

## Lee Ann Lim looks at how Tata Communications enables your community to collaborate in high definition



# A collaborative effort

**A**s president of Tata Communications Global Data and Mobility Business, Vinod Kumar has experienced first-hand the challenges in driving greater collaboration between the major centres of London, Mumbai, Reston (Virginia, US), Montreal and Singapore.

“Facilitating effective collaboration and communications between people who are located in geographically dispersed locations, yet work intimately together is even more vital when you take accents and cultural diversity into consideration,” said Mr Kumar.

One technology that Tata Communications has embraced is telepresence – a high-definition immersive conferencing facility with brilliant audio quality. As collaboration tools go, telepresence certainly is one of the most high-end and the Tata teams have found it to be a viable alternative to in-person meetings.

“The people at the other end look life-sized, there’s no delay or distortion in the sound of their voice, you really feel like you are speaking to them in person,” said Mr Kumar.

Having implemented it for internal use almost a year ago, Tata Communications is now rolling out a managed telepresence service for its customers. They are currently building private rooms for other Tata Group companies – Tata Steel, Corus and Tata Sons. The latter will be the telepresence facility for Ratan Tata, the Chairman of the Tata Group, a conglomerate of 90+ companies and other senior executives at Bombay House, the Tata headquarters. Other Tata Group companies, many of whom are pursuing aggressive globalisation strategies, are expected to follow suit.

“We believe that telepresence will transform the way we collaborate across our diverse group of companies, across industries, around the world,” said Srinivasa Addepalli, Tata Communications’ Sr. VP of Strategy and Communications.

Tata Communications has joined forces with Cisco to launch managed intercompany Cisco TelePresence services, which will be available in July. The Tata service will expand telepresence coverage beyond the large companies who can afford to build the private rooms to the thousands of mid-sized firms that have increasing

needs for collaboration, both domestic and international. This will be done through public telepresence rooms that will be available on an hourly pay-per-use basis, and will be located in central business centers. The first set of rooms are coming up at the luxury Taj Hotels, as well as at the offices of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), a leading Indian industry association. The public rooms coverage spans the globe, initially with two in the US, one in Europe and six in India, and will be expanded in subsequent phases.

Vikram Tiwathia, Chief Information Officer of CII said that the public room idea has appropriately emerged from India, where public, shared facilities have helped expand the reach of new technologies and services that might otherwise have been unaffordable to the general public, from phones to Internet cafes. For companies that want to try the technology and its economic benefits, using the public rooms is a good, cost-effective way to begin. Users in their smaller locations connect through public rooms on a pay-per-use basis, while private rooms are rolled out in their major offices where they have large populations of users. The public rooms



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enable the creation of a network effect of an ecosystem of connected rooms.

“The usefulness of a telepresence room increases exponentially with each additional room it is connected to,” said Peter Quinlan, Director for telepresence managed services at Tata Communications. “The more people in your community of interest, your supply chain and your customer base who are connected to your telepresence network, the more effective your collaboration across these groups will be”.


This then brings us to the crux of what telepresence offers – cost savings, quality of life improvement, and environmental responsibility.

By removing the need for working groups traveling from their respective locations to meet face-to-face in a central location, companies can save significant costs from the air travel, accommodation and employee expenses. A 30 percent reduction in overall travel costs is commonly cited as achievable.

Aside from actual dollars, telepresence also saves employees time, inconvenience and hazards of air travel. Employees will

have less time on the road, more time with their families, thereby improving their work-life balance.

Another major outcome is the anticipated reduction of carbon emissions from reduced air travel. Considering that aviation is expected to contribute to 15 percent of carbon emissions by 2050, cutting down on air travel can be a major contribution from companies to help save the environment.

The vision of interconnected telepresence rooms bringing people closer together – enabling them to work effectively with each other wherever and whoever they are, is driving the strategy of the Tata Communications offering. They have adopted it internally within the Tata Group and are helping large and mid-sized companies experience this new world of communications. 

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## About Vinod Kumar

As President of global data and mobility solutions for Tata Communications, part of the \$29bn Tata Group. Mr. Kumar is responsible for expanding Tata Communications’ roadmap and charter into the global communications market. Enhancing the service capabilities and customer facing activities in strategic markets beyond the shores of India in a nut shell sums his mandate. Besides heading these strategic initiatives, Mr Kumar is also responsible for the wholesale data, global mobile and international enterprise lines of business and meeting the company’s ambitious targets. Mr Kumar is also a Director on the Board of Tata Communications.

Mr Kumar has a wide range of cross-functional experience in the telecommunications industry. He also has an impressive track record in developing business strategies and creating fast growth organisations.

He was previously Senior Vice-President of Asia Netcom, responsible for all aspects of generating top-line growth, including strategy formulation, product marketing and sales. He was actively involved in all aspects of the financial restructuring, and eventual asset sale of Asia Global Crossing to China Netcom, resulting in the formation of Asia Netcom.

In 1999, Mr Kumar joined WorldCom Japan as Chief Executive Officer and prior to that, he held various senior positions in Global One in the United States and Asia where he has had major responsibilities in market management, sales, marketing, product management, multinational account management and operations.

Mr Kumar holds a Masters in Business Administration from the American University. He also graduated with honours in electrical and electronic engineering at the Birla Institute of Technology and Science in India.

