



# FACE-TO-FACE, EYE-TO-EYE

Moderated by  
**JON ARNOLD**  
J. Arnold & Associates

**MARC TRACHTENBERG**, Deputy Chairman and CTO of Teleris, talks about the revolutionary idea of telepresence and how it is making up for videoconferencing failures of the past. Telepresence is the new, reliable solution to conducting business meetings.

### **What is telepresence?**

Telepresence is a unique, intimate technology that allows people to engage in a life-like, face-to-face virtual meeting without having to be in the same physical location, faithfully replicating the human dynamics of face-to-face meetings. Teliris believes that telepresence has been achieved when you can synthetically create a meeting environment that is: 1) as natural as a face-to-face meeting, where people experience eye-to-eye contact and will really bypass travel; 2) as reliable as a face to face meeting, where you can guarantee that over 99 percent of the time will be productive; and 3) it costs less than a face-to-face meeting, where each room costs less than one round-trip flight overseas per month. Anything less is not “true telepresence.”

### **How does telepresence compare to traditional videoconferencing?**

Videoconferencing has failed – at every level – to deliver on its promise of being a viable substitute for face-to-face meetings. Videoconferencing is not natural, reliable or cost-effective. Telepresence is almost like being in the same room with your colleagues, even though they may be halfway across the world. The technology allows for no delay sound and eye-to-eye contact that makes participants almost want to reach out and shake hands across the system. Traditional videoconferencing has always been plagued with jerky speech and video with no ability to make eye contact, making it nearly impossible to conduct meaningful business over the system.

### **Telepresence has become a strong buzzword lately – what’s driving this?**

I’d like to believe that Teliris is the driving force behind telepresence. We’ve been in the market the longest of any of our competitors – since 2001 – and we have the largest deployment of systems worldwide. In the past two years, we have seen the landscape of this industry change dramatically. It is a combination of variables that have heightened the use of this buzzword. One reason is that global corporations have realized that telepresence is the best way to conduct business without shouldering the cost of money and time. In addition, the marketplace has given way to new competition, and frankly, competition has become a huge catalyst in creating this “buzzword,” not to mention the media.

### **Who is the ideal user for telepresence?**

Any company with multiple national or international locations that is looking to maximize human interactions would be an ideal user – a company looking to take cost out of the business, in terms of money and time, or radically enhance productivity and collaboration. Additionally, companies that are looking to improve work/personal balance, develop contingencies when travel is impossible or have a real effect on a company’s carbon foot print would be ideal users of telepresence.

Telepresence, specifically with Teliris, has given executives the life/work balance that had been missing all of these years. It allows executives to communicate nationally or globally, yet still lets them make it home in time for their child’s birthday party.

Telepresence allows employees to conduct meetings when travel is not an option. For instance, when inclement weather forces airport delays or closures, telepresence provides the ability to continue the meetings without a glitch. When extreme but very realistic terrorist threats shut down flights for days and weeks, telepresence allows employees to continue their work and thus allows businesses to operate seamlessly.

### **What is the payoff for these customers to use telepresence?**

The payoff is a complete change in the way companies conduct business. Companies have found they communicate more effectively and more often using telepresence. Teliris – unlike its competitors – is able to install solutions that will adapt to the culture of the business and allow productivity and efficiency to increase, while decreasing travel costs, including money and time.

### **How do companies accommodate this with their existing videoconferencing solutions?**

Teliris is customer-focused; we ensure our systems can adapt themselves into the culture and environment of the company. For this reason, Teliris systems have the capability to connect to legacy systems. This technology allows the Teliris system to “talk” to the traditional videoconferencing systems and allows customers the ability to continue the use of these older systems.



### What are some of the technical challenges for IT staff to implement telepresence?

There are no technical challenges with telepresence. Teliris has the only solution that comes with a managed service. Everything from the technology, room, network and service is provided. Teliris rooms are managed 24/7 by experts in the Teliris call centers. This is how Teliris guarantees 99+ percent reliability – something no other provider can offer.

### What are you seeing in the market? Who does this resonate with right away?

Some of the defining characteristics of a company that needs telepresence are those companies, nationally and globally, that are seeking ways to cut travel costs and communicate more effectively and more often. These companies will experience an environment of instant face-to-face connection anywhere in the world at a moment's notice. All multi-location companies working to ensure that their business will continue without a blip in the face of unforeseen circumstances should also look to telepresence as a solution.

### How is this changing the way companies do business?

Telepresence is revolutionizing the ways companies conduct their business, from a cultural standpoint to a financial standpoint. This technology is taking the cost out of business so employees and executives no longer have to spend valuable time and money traveling, since telepresence allows people to engage in real-time, face-to-face meetings with colleagues anywhere in the world. It also allows companies to communicate more often and more effectively, which creates an enhanced overall communication network. It truly is becoming a no-compromise alternative to travel.

### What would you say are the main issues right now impeding adoption by a broader audience?

We often find that it is somewhat difficult for audiences to actually see the solution. This technology needs to be seen to be truly understood. It is like trying to explain a sunset to someone who has never been outdoors. Many words can describe it, but seeing is understanding. Furthermore, users have negative opinions of failed videoconferencing projects, which hinders their decision to use telepresence.

### Being that telepresence is a new technology and new experience for end-users, what have been some of the pleasant surprises you've seen with customers?

Aside from Teliris' 99 percent reliability rate, customers have been exceptionally pleased with the enhanced work/life balance. Customers have also found that this technology has sped up a wide array of business practices. For example, one of the major pharmaceutical customers said they were able to shave six months off of the drug-to-market process, saving them millions and raising productivity to a whole new level. One customer, who spent three hours using the system instinctively, got up at the end of a meeting and reached over the table to shake the hand of someone who was 3,000 miles away.

### How has telepresence exceeded expectations?

Telepresence has exceeded expectations on every front. When companies come back and say, "We want more installations. This product is great; it has changed our employees' lives and the way we do business," that's when you know you have a great product.

### How do you see this market evolving in the next two to three years?

First and foremost, I see the possibility of the marketplace achieving \$3 billion in sales in the next three to five years. Second, telepresence is delivering innovation around making the experience even more natural and transparent. This is one technology that is driven by the pure need for humans to interact, not interoperate. Teliris is the only firm focused on this human drive solution exclusively and driving technologies that solve that most natural relationship – the one between people not technologies.



**JON ARNOLD** is Principal of J Arnold & Associates, an independent telecom analyst and marketing consultancy with a focus on IP communications. Previously, he was the VoIP Program Leader at Frost & Sullivan, responsible for managing their subscription service for Global VoIP Equipment Markets. He is a regular speaker at numerous VoIP and telecom conferences.



**MARC TRACHTENBERG** is a Co-Founder of Teliris, where he holds the positions of Deputy Chairman and Chief Technology Officer. In this role, he supplies strategic direction for the corporation. He is also the CEO of Mycroft Inc., the IT and network services company that formed Teliris in 2001 with Global Intercasting Ltd. Marc is the Chief Architect of the FACT framework and is responsible for development of Teliris' infrastructure. He also manages research and development of all Teliris' future product and transport solutions. Marc has over 22 years of experience in leading-edge technology in the areas of infrastructure and transport systems.