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case study

IBM Takes Webcasting to the Desktop

By Mark Fritz

Someday soon, webcasting will be as common a form of office communication as email or the telephone, says Greg Pulier, CEO of Interactive Video Technologies (IVT). And he's hoping IVT Studio, his company's new product, will jumpstart the trend and set the pace. He sees IVT Studio as an egalitarian tool that will bring on-demand webcasting to the masses or, as the 1960s hippies used to say, "give the power to the people, man."

"There's a very interesting change going on in the corporate world," says Pulier. "In the past, the creation of video-based presentations (for the purposes of webcasting-type business uses) has been the realm of media departments or crews of production teams. Anyone who wanted a video presentation had to schedule some time to get into the studio; they'd have to take on a big project or outsource it," says Pulier. "Now, our product is changing that. It is putting that power into the hands of everybody. Literally anyone who can use PowerPoint can now create a very professional video-based presentation that is put up in all the right formats, all the right bandwidth parameters. It's put up in a way that is hosted properly. And that person is able to check their statistics—who came, who registered, how they answered the polls and questions. All those things that are normally handled by webcasting experts and production people, we are putting into the hands of everybody. So it is becoming an enterprise application that is changing the culture of how people communicate."

Of course, Pulier is understandably a bit prejudiced toward his product, but his assertion that there is a trend afoot seems inarguable. Among those also noticing a trend emerging is Ira Weinstein, senior analyst and partner at Wainhouse Research. Weinstein says that the trend he sees is "not a trend away from studios so much as it is a trend to add the desktop."

"There is a place for polished information," he says. "There's a place for studio content. There's a reason why television studios have fancy lighting and great cameras, great mics. Presentation is important there. However, there's also a big value to immediacy, and solutions like IVT's help with immediacy because they allow you to



Joe Kahan has spearheaded IBM's efforts to bring webcasting production capabilities to more and more people throughout the organization.

capture the content where the content is, whereas the studios force you to go to the capture system."

Weinstein offers as an example a CEO who has an important message he wants to get out to his team. "You could book time in the studio, do all the camera work, makeup, titles, editing, and so forth. And that takes days. Or you could sit at your computer, click this little app, click on the 'Record Now' button, talk for five minutes, click on the 'Push It Out to My Gang' button, and bang—ten minutes after you recorded it, it's out there. That's the trend. There is a place for sacrificing polish in favor of immediacy."

And IVT Studio isn't the only product demonstrating this new trend. "There are a lot of products that are similar to IVT Studio that allow you to do content creation from your desk," says Weinstein. "But the question is how many different features and functions do you have, and how easy is it to do, and how easy is it to publish content. The IVT premise is that the marketplace is stepping away from studios and stepping to people, stepping more to desktops. We're becoming more opportunistic with capture. And that is the important thing about IVT. They focus on capturing

from the desk. There are others in this market, but this is their forte."

IBM Kicks Webcasting Up a Notch

While Weinstein has been analyzing the potential trend and Pulier has been trying to spearhead it, IBM's Joe Kahan has been testing its viability. Is there really a trend here and where might it lead his company? Kahan is program manager of emerging technologies in the CIO's office at IBM. About a year ago, he launched a pilot project to study how IVT Studio might impact IBM internal communications.

Webcasting is not something new at IBM, Kahan points out; the company has been doing it for a decade. They even brought down their satellite TV system a few years ago, says Kahan, as webcasting took off and it became clear that streaming video could be delivered with the necessary quality and reliability. And so Kahan was looking for something new, something that would take IBM's webcasting/video streaming communications "up a notch." And so Kahan and IBM agreed to help IVT with a pilot program to test and tweak their new Studio tool.

"After observation over the last 10 years, we noticed that the problem we were having promoting webcasting internally had to do with how much material our production teams could create," says Kahan. "Also, it had a lot to do with whether our infrastructure could support this format versus that format, if the desktop could provide certain players, and so forth. The executives wanted to use webcasting, but we had to pull in production teams in order to make that happen.

"So we went back to grass roots and said, in order to take this up a notch, what does our next system need to look like? And we knew the system needed to be some sort of self-service, because we were dependent on the size of our production teams, dependent on the location of those production facilities, dependent on the overall cost of all that equipment and manpower," Kahan says. "So we started building the system to try to lower those costs and to enhance something that we already knew was a good technology [webcasting]. And we knew the empowerment needed to go back to individuals."

