Microsoft Lync Conference 2014

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Last week WR attended the 2014 Microsoft Lync Conference and presented, as well as heard about Microsoft’s and its partners’ announcements, visited a busy show floor, and in general rubbed elbows with a vast number of members of the Lync / Skype ecosystem. So first the news, then what we heard from others, and our quick take. We’ll be publishing some upcoming profiles and notes and a much more extended analysis of the Lync Conference in our premium subscription services.

First and foremost, he’s baaaack…., Gurdeep Singh Pall, Microsoft took the stage after a two-year leave of absence from the collaboration group (focusing on artificial intelligence for Microsoft) and lightly touched on his new role as Corporate Vice President for Skype and Lync. Many will recall that as GM he helped develop the strategy that led to the formation of the Real-Time Collaboration division and the acquisition of PlaceWare. Derek Burney, Corporate VP for Microsoft Lync & Skype Strategic Relations and Solutions within Microsoft’s Applications and Services group, conducted most of the keynote demo, which included a great riff on the band Kiss bobble heads connected via endpoints, various demos of Lync to Skype video, a swipe at traditional video conferencing room systems (complete with a call to a cobweb-encrusted TANDBERG system) — well, you get the picture. There was a fair amount of jockeying taking place against the “vendor who shall not be named” — namely, Cisco.

Specific announcements to note: 1) Lync-to-Skype video (last year Burney demoed audio and IM — this year video is the next frontier in terms of bringing these two separate animals together); 2) new Lync support for Android tablets, which will be available summer 2014; 3) Lync server video interop with legacy “TANDBERG” units; and 4) browser extensibility with integrated Lync voice and video content through a jLync API. All of these are

Microsoft’s Derek Burney Onstage at the Lync Conference Keynote
promised to be in customers’ hands by the end of 2014. Also announced: the ability to make and receive PSTN audio calls from Lync Online and enhancements to large meetings in Lync Online.

Microsoft has a vibrant ecosystem, and a number of vendors and service providers showed a variety of peripherals like handsets and headsets, as well as Lync Room Systems, contact center solutions, and even persistent IM integrated with Lync. Here are a few folks we visited with or otherwise heard from:

- Emulating POTS- to-cellular call handoff first pioneered by the cellular industry a few years ago, Plantronics demonstrated new applications that work with Microsoft Lync and Plantronics’ sensor-enabled wearable devices to help improve productivity for users, particularly when they are on the go. Plantronics specifically demoed how a connected worker can use his / her headset to seamlessly transfer an active Lync call from his computer to his mobile phone as he moves away from his desk. In addition, Plantronics showcased how its Smart Presence application can provide more accurate presence information in Microsoft Lync when a user is on a mobile or desk phone. Trust us, there was more from Plantronics, including contact center applications developed by third-party partners like Zylinx and Clarity Connect.

- Lync Room System vendors Crestron, SMART Technologies, and Polycom (the latter showing off its LRS system with a bundled CX5500 Unified Conference Station) revealed varying degrees of focus on driving their products into conference rooms by playing in the Lync sandbox. SMART announced an enhanced SMART Room System (SRS), adding interactive sharing that enables touch and inking into any software application; integration with SMART Meeting Pro PE (Personal Edition) software; and the introduction of “un-bound workspace,” as well as new display sizes and combinations to bring collaboration to more work spaces. Crestron showed its Crestron RL — pushing its ability to integrate into a business’s infrastructure via room controllers, etc., etc., No announcements from Polycom — its LRS was only announced a few months ago — but we expect to hear more from some of this crowd at next month’s Enterprise Connect.

- We visited with MindLink, a purist’s example of how the Lync ecosystem is enlarging opportunities for vendors large and small. MindLink is a UK-based startup offering a purpose-built enterprise persistent chat that integrates with Lync. Why not use Lync alone for persistent chat? MindLink would argue that its chat adds to Lync’s persistent chat by adding mobile device management (MDM) support, advanced alerts, advanced integration, better social media “secret sauce,” better compliance features, and moderation features. Is there a future for this kind of small fry? We dunno, but financial services firms already on the Lync adoption curve are eating it up.

