StarLeaf

Preserving investment in existing video equipment

How to increase longevity and usability in today's enterprise

Whitepaper

Contents

Overview

Preserving investments in existing video equipment: how to increase its longevity and usability in today's enterprise.

This paper explores ways in which businesses can continue to leverage current video endpoint systems, by removing legacy infrastructure and migrating to a video cloud, in order to achieve advances in:

Interoperability between all H.323/ SIP systems (Cisco, Polycom, Lifesize, Avaya/Radvision) and Skype for Business with:	» Direct calling » Scheduled conferencing » Bi-directional content/screen sharing
Scalability	» Unlimited devices and users » Hardware and software endpoints
Security	» Firewall traversal » Spam call protection » Encryption
Management	» One dashboard (portal) » Usage reporting » Endpoint monitoring » Directories

Understanding how we got here

Most, if not all, video equipment deployed across meeting rooms and desktops is a flavor of the H.323 standard. However, despite the video industry's adherence to H.323, calling between different manufacturers' systems can be problematic and calling other protocols can even be impossible. For this reason, organizations have typically deployed systems from a single vendor, which ensures meeting rooms and desktops all connect to each other. Furthermore, business-to-business dialing is even harder. Companies that have a need for inter company video conferencing have typically bridged the gap and invested in expensive, difficult to use, and complex infrastructure (Gateways and MCUs). Alternatively, a scheduled conferencing service or Virtual Meeting Room (VMR) is used to overcome interoperability problems.

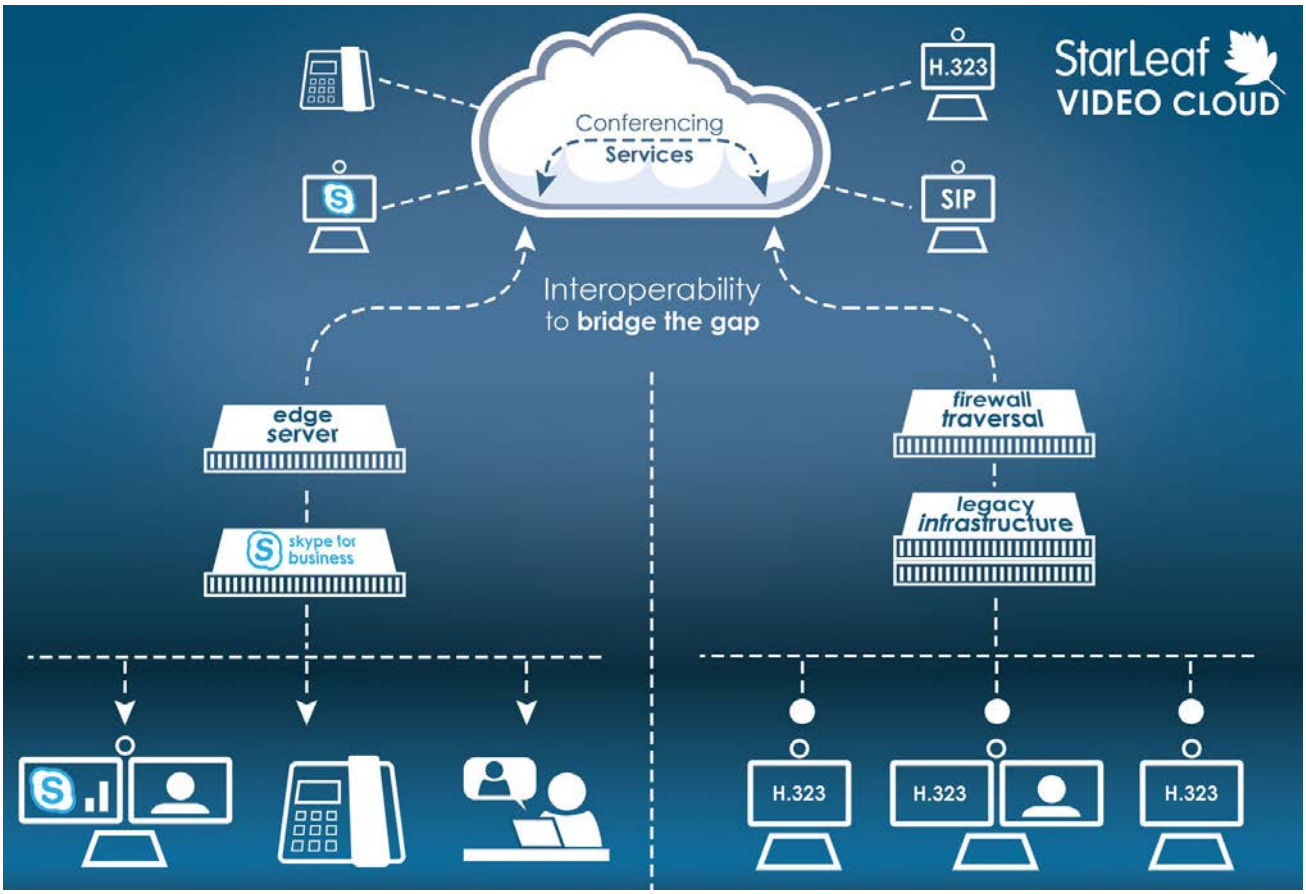
Video Conferencing as a Service (VCaaS)

