



TECHNOLOGY AUDIT

# Adobe Connect V8

Adobe

## SUMMARY

### CATALYST

With organizations increasing their geographical dispersal, while looking for faster decision making and greater collaborative working, the use of web conferencing is an obvious potential solution. However many of the available products are proprietary both in terms of the software and the devices they run on. Adobe Connect is positioned as a best of breed toolset for web conferencing and eLearning which can integrate with the majority of platforms and technologies that organizations already have.

- Enterprise class web conferencing solution, based upon Adobe Flash technology
- Designed for both web conferencing and eLearning
- Highly scalable with integration that facilitates containment of costs

### KEY FINDINGS

<b>Strengths:</b>	✓ Ease of access for participants with no download necessary. ✓ Extensibility to build customized application use within meetings.
<b>Weaknesses:</b>	✗ Adobe not yet widely known in the online meeting market.
<b>Key Facts:</b>	i Based upon Flash technology.



### OVUM VIEW

Adobe Connect provides organizations of all complexions with a set of intuitive web based conferencing tools. Utilizing its ubiquitous Flash technology, Adobe has focused on using the product to engage the maximum user participation in on-line meetings, webinars, and eLearning. The central control for scheduling meetings aligns with normal corporate policies and supports the coordination across the enterprise.

Adobe recognized (probably earlier than most of its rivals in collaboration technologies) that the internet would be key to communication between individuals and organizations, and that the tools people required to undertake their roles needed to be accessible via the internet on any device and form factor via any communication medium. Connect fits this specification and offers a 'minimal risk' set of collaborative communication technologies for the enterprise. With Adobe Connect, enterprises can integrate with various audio providers including InterCall or PGI via native integrations, or according to Adobe, to any other audio providers via the Adobe Connect Universal Voice capability; and they can also use VoIP.

With comprehensive conferencing, audio/video features along with a range of support tools, including 24x7 support for In-Meeting calls, and moderated forums, Ovum believes that the product is applicable to both the largest and smallest of organizations.

#### Recommendations

- For enterprises looking to implement low risk/low effort on demand collaboration technologies, Adobe Connect provides a wide range of tools.
- For government organizations and organizations with strict compliance requirements, Adobe Connect provides both on-premise and managed service options for full control.
- Small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) looking to maximize their communication with employees and partners (and even customers) should find the Adobe Connect persuasive.

## FUNCTIONALITY

### SOLUTION OVERVIEW

Adobe Connect is designed as an enterprise web conferencing tool, which can deliver meetings, webinars and eLearning. Based upon Adobe's Flash technology it benefits from Adobe's 'Swiss' mentality of being independent of other technologies but integrating with them very well.



The product aims to deliver what Adobe refers to as “Richness”, providing the ability to define the experience of the participant in the web conference with complete control over the layouts to suit specific collaboration, and the branding of the space.



Conference hosts can add, delete, move, or resize meeting windows as needed in seconds before meetings, and even in real time during meetings, and also save layout templates for reuse in future web conferences. In addition, all meeting rooms in Adobe Connect are persistent, meaning that the rooms are 'always on', the content, chat, layouts, etc, are all available to those with access rights until the owner of the meeting room deletes them.

## SOLUTION ANALYSIS

### **Maturity**

Adobe Connect was derived from the Macromedia Breeze product acquired in 2005. V8 of the product has a simplified interface suitable for the infrequent user. The interface has 'progressive disclosure' where only contextually relevant commands are displayed. Adobe reports that the current version was tested on users with no prior knowledge of the product.

### **Scalability**

There is no theoretical limit to the numbers of cameras and images that can be displayed in web conference using Adobe Connect; however it is of course dependant upon available communications bandwidth

### **Interoperability**

The Audio/video conference interoperability of Adobe Connect is class leading. For example it can connect to Polycom or Tandberg as a SIP (session initiation protocol) enabled end point and stream the video directly into the Adobe Connect meeting environment. In addition to the broadcast of the video conference the platform also integrates with any audio provider and provides Voice over IP (VoIP) calling to enable the maximum interaction and recording.