- Logitech showed off its Lync-certified ConferenceCam CC3000e, recently announced to fanfare for its sub $1K price point and 1080p video, as well as its ability to off board onto the camera H.264 encoding.

- Finally, SpectraLink showed off a brand new Android-based Wi-Fi handset that is in the process of Lync-qualification.

What WR thinks: The Lync Conference brought together a fan base genuinely pleased with progress to date, happy OR skeptical vendors hitching their wagons to Microsoft’s short and long tail, and others there to learn and figure out how to leverage UC. Oh yes — it’s no longer Unified Communications. Microsoft has rebranded the entire category Universal Communications, in light of the familiar experience of Lync and Skype, aspects of content and application intelligence built into its entire suite of products (from Xbox One to Office, Bing, SharePoint, etc…), mobility and cross-device story, video interoperability story, and global reach through the cloud. Well, we all needed another term.
Seriously, a sold-out conference of almost 2,000 attendees, up from 800 in 2013, shows Microsoft’s ability to build buzz. Another way to look at it, however, is that Microsoft is becoming the force in UC that Cisco was a few years ago. The titans continue to clash, the race is on! We give Microsoft credit for driving a rich, complex ecosystem that is helping push UC further into the enterprise. Cisco will have its turn again, no doubt.

Specific to Microsoft Lync Room Systems, Anton Kratz, Microsoft’s Principal Program Manager, Lync Product Group, gave a detailed talk on progress to date for the LRS spec and partner programs. An October update added support for 27 languages and Communications and Video Accessibility Act (CVAA) compliance. In November 2013 Perceptive Pixel (purchased by Microsoft in 2012) touch screen options were added. And this month the company has added licensing and deployment updates and a System Center Operations Manager (SCOM). Kratz spent a good bit of time differentiating the Lync Room System (and its channel partners) from — ok he named it, Cisco-comparable systems, both in terms of price points and functionality. Will there be a non-touch-enabled version of a Lync Room System? At this point that’s not the plan – this is a Lync Room System, after all, and the goal is to get people to use this stuff the way they are meant to use Windows 8.1.

What do we really think? As the three of us tossed around our respective takes on the event, we came away impressed by a few things, concerned about a few significant “omissions.”

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Kaltura Snags $47 Million Investment Round

Steve Vonder Haar, svonder@wainhouse.com

Content management / streaming wunderkind Kaltura has secured a $47 million round of venture financing that the company says it will use to accelerate product development and drive further international expansion. The financing round, led by SAP Ventures, Nokia Growth Partners, Commonfund Capital, and Gera Ventures, pushes cumulative venture investment in the seven-year-old online video platform company to a reported $115 million. Existing Kaltura investors 406 Ventures, Nexus Venture Partners, Intel Capital, Mitsui & Co. Global Investment, Inc., and Silicon Valley Bank also participated in the latest financing round. The company said targets for international expansion include Brazil, Mexico, China, Japan, Australia, Singapore, and Korea.

What Steve thinks: Great funding comes with great responsibilities. As such, this latest venture round is both a blessing and a curse for Kaltura. This investment round catapults the company into the golden tier of venture-financed streaming start-ups, alongside the likes of high-profile SaaS video solution provider Brightcove. Such a status usually translates into accelerated growth and enhanced market momentum. It also heaps on a pile of expectations that can be difficult to meet. While successful, for instance, Brightcove has yet to deliver the results implied by the more than $100 million in financing it pulled in prior to its 2012 IPO.

