

Presenting Online Across Multiple Platforms and Browsers

Successful online presenting requires systems that are compatible across a broad variety of browsers and computing platforms. Although multi-platform operations are required in many computing environments, they are mandatory for companies using Web conferencing, online presentations and meeting applications.

In any given day, a huge number of people join online conferences by invitation, in environments like sales, training, consulting, or financial services. In many cases, their online visit will be their first and only attempt to connect with the organization presenting or sponsoring an online event.

From the presenting organization's viewpoint, easy connection and ease of use are vital. If a prospective customer attempts to join a conference and finds that the conference does not support his browser for example, it may be impossible to view an onscreen presentation. Likewise, salespeople or consultants presenting from remote systems may not be able to adhere to their companies' in-house requirements. The results of such issues can be delays, and lost business.

An Open Source/Multi-Platform World

In today's open-source, multi-platform environment, systems like PresenterNet must be as flexible and open as the Internet itself. Vendors have chosen several strategies to address this need.

For example, some conferencing services send first-time participants to a special site to test compatibility, as part of a detailed enrollment process. This approach may be time-consuming and irritating to non-technical people, causing some potential participants to disengage and drop out of an online event. Vendors using this method are effectively telling participants that they must comply with the vendor's technology requirements to take part in an online event.

Another common approach requires participants to download and install software plug-ins for each individual service vendor. Although technically effective, this requirement may be unattractive to prospects and clients who work in companies that reject all new software without IT department approval. Other users are simply unwilling to add new software for a variety of operational reasons.

Strategy for Compatibility

PresenterNet's strategy on platform and browser compatibility is simple. PresenterNet must work with all major browsers and platforms required by the marketplace. Whether users are presenters or audience members, they must be able to operate immediately without software plug-ins or special settings regardless of platform or browser. The task therefore begins with the system's architecture, and results in ongoing work as the variety of user choices expands.

How complex is the task of maintaining compatibility? The process begins by defining compatibility at both presenter and audience sides of the Internet connection. Each side of PresenterNet must work with both PC and Macintosh, regardless of the browser.

Though a majority of conferencing attendees use Microsoft Internet Explorer (IE), the fast-growing popularity of Mozilla Firefox requires PresenterNet compatibility with both PC Windows and Mac. Even IE presents a challenge, due to its many versions. Since IE has not been successfully supported by Microsoft on Mac, PresenterNet does not include it in its list of supportable browsers. However people in the Mac Environment can use Safari on Mac, as well as Firefox.

PresenterNet's strategy is to test and qualify all publicly sold browsers as requested by the user base. The system's architecture has enabled many new browsers to work effectively without modification. In many cases, PresenterNet has tested with users, and successfully added new browsers to the list of supported systems.