



BACKGROUND ON BUSINESS

Getting Together Without Leaving The Office

(NAPSA)—More than two years after September 11, business travelers may be returning to the skies, but they aren't returning to their old road warrior ways without first considering new alternatives to travel. According to *Meetings in America V: Meeting of the Minds*, a national survey conducted by MCI, many executives are turning to collaboration tools, such as Web conferencing, to increase productivity and decrease costs.

Web conferencing is the fastest-growing collaboration tool. By combining audioconferencing and the Internet, it enables organizations to train employees, conduct online customer seminars, launch new products, demonstrate software and manage projects with virtual teams—all without the time and hassle associated with travel. In fact, nearly 75 percent of respondents have attended a Web conference before.

"Traveling to conduct business is no longer the first choice or the only choice," said Jackie Kostner, author of *Bionic eTeamwork* and expert on virtual teams. "People have become smarter about how to communicate and conduct business globally and we see that with the explosion of Web conferencing. Today's workforce is realizing the significant benefits that virtual tools provide in saving time and money, allowing them to be more productive."

Kostner offers the following tips in getting the most out of collaboration tools, like Web conferencing:

- **Find a champion.** Select someone to motivate and inspire a team or organization to use a new collaboration tool. He or she can be anyone or anywhere in the organization, as long as they know



the technology. The champion must also have insight about the challenges that people in a virtual environment face.

- **Set clear expectations.** The champion must set clear expectations for how the technology is to be used to improve teamwork. Print them on a reference card for everyone to post on their computer monitor and view during Web conferences.

- **Train people only on methods and essential features they will use now.** Give people only as much as they can apply right now, today. Then stop. Let people digest what they have learned, practice it in their real work and get comfortable with it. Then introduce new features.

- **Teach new skills over time.** To create true teamwork, the best practices and skills have to keep evolving. Therefore, people need more learning and support, one step at a time.

"If people don't find value in a tool, they'll stop using it," says Kostner. "The key is to embrace collaborative technology and introduce it in new ways that drive high-performance teamwork."

For more information on these collaboration tools, visit www.mci.com/conferencing.