Kaltura's revenues currently are split relatively evenly between the enterprise, education and media markets. In our view, however, the corporate world is the segment where Kaltura has the greatest opportunity to score the type of market growth that would help justify investors’ faith in its prospects. While the company does have some name-plate business sector customers, such as Bank of America, Oracle, Intel, SAP and Target, Kaltura's solution traditionally has been associated with smaller scale platform deployments optimized for distributing video to external audiences.

Several Kaltura upgrades on the product roadmap for 2014 demonstrate Kaltura's greater interest in flexing its muscles for gaining big-revenue on corporate networks. The company is now working with partner Wowza to develop an “enterprise CDN” solution that helps manage...
the flow of Kaltura platform video traffic behind the firewall. Also in the works is an upgrade that enables the Kaltura platform to support the distribution of live webcasts — presentations distributed in real-time that blend video with PowerPoint slides, Q&A windows and other on-screen data. Historically, the Kaltura platform has supported the real-time streaming of live video on its own but not full-fledged webcasts.

Kaltura’s hiring last year of Qumu veteran Michael Ping to head up the company’s enterprise sales team is another indicator of its ambitions in the corporate market. Ping had worked at rival Qumu for seven years, specializing in large enterprise deals for most of that time. If Ping and his expanding enterprise sales team at Kaltura score some elephant-sized deals for streaming deployments behind corporate firewalls, it could go a long way in helping investors cash in on their Kaltura gambit.

Team Polycom Topline
Andrew W. Davis, andrewwd@wainhouse.com

Ira Weinstein and I attended TEAM Polycom, the company’s annual gathering of its channel partners, mid-February. Together with over 300 reseller companies and strategic partners we got to mingle with Polycom’s senior executive team, compare notes on what’s working and what’s not, and share a glass of gluten-free beer and other Canadian delicacies. The 2½ day event created more newsworthy items than can fit in this article; nevertheless here are the highlights of what Andrew saw, heard, and thinks:

1. **CEO Peter Leav** is the real deal. It may be impolite to single out a single person when the company has thousands of employees and seemingly dozens of vice presidents, but the CEO is the CEO. Peter is not just a change from his year-ago predecessor, he comes off as humble, genuine, thoughtful, intelligent, and dedicated. These positive traits have already started to impact the troops. Morale is improving, both inside the company and within the channels. If you don’t think top management can make a difference, Polycom will be a case study on how wrong you can be.

2. Polycom is planning some aggressive, ambitious, and far-flung marketing campaigns. And Polycom is staking out new ground as a collaboration solutions company. Given what we saw in Vancouver, Polycom’s collaboration focus is real and deliverable. This re-positioning is long overdue. Despite its earlier claims, Polycom is not a UC company; it does not make UC solutions, rather it makes UC solutions better. And of course 2012’s positioning statement that Polycom was a software company only served to confuse matters further. Apple once said “think different” — not a phrase any high school English teacher could endorse. For Polycom, it’s “think collaboration.”

3. Polycom seems to be successfully walking the fine line of developing a services portfolio that doesn’t have the channels screaming about revenue encroachment and customer poaching. Moving into hosted, managed, and maintenance-type services is a necessity for Polycom and the company is doing so with both direct (managed) and indirect (hosted) fashion. The resellers we spoke to seem to accept this development and are making plans to maximize their own opportunities around Polycom services. The past few years have seen over-the-top disintermediators like Videxio and Blue Jeans Network create VaaS disruption; now Polycom (and soon others) are trying to disintermediate the disintermediators (pardon my English). A key to success here will be for the Polycom-based services, whether wholesaled, white labeled, or sold direct,
to be competitive with those offered by the VaaS specialists.

4. While Microsoft is clearly Polycom’s king-of-the-hill strategic partner, and while the integration of Polycom’s voice and video products into the Microsoft architecture is probably deeper and broader than anyone else’s, Polycom maintains a working relationship with Genband, BroadSoft, IBM, Unify, and others in the UC arena in order to be their video and voice partner of choice. This will clearly pay off as UC moves into SMB, hosted deployments, and vertical markets.

