



INTERNET BROADCASTING GLOSSARY

The advantages of hosting a live web event are much more apparent when you better understand some of the technical terms that get thrown around in a typical conversation. Following are some of the terms you'll hear most often, along with non-technical explanations.

Applet – a small program written in Java that is designed to add features to a web browser. Applets download to a user's computer only when they are needed and do not require any intervention or action on the part of the user. Related terms: Firewall, Java

Application broadcasting – a feature of many Internet presentation systems that allow you to show a program running on your desktop to anyone watching a live web event. Application broadcasting is different from application sharing in that you can show your application, but others can not take control of it.

Application sharing – a feature that lets you not only show an audience something on your computer; but also selectively allows others to take control and use the application on your computer from their remote location.

Bandwidth – refers to how much data your computer can receive per second over a network connection. Bandwidth is similar to a speed limit. Having more bandwidth means web pages load faster; video clips can be shown at a higher quality, and other Internet services work more reliably. Related terms: Broadband, DSL, cable modem.

Broadband – an industry term used to describe a high-speed Internet connection. If your computer is hooked up to a network at the office, a cable modem, or DSL, you have a broadband Internet connection. If you connect to the Internet through a modem, you do not have a broadband connection.

Codec – software used to make audio or video programs work across the Internet. Codecs are made up of complex algorithms that figure out how to make audio and video programs small enough to be transmitted efficiently across the network. Codecs are designed to offer different levels of audio and video quality, depending on how well the audience is prepared to receive the program. Related terms: encoder, streaming media.

Encoder – audio and video signals such as radio and television broadcasts have to be converted to a digital Internet signal to be sent over the network. This conversion process is called encoding. Encoding is usually done by a specially-equipped computer that can plug into an audio or video source. It uses encoding software to convert the signal into one that is Internet-ready. Related terms: codec, streaming media.



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Firewall – a security system put in place between a company’s internal network and the public Internet. A firewall acts like a sentry. It checks everything that passes between a company’s internal network and the outside world. Firewalls are sometimes configured to block the types of services required to deliver a live web event to a person’s computer, but this can be changed without a security risk if a company desires.

Flash – a form of multimedia content that can be delivered effectively to computers with slow Internet connections. Macromedia Flash was often used during webcasts to depict animated sequences, but more often is being used to deliver the audio/video portion of the presenters. Flash requires a browser plug-in to work, but it is already distributed with many web browsers. Related term: plug-in.

Java – a programming language used to create interactive web pages. Programs written in Java are called applets - an abbreviation of the term “application” to denote that they are usually small in size. Java is unique because it does not allow a program written in Java to have direct access to a user’s computer. This makes Java applications safer for distribution over the Internet than programs written in other traditional computer languages. Java is at the core of many web conferencing systems, including Vcall Web Conferencing. Related term: applet.

Latency – describes a delay in sending data over a network. When a presenter clicks a slide to advance in a web conference, it may take slightly different amounts of time to appear on viewer’s computers. This is because small delays, or latency, occur as the “change slide” command is communicated across the Internet. Latency can also cause audio or video signals to be slightly delayed in reaching individual’s computers as well.

Multicast – is a technology that allows many people to receive an audio or video stream across the Internet from a single data feed. It is much like a “party line” (remember those?) in which multiple households shared a single telephone line and everyone could listen in on the same telephone call just by picking up the receiver. Multicast makes it possible to send an audio or video stream to a large number of people without using a large amount of network capacity. Related term: Unicast.

On-demand – is the opposite of a live web event. Most live web events are recorded and made available to play on-demand. In the academic world, on-demand is sometimes referred to as “asynchronous.”

Plug-in – a program you download and install that adds new features or capabilities to a web browser. One of the most popular plug-ins is the RealPlayer which allows you to receive audio and video programs over the Internet. Plug-ins (a term used for add-ons to the Netscape browser) are also known as ActiveX controls which are used by the Microsoft Internet Explorer browser.

QuickTime – a multimedia player from Apple Computer that is used to play audio, video, and animations received from the Internet. It competes with Macromedia Flash, RealNetworks RealPlayer and Windows Media Player.

RealPlayer – a multimedia player from RealNetworks used to play audio, video and animations received from the Internet. RealPlayer is the most widely distributed player of its kind.



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Real-time Collaboration – describes the ability for a group of people to simultaneously share and edit documents across the Internet at the same time. Real-time collaboration, found in products such as Microsoft NetMeeting, is most practical when used in small groups. It may include the ability to transmit audio and video in addition to documents.

Streaming media – describes a process used to send audio and video signals over the Internet. Before streaming media was developed, you could only receive audio or video by first downloading the entire clip. By contrast, a streamed signal, such as an audio clip, can begin to play almost as soon as you request the file. This makes it possible to send live programming over the Internet.

Shared whiteboard – a feature in many web conferencing and real-time collaboration systems that makes it possible for a group of people to draw diagrams and mark up documents at the same time.

Synchronous – an academic term for a live web event that a group of people attend at the same time.

Teleconference – a common business communication tool that allows a group of people to call into a shared phone line. A web conference can be added to a teleconference to add visual and interactive elements that are otherwise lacking.

Unicast – is the opposite of multicast. In a unicast, each person who tunes into to a streaming media event receives his or her own private connection. In a multicast, 100 people might share the same streaming signal, while in a unicast, the same event would serve 100 individual streams; one to each viewer. Despite the advantages of multicasting large events, many still use unicasting because most networks can not send multicasts. This is a major consideration for companies that are exploring the use of streaming media in their organization. Related term: multicast.

Video conference – a technology requiring special equipment that allows two or more people to send live video over a network. When more than two parties wish to connect, a video bridge is required to join all parties. Video conferencing remains an expensive and somewhat unreliable technology.

VoIP – stands for Voice over IP. This usually describes technologies that make it possible to conduct telephone calls over the Internet, rather than using traditional switched telephone circuits. VoIP can be much less expensive than a traditional phone call, especially when connecting internationally.

Webcast – is the term most widely associated with an event that is broadcast over the Internet. It is akin to receive a radio or television program through the computer. The term webcast may also be applied to a web conference although the two are distinct types of technologies.

Web conference – describes a live web-based event that usually features a presenter (or presenters) conducting a presentation for a group of people over the Internet. A web conference can feature visuals, exercises, polls, and questions received from the audience. Web conferencing technology can be used in conjunction with a teleconference, videoconference, or webcast.

Windows Media Player – a multimedia player from Microsoft that is used to play audio, video, and animations received from the Internet. It competes with RealNetworks RealPlayer and QuickTime from Apple Computer.

Zero client footprint – a web application that can run on your computer without special downloads or plug-ins. Because nothing is installed, the application is said to have no “footprint.” Vcall Web Conferencing uses Java technology which does not require any downloads. Thus, Vcall Web Conferencing is a zero client footprint product.