The six-month pilot program involved about 100 content creators. "I didn't want it to get too large, because I wanted to make sure that various areas of the business were using it, and so we could collect really good information to see if this was something we should invest in," says Kahan. The "back-end" of the IBM system, according to Kahan, featured 5,000–6,000 registered users (or you could call them content consumers).

"The folks that were selected to start producing content for the pilot ranged from senior executives (VPs, GMs) all

the way down to architects," says Kahan. "They were selected for their various areas of communications within the company. We were looking at how the system would aid us in our daily activities to communicate across the board, not just across one department or one division. In fact, since we are a global company, we have folks all over the globe who are building content and posting that content for global usage."

Surprising Results

At the beginning of the pilot, Kahan conducted a survey asking his 5,000–6,000 users a few questions, including their purposes for using webcasting. This resulted in four main categories: general information flow, training, support, and effective meetings. At the end of the pilot, he conducted the survey again. Among the changes that most surprised Kahan was the number of people who were using IVT Studio to improve their meetings.

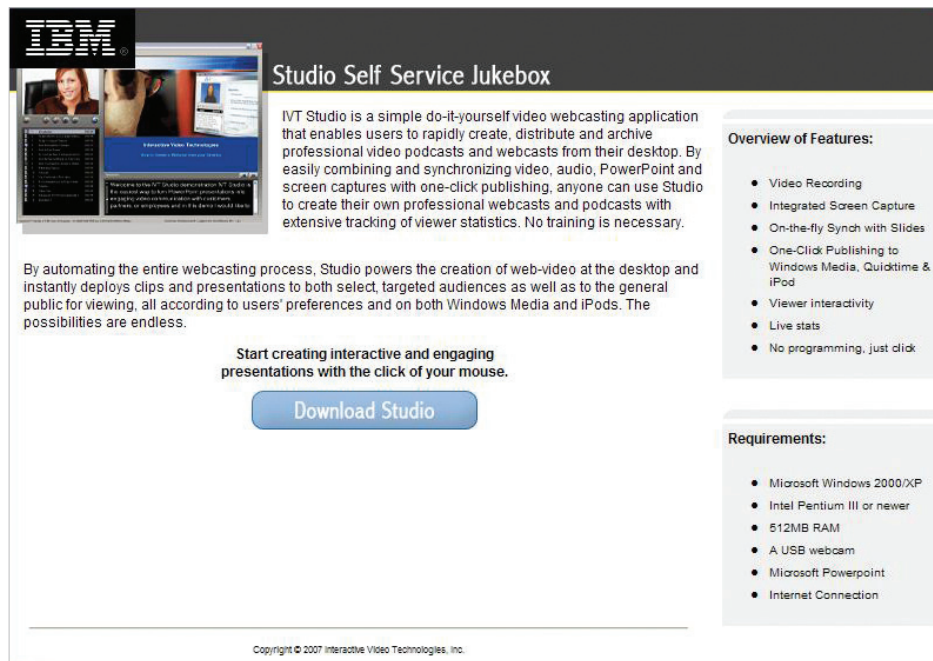
He found that large numbers of IBMers were creating and distributing on-demand pre-meeting presentations that contained preliminary information related to upcoming meetings. This information helped all participants to be better prepared for the live face-to-face meetings when they arrived. And consequently, the meetings were a lot smoother and, perhaps more importantly, faster. Nobody likes being stuck for hours at a time in a meeting room, and IVT Studio helped to streamline IBM meetings, according to Kahan.

This surprised Kahan, because he expected training to be the primary category of IVT Studio usage. Indeed, the initial survey had revealed that 31% of users expected to use the tool for that purpose. But at the end of the pilot, those two categories (training and effective meetings) had flip-flopped: Training usage went down to about 25%, while effective meetings usage shot up to an amazing 35%, making it the highest usage category.

Kahan was also a bit surprised by how few support personnel were using the system to create user support presentations—only 15% at the end of the pilot. He talked with his support people and they said they'd use the tool more if it offered screen capture or application capture capabilities. Kahan raised the subject with IVT and IVT built capture into the tool. Kahan reports that today, six months after the completion of the pilot, many more IBM support staffers are using IVT Studio due to the capture enhancement.