5. On the product front, let me point out three things to watch based on the Vancouver tea leaves: a) Video content management will be a major part of Polycom’s product expansion into collaboration. The company will zip up its portfolio with some interesting interoperability stories and intelligent indexing, but I border on violating my NDA. b) Customers will have a choice of purchasing Polycom infrastructure solutions as hardware-based, software-based, and virtualized products as well as by pure OpEx models. Some of these will be sold through channel partners, some through service providers. RealPresence One, announced at the event and offering a combo of platform, software endpoints, and services, is the first step in this direction, but the major focus here is moving towards a business model that is easy to understand, easy to sell, and easy to buy. We also saw some innovative demos of software management systems that take advantage of the possibilities offered by a virtual-server-based deployment. c) VaaS is definitely on Polycom’s radar screen and will be available in several different go-to-market models.

Bottom line: Despite all the negative winds coming out of Wall Street about video conferencing being on the outs, I think Polycom is positioned to grow, and in fact, to gain market share this year. The company still has the brand and the technology to do well — as well as an enviable balance sheet. Combine these with a solid product line, good people, and a real focus on the collaboration market, things could get very exciting. This is not to deny the obvious however. Where the rubber meets the road you have to find professional sales, sales management, and support people who can help customers solve their business challenges.

News in Brief

Audio Conferencing

- Voxbone announced in conjunction with the Lync Conference that its inbound-only DID SIP trunking service is qualified for Microsoft Lync 2013. Enterprises and hosted service providers can now leverage Voxbone’s DIDs and toll-free services, called VoxDID and Vox800, respectively, when they use Lync 2013.

- Milan-based Messagenet S.p.A., which specializes in VoIP services, has released its Mtalk.net service. The hook? Mtalk.net provides registered users with a free and permanent personal webpage address, which can then be clicked on by contacts who want to initiate a voice call or text message. Smartphone users do not need to register, but for now they must download an app to access the voice service. Mtalk.net is based on a freemium business model and the basic service is free. Additional Mtalk.net personal links, personalized services and the option of multiple concurrent calls will be available as pay services. The company expects / hopes / prays that as mobile devices begin to support the new WebRTC standards, the need for the custom app will be eliminated.

Video Conferencing

- Down under, Telstra has announced availability of a new Blue Jeans Network-sourced, cloud-based video conferencing and collaboration service. Customers choosing Blue Jeans Network with Telstra will gain the benefits of a local point of presence in Australia. See our 1:1 later this issue with Blue Jeans Network for more on its strategy for global domination.
• **FuzeBox** announced the ability to schedule Fuze meetings directly in Google Calendar via a Chrome extension. This capability complements its existing Outlook calendar integration.

• Russian developer **TrueConf** showcased some new capabilities at the ISE show in Amsterdam a few weeks ago, including 4K video conferencing. Look for TrueConf to get a bit more aggressive in global markets outside of its traditional eastern European coverage areas.

**Distance Education and e-Learning**

• Online learning platform provider **2U Inc.** filed last week with U.S. financial regulators to raise as much as $100 million in an IPO common stock. The Maryland-based 2U provides cloud-based online learning platforms that include immersive course content, live classes, and social engagement. It seems to be a sort of “anti-MOOC” meant to hone in on the weaknesses of over-scaled programs.

**Unified Communications**

• **Avaya** reported results for its first fiscal quarter of 2014, ending December 31, 2013, showing $1.158 billion in revenues for the quarter. On a year over year basis revenue was down 6.6% compared to Q1 FY 2013. Non-GAAP operating income was $196 million, compared to non-GAAP operating income of $193 million for Q1 FY 2013. This quarter typically is seasonally down, but the company is now sitting on cash and cash equivalents of $300 million and remains optimistic that, as President and CEO Kevin Kennedy stated, “We delivered year-over-year profitability improvements and increased cash while advancing our business model.” The company also completed the sale of its facility in Westminster, Colorado subsequent to the end of this quarter for $58 million and also announced last week that it plans to sell its Government Solutions division’s IT Professional Services consulting group to **Camber Corporation** for $100 million. (Avaya will retain its product sales and services teams in Federal, state, and municipal governments.) Finally, our nod to the Official Supplier of Network Equipment for the Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games. # 1 accomplishment: we hear everything worked. And we know that Olympic rings were not networked devices.

