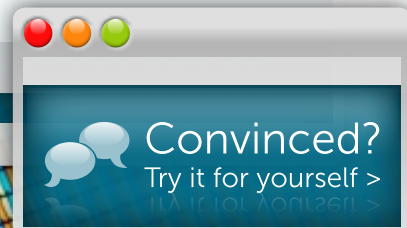
web apps are rapidly becoming as powerful as their standalone cousins

The power of an app... delivered through a web browser

The power of apps through a web browser is already being realized. If you've ever used Google Docs, Office 365™, or iWork® for iCloud, then you've already run an HTML5 app through a web browser. Historically, even things like web mail delivered this way were nowhere near as good as the actual program version on your computer.

But now you get a more seamless and much better experience. Internet-connected devices today are simply windows to the one computer of the world ... the web.

Technology such as WebRTC is simply part of a continuing evolution and an opportunity for "the masses" to more easily become involved in video communications technology.

Convinced?
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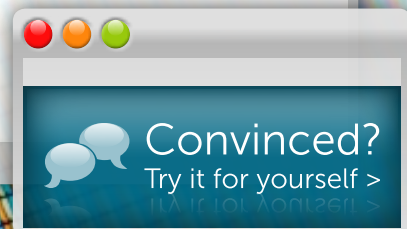
The perfect solution? Well, not quite ...

So this all sounds perfect, right? Nearly. WebRTC technology is not just a case of web browser–to–web browser communication; you still need the "middle piece," the infrastructure, to make it all work. There is currently limited browser support, and data sharing is limited to full-screen capture only. The technology is not fully interoperable with all existing video conferencing systems and infrastructure, and the sound quality could be better (best to wear a headset).

So, no, the quality is not going to be as good as traditional room-based video conferencing, but hey—its browser-based video conferencing! The cost and convenience implications alone could well make up for quality issues that are continually being addressed and updated anyway.

You have to evaluate the balance of quality versus convenience. Video conferencing delivers a far richer experience and is perfect for frequent use. WebRTC opens up video communications to a wider audience and is perfect for the occasional user who wants to connect with people outside of their own environment.

QUALITY VERSUS CONVENIENCE

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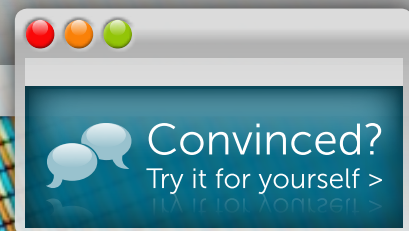
Amazon Kindle Fire™ HDX

Uses for WebRTC

With some creative thinking, WebRTC could revolutionize the way business is conducted in a host of industries. Imagine making a customer service call to your bank and being connected face to face with a representative instead of just a voice over the phone.

It could change the way social media is consumed. (Instagram® video and apps like Vine and Keek™ are already showing us the power of video in the social world), and QR codes could link you to a live sales representative instead of a webpage—not to mention that WebRTC could help your company become more productive and efficient with real-time document collaboration and in-person meetings rather than endless email strings and dreaded audio conferences.

And this isn't just "the technology of the future." Case in point—take Amazon's new support service available on its Kindle Fire™ HDX product called Mayday™. This service connects you with a live support representative within 15 seconds, and the tech advisor can even draw on your screen to walk you through various steps. This is video customer service that is available 24/7—props to Amazon!

Read more >

Convinced?
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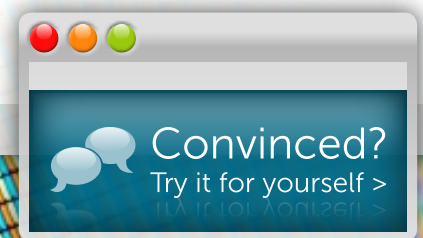
Try it yourself

If you have never tried video conferencing before, WebRTC is about as easy as it gets. If you know how to use an Internet browser, you can launch a video chat in seconds.

Lifesize has created a WebRTC application for you to try video for yourself. It's a great way to get started on making simple video calls and allows you to communicate with folks all around the world with nothing more than a webcam and an Internet connection.

## How to use Lifesize WebRTC in two easy steps:

Step 1:

Simply type the web address (www.Lifesize.com/webrtc) into your Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox browser or click this link.

Step 2:

Plug in your webcam (or use your embedded camera)

That's it!

No software clients, no logins/passwords, no plug-ins, no adding scary "security exceptions"—just an honest-to-goodness video chat. It is by far the easiest way to take video for a test drive.

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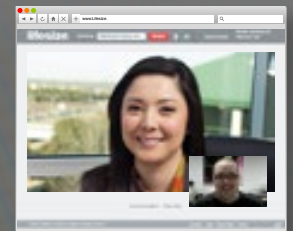
Explore video conferencing

Video conferencing has moved beyond the Fortune 500 boardroom into businesses of all sizes. Increasingly, it is becoming part of the supply chain, allowing businesses to have closer, more human, connected relationships with clients, suppliers, partners and employees.

WebRTC is helping push boundaries and truly moves video conferencing further away from being a technology for the "other guys" by expanding our reach and helping us build a more connected world.

We hope that you found our "WebRTC – So what's all the hype about?" guide helpful, and because we know that seeing is believing, we would be delighted to arrange an opportunity for you to experience the power of video for yourself.

On-Demand Webinar: WebRTC – Hype or game changer

Lifesize University of Video Conferencing
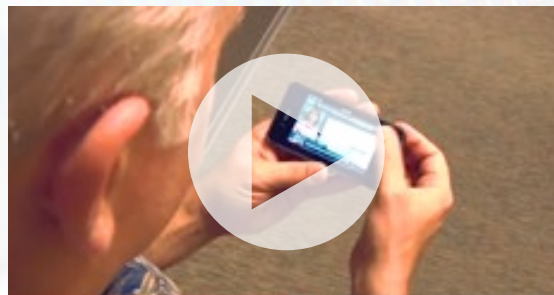
For more information or to request your personal demonstration, visit us at: www.apicom.com.co/demo.

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