Another surprise to Kahan was how quickly "C-level executives" took to the tool. One such satisfied customer: IBM's CIO, Brian Truskowski, who, according to Pulier, "fell in love" with Studio. "The CIO there at IBM sat down and created a presentation, and he came back the next day and checked his stats and saw that 1,500 people had watched

*The starting point:
Here's what IBM
employees and other
corporate IVT Studio
users see the first
time they go to work
with the software.*



Studio Self Service Jukebox

IVT Studio is a simple do-it-yourself video webcasting application that enables users to rapidly create, distribute and archive professional video podcasts and webcasts from their desktop. By easily combining and synchronizing video, audio, PowerPoint and screen captures with one-click publishing, anyone can use Studio to create their own professional webcasts and podcasts with extensive tracking of viewer statistics. No training is necessary.

By automating the entire webcasting process, Studio powers the creation of web-video at the desktop and instantly deploys clips and presentations to both select, targeted audiences as well as to the general public for viewing, all according to users' preferences and on both Windows Media and iPods. The possibilities are endless.

Start creating interactive and engaging presentations with the click of your mouse.

[Download Studio](#)

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Overview of Features:

- Video Recording
- Integrated Screen Capture
- On-the-fly Sync with Slides
- One-Click Publishing to Windows Media, Quicktime & iPod
- Viewer interactivity
- Live stats
- No programming, just click

Requirements:

- Microsoft Windows 2000/XP
- Intel Pentium III or newer
- 512MB RAM
- A USB webcam
- Microsoft Powerpoint
- Internet Connection

his presentation," says Pulier. "He was very excited. He had a sort of 'a-ha' moment, when he realized, 'Wow, I can reach out to thousands of people very rapidly and see who watched and how long they watched and what questions they asked. I didn't have to get everyone's schedule coordinated and I could get statistics and reporting.'"

While Kahan isn't willing to say that his CIO fell head over heels for IVT Studio, "he definitely got infatuated," he concedes. "Brian enjoyed it enough that he used it regularly," says Kahan about his CIO. "The first set of presentations he did was in an auditorium situation, but then he started to get a lot more relaxed and said, 'Hey, I don't have to do it in that environment.' Then he started posting them out of his office in more of an informal scenario. And the feedback seemed to indicate that the audience really appreciated that. It made them feel like it was more like a one-to-one situation, like he was speaking directly to them."

Another surprising thing about IVT-powered webcasts was that the Studio tool increased attendance at live webcasts. "In the past, for big live meetings where there was an invitation, typically turnout was 10 to 15%," says Kahan, "so if a 1,000 people were invited and 150 showed up, that was considered a good webcast." Kahan was pleasantly surprised that IVT Studio boosted attendance to "well above 30%, doubling the original invite type of thing." And then there is, of course, the added advantage that many more people could access the stored presentation on demand after the fact.

Of course, while IVT Studio can be used for live webcasts, it is the tool's video-on-demand capability that is most important, says Wainhouse Research's Weinstein. "VOD is the time shifter and geographical boundary breaker," he says. "When we do webcasts, we see an initial surge of viewing for the live event, and then

usage trickles up over time for the VOD. But another advantage of VOD is that it becomes a bit viral. Someone looks at it and forwards a link to someone else. And now you're communicating as a team at everyone's convenience. That's good stuff."

Easy Come, Easy Go

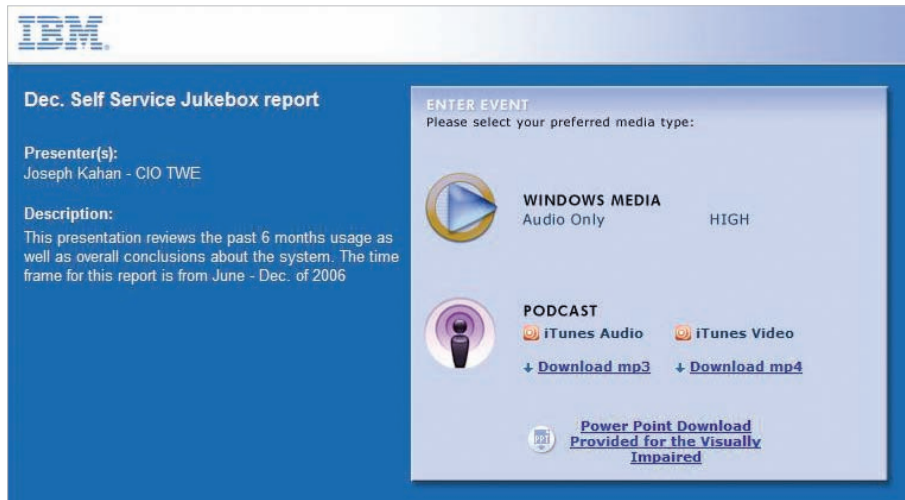
Kahan believes that one of the most attractive aspects of IVT Studio is its simplicity and ease of use. "The primary reason we wanted to use the Studio product was mainly to empower the average user to create multimedia communications without having any professional knowledge of how to do that. The biggest asset of the system is that anybody can sit down and use it. It doesn't take up time for training. It didn't take a lot of resources to get it up and running. That has huge value to me," says Kahan.