• **Alcatel-Lucent** introduced a few weeks ago new cloud-based enterprise communications solutions for SMBs and an expansion of services for mid-to-large enterprises. The company’s new **OpenTouch Office**
Streaming and Web Casting

- This week Qumu reported its financial results for the fourth quarter ended December 31, 2013. Software-contracted commitments for the quarter set a new record and backlog grew 56% from September 30, 2013. Total revenues for the fourth quarter of 2013 were $20.7 million, virtually flat compared with revenues in the fourth quarter of 2012. Disc publishing revenues grew slightly over the prior year period while Qumu software revenues declined slightly compared with the prior year’s fourth quarter. Cash and marketable securities at December 31, 2013 totaled $51.0 million.

People & Places

Know someone in the industry who changed jobs? Jump into a new role yourself as vendor, end user, or channel partner? Email us at wrb@wainhouse.com to share the good news.

- Carousel Industries, Bill Thompson, VP of Video Services
- ClearOne, David Moss, Vice President of Sales, Video Collaboration Products & Services
- LifeSize, Craig Malloy, CEO; Trey Tramonte, President
- Vidyo, Eran Westman, Chief Revenue Officer

Cloud (OTOC) solution is a unified communications-as-a-service (UCaaS) offer for SMBs. OTOC applies Alcatel-Lucent’s OmniPCX Office RCE technology foundation. The company states that more than 17 million users globally take advantage of OmniPCX Office — which delivers a pre-configured server for business telephony, customer service, and enhanced business operations. OTOC will enable existing SMB customers (and value-added distributors who work with SMB and larger customers) to shift their services to the cloud. Avita in Ireland and Synelyans in France have been named as launch channel partners for the first deliveries of OTOC in their respective countries. Alcatel-Lucent also will update its OpenTouch Enterprise Cloud (OTEC) solution, offering a new CPE-2-Cloud transformation program which gives channel partners more opportunities to address customers seeking full, hybrid or overlay cloud options. One more new business feature is OTEC’s Voice Inbound Contact Center as a Service (CCaaS), which offers enterprises of any size a virtual customer service center for emergency hotlines, customer help desks or technical support.

- Onstream Media Corporation reported revenues for fiscal 2013 of approximately $17.2 million as compared to approximately $18.2 million for fiscal 2012. Revenues for the fourth quarter of fiscal 2013 were approximately $4.1 million as compared to approximately $4.2 million for the comparable quarter of fiscal 2012. These decreases were the result of an unexpected reduction in webcasting revenues from both government and commercial clients, and in the case of the full year comparison, also resulted from the loss of a single customer receiving streaming services.

- The Unified Communications Interoperability Forum — UCI Forum (along with a number of WR analysts) will be at Enterprise Connect March 17-20 in Orlando. (The UCI Forum is a non-profit alliance of vendors committed to assuring a quality UC experience.) An open reception is taking place Monday, March 17 from 6:30 – 7:45 p.m. to discuss the formation of a Unified Communications Enterprise User / Interest Group. Those interested in attending should register here. Also at EC, UCI Forum will be presenting a UC and Software-Defined Networking (SDN) session on Wednesday, March 19 at 2:30-3:15 p.m. with Pascal Menezes, Chair of the UCI Forum UC SDN Task Group and Principal Program Manager for Skype / Lync Partner Engineering with Microsoft. Details here.
New WR White Paper on Business Webcasting and Mobility

Business online video is breaking free of the desktop. While less than one in five organizations have implemented technologies that enable them to distribute online video to tablet devices, 25% of all organizations represented in a recent WR end user survey say they plan to invest in this capability in 2014.

