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## ComputerWorld Strategies & Tactics

by John Dickinson

### SEEING IS BELIEVING

Given the lousy track record of video- and Web-based conferencing and collaboration technologies, I was very skeptical when a **Teliris** representative invited me to try her company's "breakthrough" telepresence-based VirtuaLive system.

"It's different," she promised, and she was right. I was impressed by the quality of the images and sound, but mostly by the realism that the system brought to the meeting. I was in San Francisco looking into the eyes of people in New York, and it felt like they were just across the table. They were the right size to be seated across that table, their voices seemed to come directly from their mouths, and they sounded natural - not at all artificial, as they would with so many remote sound systems.

My good impressions were reinforced when I got a look at Cisco's TelePresence system at the company's headquarters in San Jose. The system's modular configuration is quite functional and makes a virtual oval conference room table come alive. The Cisco equipment's gaze angle is not quite as natural as that of the **Teliris** system because the focus of the system is on the person sitting in the center, but otherwise it's just as realistic as **Teliris** VirtuaLive.

I later joined a conference using the **Teliris** WebConnect system from my home office. The required telephone hookup was as awkward as those of other Web-based systems, but the multiscreen image successfully mimicked the VirtuaLive conference room setup, with motion on the screens that was very nearly as smooth. The difference is that I was looking at a much smaller format.