While bridging, in whatever form it takes, allows for interoperability and business-to-business video meetings, challenges remain. Consequently, today many organizations face the need to reconcile where they are with where they want to be in terms of equipment, user experience, and broad adoption. To do so requires a new strategic approach to video conferencing. To gain an understanding of what the ongoing requirement is, for current systems and future use, organizations should consider:

- Current network infrastructure's ability to scale to meet user demand
- Manufacturer's support of legacy infrastructure i.e. end of life timescales
- Requirement for broad adoption of video via a software video client
- Need for business-to-business video collaboration
- Demand for internal and external connectivity with Skype for Business users
- Plans for unified communications i.e. Skype for Business and continuing use or migration of meeting room systems

The adoption of VCaaS is very appealing as it addresses most of the above. However, for today's millennials, the idea that all video communication must first be scheduled is archaic. Their use and experience of video is as an immediate face-to-face chat capability. Unfortunately, instant access to video communication and collaboration is beyond the capability of a 'meet me in the middle' bridging service. The desire to use video in the same way that we use a telephone is an emerging need, which is accelerating as the younger millennials enter the workplace. Skype for Business delivers against this need by allowing users to escalate from IM straight into a video call. But Skype for Business is not interoperable and its users cannot call directly into any traditional standards-based video system, be it software or hardware. It is a vicious circle, which brings us back to the idea that the only way to achieve an any-to-any meeting environment is via a bridge and scheduling service.

Figure: 1. Existing infrastructure connected to the cloud



In Figure: 1. Existing infrastructure connected to the cloud, we see that VCaaS does indeed provide the much-needed interoperability between existing legacy video and all other forms of video endpoints. However, in this example it only serves to bridge the gap, and does not address the need for point-to-point video calling, between users and businesses alike.

In addition, in this example, the enterprise retains the network infrastructure and remains hand-cuffed as far as scalability and broader internal video adoption is concerned.

The game changer that preserves current investments

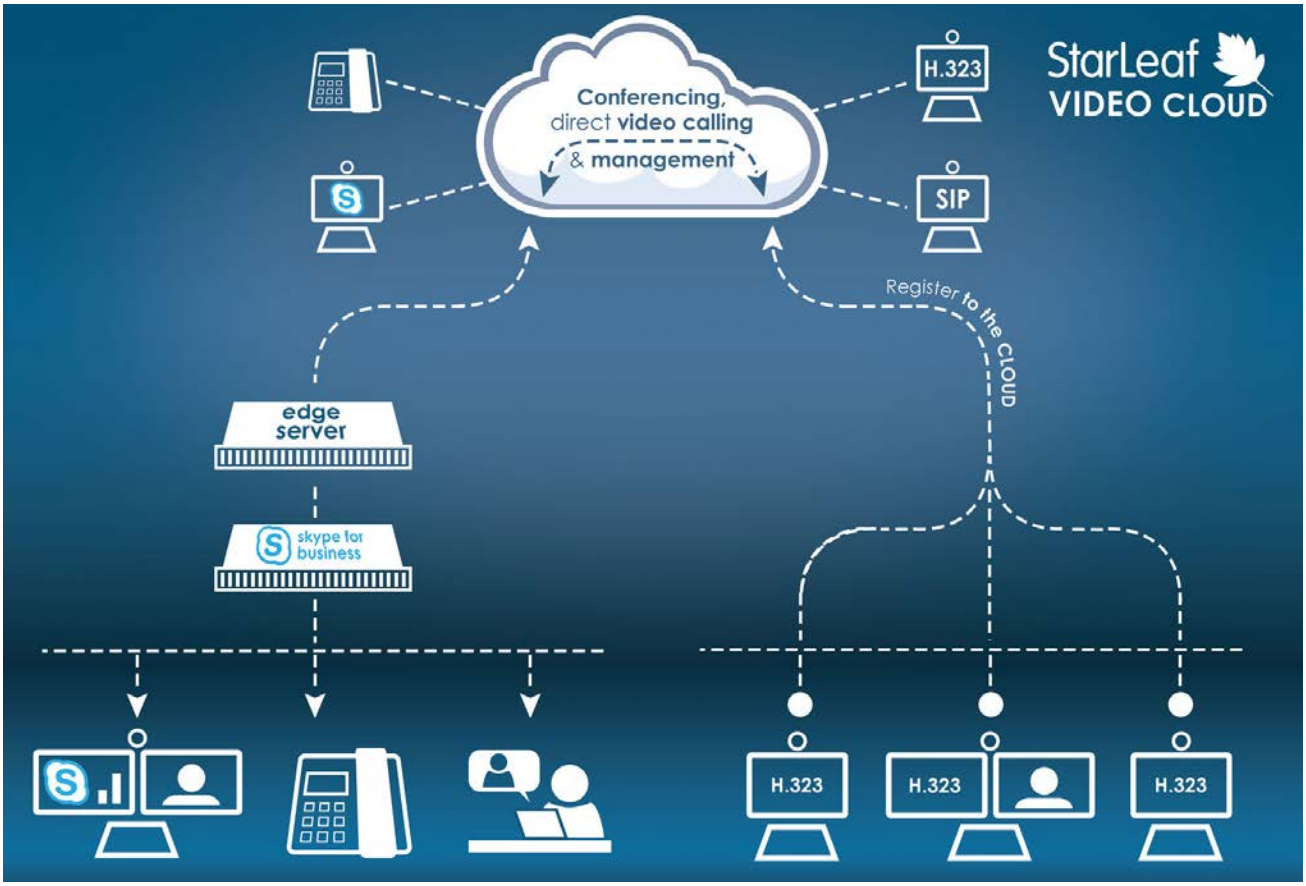
The video cloud, a comprehensive platform that offers more than conferencing services, has the power to allow external business-to-business calling and solve interoperability between all video endpoints, from all manufacturers. In addition, it provides the much-needed interoperability for unified communications, i.e. Skype for Business, and the traditional world of video conferencing.