These and other survey results are spotlighted in a new report, called *Video Goes Mobile: Tablets, Smartphones and Emerging Trends in Business Webcasting*. Sponsored by TalkPoint, download your copy here. Earlier this month WR Senior Analyst Steve Vonder Haar and TalkPoint CEO Nick Balletta discussed mobile streaming along with a host of other issues shaping the adoption of streaming technologies in the enterprise. Called “Online Video and the New Age of Business Communications,” catch a free on-demand replay here.

Upcoming Webinar: Personal Collaboration in the Conference Room

As IT teams plan for conference room solutions that will play well with their UC platforms and roadmaps, providing users with a standard tool set that accommodates the majority of their collaboration needs, regardless of their device or location, will improve productivity, reduce IT support needs, and ultimately increase user adoption.

In this 45-minute webinar sponsored by Logitech, Senior Analyst Bill Haskins of Wainhouse Research will provide research-based recommendations and insights, including:

- A framework for defining conference room integration requirements
- Why it’s smart to deploy equipment across all room types
- How user preferences for ease of use, accessibility, and availability are driving UC requirements
- Why IT roadmaps should seek a consistent collaboration experience across mobile devices, personal workspaces, and conference rooms

Join Bill and your peers on Tuesday, March 11, 2014 at 11 a.m. PT, 2 p.m. ET.

Have friends? Want to make more friends? Forward this issue of the WR Bulletin and encourage them to read it and subscribe. Anyone can sign up for a free subscription at www.wainhouse.com/mail.
WR: It’s been awhile since we last spoke. In the interim, it seems like everyone in the industry has you in their gun sights. So, let’s start with “What’s Blue Jeans up to these days” and then get into some of the tough ones.

KR: We’ve been continuing on our mission to enable high-quality, face-to-face interactions through the cloud. We are capitalizing on a market transition from expensive, on-premise hardware/software video conferencing products to cloud-based services, mostly at the expense of industry incumbents.

WR: OK, motherhood and apple pie. How is it going?

KR: We’ve seen approximately 500% growth in the past year, with 50% growth in monthly usage and 100% growth in monthly subscribers in just the last month. The service has now been used in over 12,000 cities, in over 200 countries and territories, on all seven continents—yes, including Antarctica. Our customer base includes businesses of all sizes, shapes, geographies and verticals that use our service every day to host general-purpose, multiparty business meetings which may require any combination of audio, video, and content sharing.

We’re now finding many customers, who initially bought us for video collaboration, using Blue Jeans for their “converged conferencing” needs. Rather than having to decide in advance if a meeting should be an audio conference, a video conference, or a web conference—and then having a different tool, from a different vendor, with a different user account, and different use model to deal with—they love the fact that Blue Jeans offers them one service that just works for any type of meeting. Plus, Blue Jeans gives them the ability to share rich content in the meeting, from documents, to presentations, to video clips. This is an exciting transition for us.

WR: Pardon my rudeness. But much of what you say isn’t a differentiator, and in fact is pretty common today. There are dozens of “video bridge in the sky” and Virtual Meeting Room (VMR) services out there that handle mixed audio, video, and web participants and you don’t have to decide in advance how to invite people. Also, the established web conferencing vendors like Cisco WebEx, Citrix GoToMeeting, and Adobe Connect have all added high quality video. So what really is the Blue Jeans story here?

KR: Talk is cheap. It’s not about feature checklists and marketing slogans. It’s about the user experience. I think that is where we excel. Our quality, reach, and ease of use are second to none. It’s why our growth is so high and our retention rates are so strong.

