

## Government Technology

by Martyn Lewis, Teliris co-founder and European chairman

### TRUE TELEPRESENCE – YOU’LL KNOW IT WHEN YOU SEE IT

Telepresence, executed correctly, enables intimate, intuitive and effective interactions over great distances without the need for physical travel. This makes it a powerful communication tool and one that can drastically reduce the need for travel. According to the SDC, The UK Government’s independent watchdog on sustainable development, “The impacts of climate change are global. For us in the UK, the challenge of moving to a low carbon society will involve fundamental changes in the operation of government...”

These changes are essential if the Government is to meet its own targets. With road travel contributing 20% of the UK’s CO2 emissions and air travel contributing 5.5% it is essential that Government finds solutions to cope with its own Carbon footprint. Telepresence provides the ability to dramatically reduce the need for travel by offering real time collaboration that is far more reliable, and therefore useable, than predecessors such as video conferencing.

Admittedly, this sounds more like something you would see in the movies – a fictional solution created to facilitate an improbable plot; but in fact, it is far from fictitious, or even new for that matter. Telepresence technology has been around for nearly a decade but the recent entry of several major players into the market has heightened focus on this emerging technology and the implications it has for business growth and communications. Like many technological solutions, telepresence is finally gaining the attention that will eventually catapult it into the mainstream market.

As a former broadcaster, I became fascinated with the potential of this technology from the first time I experienced it. I understand the nuances of eye contact, subtle facial expressions and body language. Immediately I recognized that Teliris’s solutions, today represented by the VirtualLive™ offerings, open up possibilities for interacting over significant distances at a level that no other solution in the world can deliver.

But as this technology continues to emerge, it is important that the industry be held to a standard that ensures that when a company makes the investment in telepresence, it is getting the full potential of this powerful tool. At Teliris we call that ‘true telepresence’. In this article let me define the true telepresence standard and why that matters for the way governments can meet environmental targets as well as streamline their internal and external communications.

#### True Telepresence

Telepresence is a technology-based solution, but the interesting thing about it is that the goal and purpose is to make the technology invisible. What do I mean by that? I mean that in order to be successful and truly change the way governments interact internally and externally across distance, telepresence must ensure that the technology in no way interferes with the meeting conversation, it must be natural. Additionally, it must be

totally reliable and cost less than a face-to-face meeting. This is a simple statement, but one that takes into account several factors that together accomplish the details that make up a natural meeting experience.

No matter how many participants or how many site locations; a true telepresence meeting must have precise and uncompromised eye-to-eye contact. Participants must be able to look in any direction and at any site location and see eye-to-eye, not only the person directly in front of them, but the people at the end of the table, off to the sides and vice versa. Each person also needs to be able to hear all the participants directionally, from their location at the virtual table AND interrupt each other without delay – all interactions that we take for granted during a face-to-face meeting.

All of these technological challenges were the root of why many lost confidence in traditional videoconferencing, a technology solution plagued with blurry images, out-of-sync lip movements, frustrating audio delays and shoddy sound quality. Today's technological advances that make up true telepresence solve these visual and audio inadequacies and feed into the goal of capturing non-verbal cues such as facial expressions and body movements – the interactions that people would interpret and engage in if they were sitting across the table.

Creating this “inert” technology to execute a natural meeting experience is only part of the solution. A telepresence meeting is only valuable if it's reliable. As a broadcaster, I have particularly vivid memories of introducing a remote reporter and having to fill in the awkward air-time when we lost the connection or when we were simply unable to connect at all. Reliability is not a sidebar to true telepresence, it's required. Teliris guarantees 99+ percent reliability through our managed service which entails end-to-end diagnostics coupled with 24/7 analysis and maintenance support. Like telepresence technology, a managed service must be inert and allow people to walk into a meeting, sit down and conduct business without a hitch – whenever and for as long as they need.

The combination of these factors has won Teliris recognition by influential consulting company Frost & Sullivan as the global market leader in telepresence, so it's not surprising that Teliris has the largest installed base of telepresence systems in the world, owning 44 percent of the market including many FTSE 100 companies that are all realizing the benefits of true telepresence. The award also commends our ongoing achievements in marketing, strategy development, revenue growth, and technology innovations.

### **Telepresence and Carbon Responsibility**

Aside from the overarching collaboration and business continuity benefits, today companies using telepresence have found they are also addressing growing concerns about reducing their corporate carbon footprints. The need for companies to become more environmentally responsible has climbed up the corporate agenda in recent years, but the implementation has been slow.

Teliris has been working with the London-based CarbonNeutral Company (also known as TCNC), the world's leading full service carbon management business, to raise the visibility for technology-based solutions such as telepresence as a weapon against carbon emissions. This is an important initiative for me personally, and one I have supported for over six years as a co-founder of Teliris. For example, Teliris has been successful in reducing its customers' travel between strategic corporate locations by up to 25 percent which has had an immediate impact on reducing carbon footprints, without compromising company performance.

Teliris and the TCNC are working together on joint initiatives to promote the core benefits of using telepresence to reduce CO2 emissions. This partnership solidifies Teliris' ongoing support of carbon neutrality and in fact, Teliris itself has been CarbonNeutral® since 2006.

### **The Future for Telepresence**

The future of true telepresence really comes down to the goal of every efficient enterprise - seamless interaction. This means more collaboration, a higher level of connectivity and the exchange of ideas in an open, uninterrupted forum. While this is a tall order for providers, it is how we, at Teliris, see telepresence becoming a mainstream and widespread success. To achieve this goal our industry must adhere to the strict, uncompromised guidelines that are defining true telepresence.

### **About the Author**

Martyn Lewis is a co-founder and the chairman of Teliris, and has played a strategic role in the development of the company, its products and services. Martyn is one of Britain's best-known broadcasters.

In a television career spanning 34 years, he has presented every mainstream national TV news programme on ITV and the BBC, and reported from around Britain and the world. He regularly chairs conferences in the corporate, public and charity sectors.

Beyond his role at Teliris, Martyn is a Trustee of the Windsor Leadership Trust where he helps to develop the leaders of tomorrow. Martyn is also Chairman of the Beacon Fellowship which honours the unsung heroes in communities across the UK.

He is also heavily involved in charitable work. Martyn founded and chairs YouthNet UK, an Internet resource guiding young people to every conceivable kind of opportunity, help and advice — and described by the Prime Minister as 'path-breaking' for the way it uses technology to help communities. YouthNet UK's online advice and information services are used by approximately 750,000 young people each month.

Closely involved with hospices for many years, Martyn is a Vice-President of the movement's three main national hospice charities. He has written the definitive layman's guide to the Hospice movement in Britain, and speaks regularly at Hospice fund-raising events around the country. His other charitable roles include the Presidency of United Response, providing homes in the community for people with learning disabilities.

### **About Teliris:**

Founded in 2001, Teliris develops, implements and manages the world's most widely deployed telepresence systems, realistically replicating the human dynamics of a live meeting. Teliris has deployments in 19 countries with the largest installed base of Fortune 500 companies, including Pearson plc, GlaxoSmithKline and Royal Bank of Scotland, among others. Headquartered in New York and London, the company combines a fully managed service with end-to-end integration that offers businesses a 24/7 multipoint capability with a 99%+ availability guarantee, ensuring they can respond and collaborate as needed. In 2007, Fidelity Ventures and Columbia Capital took a major equity stake in Teliris. For further information regarding Teliris, visit the company's web site at [www.teliris.com](http://www.teliris.com) or email Teliris at [info@teliris.com](mailto:info@teliris.com).