"It doesn't take a production team to build the content. A 5- to 10-minute presentation takes an individual about 30 minutes. If you forget, you can do it fast at the last minute. You can do it in the morning and have it out the same morning." Kahan points out that if the tool shaves 30 minutes off of a meeting attended by 20 people, that's 10 man-hours saved. That's ROI, he says.

"We put out the system with no training," says Kahan. "It came with no training material whatsoever. We just said to users: 'Start using it. If you have any problems, here's some reference material.' And not one person, not one, actually needed to reference the reference content. People adapted to the interface quickly. Even senior-level executives, who typically like to have their hands held, were able to produce their content and do everything they needed to do in nothing flat."

"Rich media is important because it attracts eyeballs," says Weinstein. "With tools like IVT Studio we are taking this eyeball-attracting content and making it easier to create

IVT Studio lets users at IBM generate content in Windows Media and iTunes audio and video formats, and makes the content available on-demand after the live event.



and more cost-effective to create. This is a good trend. But it is evolutionary. What will start to be revolutionary is when we are able to combine all this content with some of the advanced management and searching systems that are out there. Content is only valuable if I can find it when I need it."

Indeed, the other key attraction of IVT Studio is its back end, according to CEO Pulier. "The critical thing here is central management," he says. "Without central management, corporations will not deploy an application like this. Central management provides the ability to determine where certain groups of people can put content, what type of content they can create, what templates they can use." Another important part of central management is the ability to keep track of statistics. Pulier points to banks, for example, whose stringent regulations require them to track everything very precisely in a central way. "And that's what our system does," he says. "Those competitors of ours who have just a tool without a back end are really not competitors."

Real ROI

Along with saving money by cutting man-hours wasted in ineffective meetings and saving money by lowering production costs (studios, crews, equipment, etc.), one of the other major ways in which IVT Studio delivered ROI to IBM was by reducing staff travel, says Kahan.

One of the questions asked of IBM staffers on the pre-pilot survey was whether they expected to use webcasting in lieu of travel. About 40% of the IBM employees in the test group answered in the affirmative. But six months later, the number of people using webcasting to replace travel had increased to 50% (about 170,000 people).

Another nice thing about IVT Studio is that it doesn't cost much. "The system was inexpensive enough for us to recover our costs within one year," says Kahan. And once it is in place, the more it is used, the greater the ROI. "As more people get on the system, the price per person per webcast goes down," says Kahan. Let's say, for example, that today a video webcast to 100 people costs between \$2,000 and \$5,000. When you increase the number of users to 200, the

cost per user is halved, and if the audience was 1,000, the cost per user would be between \$2 and \$5. And imagine if 10,000 people see the webcast.

The Future of Webcasting at IBM

After completion of the pilot project a few months ago, IBM decided to go ahead and purchase IVT Studio. Kahan is currently implementing a full-fledged "production" version of the system that will open up webcasting to many more IBMers. "Our plan before the end of the year is to multiply up to several hundred or even thousand content creators," says Kahan, "and the back end could eventually get as large as IBM itself."

He says that IBM is looking to enhance the product—doing things like making it more accessible to those who are hearing or sight impaired, for example. "And we want a lot more empowerment on the management of the content itself, empowering the user not just on the front end, but [in terms of] how to manage the back end content and do data mining. It's pretty exciting what we're planning."

Asked to predict which of the four usage categories will be the highest in percentage in the immediate future, Kahan says he doesn't know. "I wouldn't be surprised if a year from now we see another completely unexpected new usage category emerge. When you allow people to use communications systems open-endedly like this, sometimes you are surprised and delighted by the outcome."

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