Our design center has always been around the modern general-purpose multiparty business meeting and being able to recreate a face-to-face experience across distance with high quality audio and video. We recognized early on that the face (video) was the centerpiece of the modern meeting, but we also built in rich content sharing for documents, presentations and video clips to make the meeting effective. And to the delight of many of our customers, we didn’t stop there. We realized that modern workers want flexibility to control how they participate and consume the meeting content. So we built in robust layout and policy controls. The result is a more flexible product. I think that’s why we see the virality that we see within our customers and between our customers and their suppliers, partners, and customers. We didn’t set out to cannibalize WebEx or GoToMeeting per se. It just happened. Our customers decided all by themselves that Blue Jeans was a better experience for the regular meetings that they do hundreds of for every one webinar or large presentation.

WR: Blue Jeans made its name by enabling video solutions from different vendors, like Cisco, Polycom,
Microsoft and Google to “play nice” and connect to each other in the same meeting. But the real story, in my humble opinion, was your Skype connectivity and enabling Skype to talk to industry-standard SIP and H.323 room and personal systems. Recently, Microsoft closed the SkypeKit to external developers. How has this affected Blue Jeans? It looks like you’ve dropped Skype support. And is it a sign of a future market transition?

**KR:** Over the last year, we saw Skype’s usage by our customer base drop from about 45% of our endpoint mix to less than 1%. This can directly be attributed to the strong market preference for open, web browser based solutions (like WebRTC), which have now grown to over 50% of our mix in the same timeframe. Over this same period, overall commercial usage of the BKN service grew more than fivefold. Today, we handle almost one million minutes a day for our business customers.

At the end of last year, Microsoft requested that we end our use of SkypeKit. Given that Skype had become almost irrelevant to our user base, we agreed to comply. Obviously, all things being equal, we would have preferred to continue to offer customers a Skype option, but given the tiny usage it was not worth a new engineering effort to continue.

At the beginning of this year, we officially ended support for Skype endpoints. This has had almost no adverse impact on our business as we continue to see record growth. In fact, January 2014 was our best month ever, with nearly 50% growth in service usage and 100% growth in new subscribers over December 2013, and we’re already up almost 40% in February over January!

One of the most popular use cases we see around Lync is with customers that are both Microsoft and Cisco shops. We are really the only game in town right now to connect Cisco Telepresence, conference room, and desktop systems to Lync.

**WR:** Speaking of Skype and Microsoft. What’s your position with respect to Lync. Any statistics or opinions you can share with us?

**KR:** We provide a lot of value to Lync users. It is one of our faster growing endpoints right now, though we see it mostly in our enterprise customers. Simply put, Blue Jeans enables Microsoft Lync to be a more effective collaboration tool, especially for collaboration outside the company. Essentially, we help address some of the biggest challenges customers face when deploying Lync.

- Interoperability with a full range of room video conferencing systems
- Interoperability with non-Lync desktops and mobile devices
- Limited multipoint capabilities within Lync
- Limited data collaboration compatibility
- Federation complexity for any Lync user

You actually wrote a great white paper about it last year. I’d recommend it to anyone who is looking at Lync for video.

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**WR:** What trends are you seeing with mobile? Our data suggests that mobile video conferencing is like teenage sex - everybody’s talking about it but nobody’s doing it.
KR: Not so. One-third of all Blue Jeans meetings include one or more attendees participating from mobile devices and we expect that number to continue to grow as more smartphones and tablets are integrated into the workplace.

We now offer both iOS and Android solutions and have seen their popularity skyrocket since we released them. We are investing heavily in mobile development to ensure that we continue to offer the best possible meeting experience from any device.

We are also seeing more situations where people in conference rooms use room systems and complement them with their mobile devices. For instance, they might keep the video feed on the room system screen while viewing and sharing a presentation from their mobile device. We think mobile devices will dramatically shift the paradigm for conferencing and collaboration over the next few years by redefining presence, pairing, and content sharing.

WR: What role has the channel played in Blue Jeans’ growth?