The difference between the video cloud and a VMR/VCaaS is that it replaces existing infrastructure allowing endpoints to register directly to the cloud on an endpoint-subscription basis. This simple reconfiguration of an existing video installation delivers far more than a conferencing service or MCU.

In addition to scheduled conferencing, endpoints that move to the StarLeaf video cloud will have an extended life with improved functionality and increased value. In this case, the gains can be counted in the following ways:

- ✓ Unlimited direct calling to any other endpoint or Skype for Business user
- ✓ Direct calling to internal and external parties
- ✓ Bi-directional screen sharing between traditional video endpoints and Skype for Business
- ✓ Encrypted calling ensures privacy for all video and audio
- ✓ The eradication of nuisance calls with spam call protection
- ✓ Scalable architecture
- ✓ Support for all users of software endpoints (StarLeaf Breeze)
- ✓ Scheduled conferencing with global audio dial-in and calendar integration
- ✓ Optional cloud recording capability
- ✓ Firewall traversal with H.460 for H.323 and STUN/ICE for SIP
- ✓ A central management dashboard
- ✓ Usage and performance reporting
- ✓ Endpoint monitoring
- ✓ Full infrastructure redundancy
- ✓ Compliance with regional data protection legislation

Figure: 2. Endpoint registrations to the cloud



Use cases for Cloud Endpoint Subscriptions

Moving to the cloud and allowing it to replace video infrastructure will provide increased longevity for existing endpoints. However, there are at least three compelling use cases where tight timescales and the need for interoperability create the perfect storm.

1. Mergers and acquisitions

Two global entities start their negotiations often in person and on neutral grounds. As they arrive at an agreement and move forward there is a need to hold confidential and sensitive meetings on a regular daily basis. Video conferencing is proven to aid these early-stage negotiations and is critical to post-acquisition personnel and team integration. However, more often than not, the two companies in question have a hodge-podge of incompatible video equipment, which hinders progress and slows down integration. Moving these endpoints to the security of the cloud delivers the interoperability needed and allows teams to connect and integrate. It is the fastest and least disruptive way to bring teams together.

2. Aging infrastructure plus the introduction of Skype for Business

A global organization has developed a culture of video conferencing in preference to travel. It is rolling out Skype for Business across desktops and has legacy video endpoints including expensive boardrooms, team video meeting rooms, and a scattering of video-equipped huddle rooms. Supporting this deployment is a range of infrastructure that cannot scale to meet demand, nor can it address the need for interoperability between desktops and rooms. In addition, the infrastructure, MCUs and gateways are nearing end-of-life. In this situation, the organization can preserve its video endpoint estate by dispensing with its infrastructure and instead registering the endpoints to the StarLeaf Cloud thereby enabling direct calling between its Skype for Business desktops and existing meeting room systems. This is a low impact solution that can be implemented alongside the roll out of Skype for Business.

3. Migration

A migration strategy is required for organizations that have decided to 'rip and replace' aging systems with modern equipment such as the StarLeaf GT Mini range. The StarLeaf Cloud can support the move by allowing legacy systems to remain in use, and be phased out as new endpoints are introduced.

Summary

The video cloud has emerged as a platform that provides rich services, including conferencing and recording but also direct calling between any two video endpoints or clients. This infrastructure in the cloud offers resilient, scalable and secure capabilities that can future proof existing video installations and ease the path towards the introduction of new technologies.

StarLeaf offers Cloud Endpoint Subscriptions for most traditional video equipment from manufacturers including Cisco, Tandberg, Lifesize, Polycom, and Avaya/Radvision.

Legal information