While Adobe Connect offers its own calendaring and scheduling facilities, as with other functions of the product it integrates with a wide range of third party calendaring/scheduling tools, along with external email systems.

### **Innovation**

Adobe has focused on ease of use for Adobe Connect. Because it is based upon the ubiquitous Flash technology, attendees can join meetings instantly without the requirement to download clients or other software. This especially relevant for large scale events or in organizations, where attendees may be in a 'locked-down' IT environment, and unable to install software.

Adobe Connect provides many integrated eLearning functions which enable the rapid creation and deliver both on-demand and virtual classes, alongside the ability to manage training programs. Content for delivery can be created by subject matter experts using plug-ins for Microsoft PowerPoint to add narration, animation, interactivity, simulations, branching scenarios, quizzes, without programming. The tracking and reporting capabilities within the products enable participation, and course effectiveness to be assessed, and there is integration with third party learning management systems.

**Enterprise Fit (Server Deployment Platforms, Licensing Models, Administration)**

As a best-of-breed web conferencing Adobe Connect was designed to integrate with existing enterprise infrastructures (e.g. user directories, audio conferencing services, video conferencing systems, SIP/SIMPLE- or XMPP-based presence and IM solutions, content repository and collaboration portals).

Adobe Connect has been designed for the widest level of deployment, thus administration can be delegated to business users and it offers integration with enterprise single sign on (SSO) solutions. As single platform solution for an organization, it runs on Microsoft Windows server, and supports a virtualized server environment, and client access can be on Windows, OS X or Linux devices. In addition Adobe Connect can delivered via either thin or web clients.

The host of each meeting has the ability to control all aspects, including the quality of the video output, which can be up to HD level. A full management reporting facility is included in the product enabling organizations to measure the effectiveness of the solution.

**Asynchronous Collaboration Features**

The content of meetings and group discussions run through Adobe Connect is stored until needed again in future, and thus is persistent. Meeting remain interactive, and all hands-on components such as quizzes, simulations, links, attendee listings, and access to downloadable content, remain interactive for users viewing the recording on demand, and can be added to. Meetings including audio from both telephone and VoIP can also be 'recorded' which creates a record of the live events as they transpired. Editing tools can be used to add or delete sections of recordings prior to making them available for distribution as a hosted link or for download and offline viewing.

