

VERREX INSIDERS

MARCH 2023



Cameras for AV: The Remote Side of Meeting Equity

The basics of cameras haven't changed. But how we leverage technology enhancements within and around cameras has radically evolved over the past 36 months. Now we create solutions to give all video call participants an equal platform, knowing that every meeting includes local and remote people.

Let's start on the simple end – your remote workers. USB webcams have been widely used for 20 years. The basics are still the same; webcams capture a single person well. While I wouldn't recommend any \$30 Amazon special, Logitech cameras provide impressive image quality from \$70 on up. Of course, this assumes the camera is capturing a single person with decent lighting.

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Bill and Bart's Excellent ISE Adventure

It's hard to believe it's already been over a month since ISE. But let us tell you, ISE is back and in full swing! ISE reports that there were 58,107 unique attendees from 155 countries. Bill Chamberlin, VP of Sales and Marketing, and UK Project Engineer, Bart Lyons, represented Verrex at this record-breaking event. When we asked about the show, Bart and Bill agreed that meeting equity was the most often heard phrase at the show, which makes perfect sense in the hybrid workplace of 2023. Here's more of their firsthand report, including their Top 5 List.

ISE did not disappoint! It was busy, exciting, energizing, and productive. Chamberlin was ecstatic to be back at ISE, not having been since the 2020 event in Amsterdam. "It was amazing to meet with people I hadn't seen in years face to face again. I've missed this," said Chamberlin.

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When picking a camera, it's important not to get too hung up on the resolution, which applies to webcams and conference room cameras. 4K does not automatically mean better images. Most calls from a laptop are transmitting no more than 360p. Zoom makes it easy if you ever want to check your send and receive resolutions while on a call. And no standard platform transmits 4K video to calls. Whether you use a room-based system or an app on your laptop doesn't matter. Room-based systems max out at 1080p.

So what resolution is needed? On the webcam end, 1080p is always sufficient, and picking a specific model depends on what else you expect or need. I prefer the image from a Logitech C930 over the original BRIO, though I have good face lighting. The BRIO has better microphones. My old Tandberg PrecisionHD USB from 2009 was 720p and worked wonderfully until two years ago. I loved the image quality because it picked up so much light with its f1.7 aperture. I looked like myself when on camera. Today my primary camera at home is a Jabra PanaCast 20, and a Huddly IQ at the "real" office. Both cameras have 4K image sensors, but I prefer the Jabra image.

Why am I worried about webcams? Shouldn't I be concerned about the cameras in the boardroom? Well, yes, I am worried about the boardroom. How often will you look at remote participants captured by webcams, shown on a 98" flat panel in the boardroom? Or better yet, your brand new Planar dvLED 0.6mm 108"? Research from [Crestron](#) found that 84% of employees regularly have at least one remote participant joining their meetings. So, everyone should look good on camera. And they can.

Most of us still use a static camera that works well while seated or standing if we have a sit-stand desk. One excellent benefit of technology enhancements is the freedom of movement in your personal workspace. An example is the Poly Studio USB. While this camera bar is more often used in a small conference room, and yes, I agree, it's not physically the prettiest thing, the presenter tracking feature is excellent. You can wander around your personal workspace and the Poly Studio USB will actively track you, keeping you nicely in the shot. The image quality is also on par with the best ePTZ cameras. (This means I like the Poly Studio USB!)

There are more webcams now than ever. The best webcams provide a good image in a variety of lighting conditions. Also, plenty have special features, such as a selectable field-of-view and tracking. Looking good on your webcam is a critical part of meeting equity.

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Bill and Bart's Excellent ISE Adventure, continued from Page 1

Returning to what they felt was the show's overriding theme, meeting equity. The focus was on balance and giving everyone a fair chance regardless of whether they are in the boardroom or working from home. "This has never been more important in the new and diverse hybrid workspaces we are working on today," said Lyons. "The advancement of camera AI technology and intelligent video allows the creation of new meeting spaces explicitly designed to give everyone a seat at the table. Post-pandemic, people are shying away from the single-face, full-screen and opting for a more personal experience with a gallery view and equity for all."

How are manufacturers ensuring meeting equity? Logitech, for example, is addressing this issue with the new Logitech Sight. This camera can be added to an existing system, like a Rally Bar, in a huddle space or conference room in the office. The Logitech Sight is placed in the middle of the table and captures all the participants around the table, creating a more personal and immersive experience for the remote workers. Jabra is another manufacturer using this technology; the results are stunning!

Conversely, many manufacturers are also getting in on the personal workspace arena. Many devices now allow remote workers to integrate into the office effortlessly while at home. "This has a tremendous area for growth in the coming year as companies realize that it is just as essential to outfit your remote workers with the correct camera technology to give them an equal seat at the conference table while they work at home," explained Lyons.

Another variable that has made great strides in meeting equity is assistive listening. These new products now allow you to listen on your device with your headphones, creating a much more inclusive space. Sennheiser's Mobile Connect is a perfect example, which made our Top 5 List.

Lyons summarized it perfectly: "Everyone is getting in on the act, creating workspaces that give everyone an equitable chance. I think it's early days, but the technology shift towards an AI-driven future is here to stay. My hope for the future is that we build on this creativity and present the meeting rooms of tomorrow today. That will be driven by needs analysis right at the start of the design stage and help to create technologically advanced spaces and ones that incorporate the true meaning of equity."

Top 5 Highlights of the Show

There was so much new and exciting technology on the show floor that picking our Top 5 wasn't easy, but here are five products or vendors that Bill and Bart agree you should keep an eye on.

Sennheiser Mobile Connect

The Assisted listening product from Sennheiser uses your personal device. The "Talk Back" feature is effortless, enabling users to have their own push-to-talk microphone. In addition, the app is fully customizable for branding and the interface is intuitive and user-friendly. It's a game-changer!

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ThinkSmart Core and Controller Kit (Biamp and Lenovo)

Biamp has partnered with Lenovo to create Room Kits with various Biamp products and the Lenovo Think Smart Controller. Biamp's Parlé VBC 2500 is also noteworthy in its incorporation of the noise canceling algorithm to remove unwanted room noise. The demo used candy wrappers, pen clicking, and even a cordless drill. It was impressive!

Sennheiser TeamConnect Ceiling Solutions (TCC-M)

Sennheiser launched the TCC-M, a smaller version of their outstanding ceiling microphone. TeamConnect Ceiling Solutions use a single beam to pick up anything in the room and help with inclusivity for people on the far end. One interesting thing Lyons noted is the number of other booths using the Sennheiser TCC-M microphone for their own demo purposes. That's pretty telling!

Yealink

Yealink has grown its product line over the last few years and offers complete bundles for Teams and Zoom. They have partnered with Shure and Biamp and offer camera tracking based on microphone directivity. In addition, they have a range of cameras offering various tracking methods and AI options for smart framing. All products are Zoom and Teams Certified. Lyons is looking forward to taking a closer look at Yealink soon.

Kramer

Kramer launched many new products at ISE, including, K-Lock (a USB-C locking connector) and an upgraded version of their VIA platform (their wireless collaboration and conferencing platform). Additionally, Kramer CONNECT launched an extended portfolio of premium USB-C products along with a new line of Services. They also announced new partnerships with Sennheiser, Samsung, and Yealink. Another fun fact about Kramer is that they have a set of webinars in which they share their expertise by diving into the inner workings of USB and all of its idiosyncrasies.