

Blue Jeans Network makes video calls a casual fit

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BlueJeans Network (BJN) logo. BJN came out of stealth mode on Wednesday with a service intended to make video conferences as common as telephone calls.

Well-funded start-up Blue Jeans Network (BJN) came out of stealth mode on Wednesday with a service intended to make video conferences as common as telephone calls.

BJN allows people using smartphones, tablets, or home computers equipped with cameras to connect with corporate [video conference](#) rooms, which until now have only connected to similarly equipped rooms at other locations.

BJN was built in the Internet "cloud" to let people make [video calls](#) to one another regardless of which device or system they have, according to

co-founder and chief executive Krish Ramakrishnan.

"The Blue Jeans Network is really about interoperability; connect any device anywhere at any time," Ramakrishnan told AFP.

"Video conferencing, sadly, is an intercom between two conference rooms today, and most people can't get to those rooms," he continued. "This is a meet-me-in-the-cloud service."

BJN is used by more than 500 companies including [social networking](#) giant [Facebook](#) and global executive search firm Heidrick & Struggles. In Europe it has partnered with Deutsche Telecom.

"Unfortunately, many clients and candidates don't have easy access to high-quality video conferencing," said Heidrick & Struggles global venture capital practice managing partner Jeff Markowitz.

"Blue Jeans Network has dramatically made interviewing more efficient, boosted team productivity and helps to save money on company travel," he added.

Ramakrishnan said that interest in BJN was strong in Europe and North America, where increasingly global businesses have to coordinate video calls with workers, clients, suppliers or partners in varying time zones.

BJN customers get "a room in the cloud" to schedule meetings that participants can dial into on devices of their choosing using toll-free numbers, explained start-up chief commercial officer Stu Aaron.

"People can be on Polycom, Cisco, tablets, smartphones...you name it," Aaron said while demonstrating BJN calling on an iPad.

Free Skype or Google Talk software for computers or mobile gadgets

can also be used to take part in BJN video calls.

"We have people in all four corners of the world feeling connected because they can use any device to connect into the Monday morning staff meeting," Ramakrishnan said.

"Now, one group can be in the office during regular work hours and one in another time zone can be home on Skype."

Microsoft's purchase of Skype is expected to lead to the popular Internet phone and video calling service spreading into Xbox 360 video game consoles and an array of devices powered by the technology titan's software.

BJN video calls will cost companies 10-15 cents per minute as compared to the dollar-a-minute typically spent on such calls now, according to Aaron.

The new calling capability could assist with long-distance learning, medical treatment and the pinpointing of product problems by distant service centers.

BJN's vision of converting the estimated 80 billion minutes of audio calls annually into video calls has attracted some \$23.5 million of investment in the start-up, which is building data centers around the world.

BJN is headquartered in the northern California city of Santa Clara and has grown to about 4,000 subscribers in 100 countries since the test phase began in mid-April.

"We want [video conferencing](#) to be as comfortable and casual as your favorite pair of jeans," Ramakrishnan said.

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