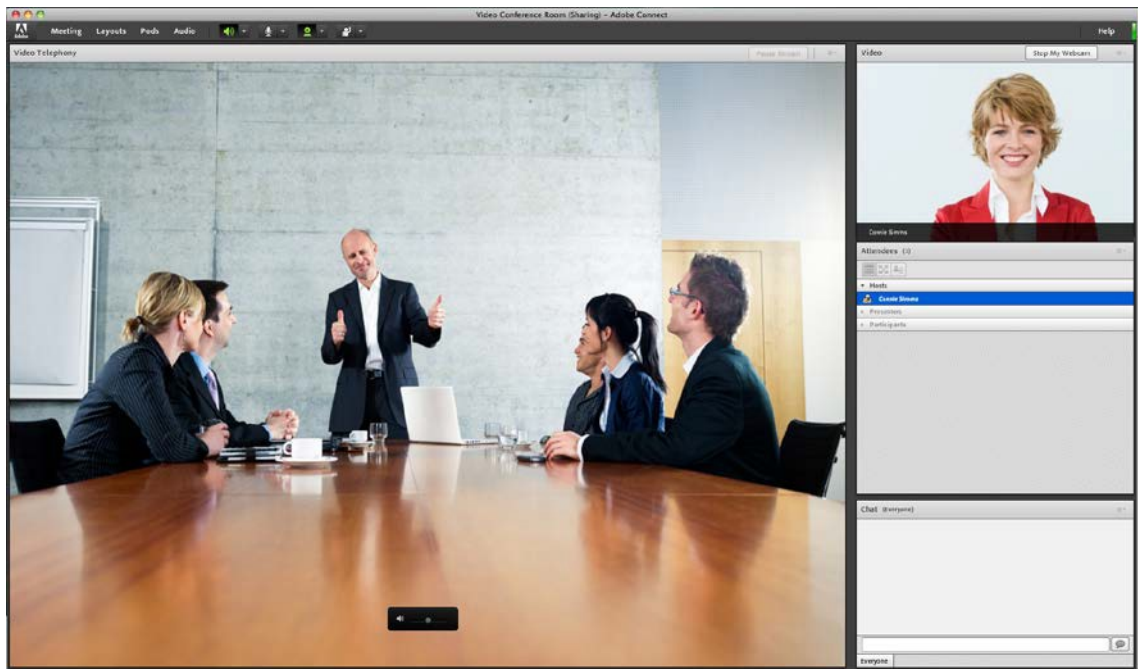
**Synchronous Collaboration Features**

Adobe Connect provides both video and audio conferencing capabilities, and following Adobe's 'Swiss' philosophy will integrate with a range of the more popular third-party audio and video conferencing systems. Adobe Connect's synchronous abilities also provide:

- real time chat
- white boarding
- streaming video
- Flash animation
- quizzes
- notes and polls
- breakout rooms
- screen sharing

to facilitate the online meetings/conferences. It will also integrate with third party instant messaging systems.

**Figure 2: Adobe Connect 8 video conferencing**



Source: Adobe

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Adobe Connect provides a comprehensive set of controls and participant management features. Administrators can disable functionality not required for use within the meeting and define which applications can be shared, and control the access to meeting rooms. Meeting hosts can change the roles of participant via drag and drop and assign rights using mouse-over controls.

**Collaboration Management Features**

Adobe Connect enables users to share a variety of content types including animated presentations, images, audio, video, and because anyone in the meeting is already using Adobe Flash Player, attendees can view any of the content without additional plug-ins.

**Mobile Deployment Platforms**

Being web accessed Adobe Connect is also accessible on mobile platforms such as tablets and Smartphones. This includes devices running Windows, Google Android and Apple iOS. The latest version of Adobe Connect Mobile is optimized for mobile tablet and supports two-way video



## PRODUCT STRATEGY

### MARKET OPPORTUNITY

Offering a web conferencing and eLearning platform that enterprises and government organizations can standardize on, while utilizing technologies that the majority of organizations already have in place gives Adobe a major market opportunity. The company aims to drive adoption through the ability of organizations to customize and extend its functionality to address use cases across all verticals including web meetings, eLearning and webinars, as well as more customized use cases such as guided selling and emergency response. In particular Adobe sees guided selling and emergency response, as other major market opportunities for Connect.

Furthermore it's 'Swiss' attitude of being agnostic of yet integrating well with other propriety products, makes it suitable for both organizations that have mergers and acquisitions and of course for short-lived projects or interaction outside the corporate firewall, or those who are looking to adopt a best-of-breed web conferencing solution as part of a unified communications stack,

### GO TO MARKET STRATEGY

Adobe Connect is sold directly and through partners. Adobe freely offers its SDK to partners, customers, and independent developers to download and use to develop vertically relevant collaborative applications or other innovative functionality using Flex. Approximately 50% of Adobe Connect deployments are on premise.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Adobe Connect can be purchased as a hosted, on-premise, or managed services solution. Licensing is flexible and can be based on named hosts, concurrent users, per event, or pay per use. Adobe Connect is designed to be highly extensible. Thus organizations can develop customized extensions for use within the meeting environment to handle specific business use cases. Alternatively, those users can access a library of pre-existing extensions to enhance meeting functionality, such as a closed captioning application. Furthermore Adobe provides a set of Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) to allow external scheduling, reporting, user management, authentication, audio bridge integration.

## DEPLOYMENT EXAMPLES

### Government departments

Adobe states it is gaining significant adoption in the government sector with reference deployments in Bainbridge Island Police Department, Miami-Dade Police Department, Michigan Department of Community Health, and Davenport Fire Department.



**Other examples**

Xerox used Adobe Connect to train both technical and field staff. As a global company that is moving to a more services led approach, it requires a lot of re tooling and associated training, in multiple languages. Xerox has saved significantly on travel and enabled direct interaction with customers. The return on investment was reported to be within one quarter.

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