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A Tale of Lost Time

By Boris Bobrovnikov

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Boris Bobrovnikov
Director General
CROC

For many people, information technology is still perceived as something complex, remote and difficult to understand. The only thing that probably everyone agrees on is that today, any business without IT is not a viable business. Obviously, many IT tools increase business efficiency and make life easier for business people. You could probably live without IT, just like you can live without a mobile phone. But why bother, if having a phone is so much more convenient?

Over the past six months, Mother Nature has shown us who the real boss is. First, the Icelandic volcano eruption made the world learn a new tongue twister — Eyjafjallajokull — and resulted in the cancellation of hundreds of flights and ruined the plans of thousands of people. Then unprecedented forest fires swept across central Russia. Business life in Moscow slowed down dramatically, flights were delayed and meetings and negotiations were cancelled. However, demand for gauze to make makeshift coverings for windows and masks to breathe through reached a record high.

In addition to natural disasters, many frequent business travelers suffer from the fact that it is not they that benefit from the accumulated miles on marketing schemes offered by airlines, with free tickets and rewards often going to C-level executives.

However, I have some good news for people who have geographically distributed businesses, work with partners all over the globe and have to personally communicate with clients while being responsible for delivering major projects. Today you can eliminate the need to travel to Vladivostok and back in one day and reduce the quantity of external meetings and trips within Moscow as well. As a result, you can save time, which can be better spent on yourself and your company.

My personal choice is videoconferencing. My colleagues and I have been using this technology extensively for a long time and I am certain that it is vital for business today. Either you invest in technology to receive both short and longer-term benefits, or you fall behind and lose time and, eventually, your business.

There are a number of different types of videoconferencing systems available. They are like computers: First you define functionality, and then you compare it with your budget. And if they match, there are multiple solutions available on the market. When choosing a solution you should start with your objectives. Some people need a Telepresence studio — a meeting room with HD equipment that offers an across-the-table experience — while others only need a personal station, meaning a desktop computer with a web camera. Many people use several types of solutions depending on their goals.

Almost every videoconferencing system will cost you less than a flight to the United States for several managers or one or two flights for senior executives on a business jet.

Of course, there are situations in business, as in life, when you need to discuss something important tete-a-tete. So, leave the door of the videoconferencing room closed and nobody will interfere. My own experience proves that the majority of business issues can be settled using videoconferencing without any problems. Certainly, you will not be able to shake hands with your colleague, but not having to take a 10-hour flight is worth it. Besides, with technology developing so rapidly, it is probably only a matter of time before even this is possible.

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