

Suitable Technologies set to market new 'Beam' Remote Presence Device

September 27 2012, by Bob Yirka



(Phys.org)—Suitable Technologies, spinoff of the famous Willow Garage robot technology company, has announced that they are ready to start taking orders for their new Remote Presence Device (RPD) they call "Beam" and will begin delivery of the devices to customers next month. The Beam, the company says, is a step up from competing products in several ways and is aimed at corporations looking to hire people that will remain working in remote locations, but want more than simple devices with spotty connectivity.

Telepresence machines are becoming more common in the workplace as more companies seek to take advantage of the cost savings of not having

to fly staff to different locations to have them attend meetings or work with staff onsite. They have evolved from video conferencing systems to include features such as the ability to remotely control a device that rolls around on wheels. One such machine, the Texai, developed by Willow Garage was featured on the popular American television show "The Big Bang Theory."

One of the main complaints of the new telepresence machines has been Wi-Fi connectivity issues. Because the machines rely on such communications to operate, moving between hot-spots can present problems. To fix this, the engineers at Suitable Technologies added four radio receivers that are each able to operate independently and to hand off to each other so quickly that no loss of signal is ever detected. That's just one of the improvements the team has made over competitors they say; another is a bigger screen that is large enough to allow the remote person's head (the company calls them pilots) to appear life size, which helps those speaking to them engage more easily. They've also added some weight to the machine (courtesy of bigger batteries that allow for eight hours between charges) to give it more heft and a remote charging station that can be used without any local assistance. It also has two cameras, one front facing, another looking down, and multiple microphones to help with noise canceling and in hearing people not directly in front of the device. The Beam is remotely controlled either by keyboard keys or a mouse.

Cost for the Beam is a step up as well, at \$16,000 per unit with an additional \$950 for the [charging station](#). Suitable Technologies believes that potential customers will see the machines as well worth the cost as they will get a RPD that is always on and ready to go, can maneuver in any direction, and doesn't need any assistance in getting around or in recharging.

More information: www.suitabletech.com/

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