KR: The channel has been crucial for us. Almost two thirds of our bookings are generated through our 100+ channel partners today. We have so many great partners who have been selling Blue Jeans as a complement to their existing services. This ranges from top notch AV / VARs like Conferencing Advisors, all the way up to major telecom providers like InterCall and Level3. More recently, we announced a new partnership with Telstra that will be key for our expansion into the Australian market.

We invested early on in our channel by building a direct sales force that could learn how to effectively sell our service. Now, they are able to share their knowledge with our channel partners. By compensating our sales people on channel deals, we have eliminated channel conflict and accelerated the rate at which our channels become productive.

WR: So, do you sell direct to end users at all? WebEx pioneered this dual approach years ago. And if you sell through channels, is it a white label service under the channel partners logo, or does it say Blue Jeans on the cover? Are you worried about brand awareness?

KR: Yes, of course. If two thirds of our business comes through our channel partners, that obviously means the other one-third is direct. We think it is important to maintain this mix because it gives us a direct sense of the pulse of the customer. It helps us be a better channel partner.

We do not white label the service because we believe that the Blue Jeans brand is a stamp of quality that actually helps our channel partners. For some of our larger partners we do some co-branding, but the Blue Jeans brand is always prominent. That’s what the customers are buying. Our channel partners are able to provide enhanced services, or bundled offerings (e.g. endpoints), or easier purchase vehicles, but the core service is always Blue Jeans.

WR: Blue Jeans is known for taking a creative approach to marketing. I like the edginess. Anything new and noteworthy you can tell us?

KR: We do try to have a little fun with our marketing. We don’t have the big budget that some of the industry incumbents have, so we like to keep things interesting. From fake product videos like Sniff-RTC and The Roominator to edgy billboards, we like to mix it up. This month, for Valentine’s Day, we decided to put up what is, to our knowledge, the world’s first “Dear John” breakup billboard. The idea behind it was that people want a technology where they can “see other people,” which is also a very common breakup line. We believe Blue Jeans is the ideal technology to enable face-to-face conversations because we are first and foremost a video company; but we also have collaboration features, like screen sharing, that support the conversation.

(EDITORIAL NOTE: Very subtle ad! WebEx has offered HD video conferencing and interoperability with Cisco’s own Telepresence and room systems for a while — but the billboard is not materially incorrect if you consider video interop with all systems.)
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Personal & Web-Based Conferencing

IBM's Web Collaboration Solutions
Profile and analysis of IBM and its web collaboration offerings

Cisco's Web Collaboration Solutions (includes WebEx)
Profile and analysis of Cisco and its web collaboration offerings

Unified Communications

InterCall Enterprise Connectivity Conferencing (ECC) Lync Edition
An Overview of InterCall's Lync Audio Conferencing Integration

NextPlane Company Profile
Information and insight into NextPlane's B2B and cross-platform, federation service offering

Distance Education & e-Learning

Education Networks of America
Company profile providing information and insight into a data, voice, and video service provider that focuses on educational markets in the U.S.

Distance Education and e-Learning Metrics Survey 2013
Survey of 263 respondents covering usage, purchase criteria, mobility, content usage, and technologies for personalized learning

Audio Conferencing

Understanding Cisco's Push for Cloud Connected Audio (CCA)
Since 2012, Cisco WebEx has offered large enterprises an option for audio conferencing which is a hybrid between on-premises and hosted audio conferencing. Dubbed Cloud Connected Audio (CCA), the offering combines on-premises call signaling, routing, and traffic with hosted Cisco audio conferencing ports.

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Video Conferencing

Huawei Video Conferencing Company Profile
This company profile provides information, insight, and WR's opinions on the company's video conferencing products, go to market strategy, and the unique challenges it faces based on its China-based origins, the political backlash from lingering security concerns and its legacy offerings.

Zoom Cloud Meeting (version 2.5)
WR's hands-on testing of new UI and features