Consider Hosting a Virtual Family Reunion

Family Reunions can be a powerful revitalization for strengthening extended family ties together. Unfortunately, traveling distances can make it impractical to stage and not on a regular basis. Aligning family vacations to coordinate one or more days together can equally be challenging and perhaps the most formidable challenge are the expenses for families with children to undergo long-distance travel expenses. Fortunately, videoconferencing software apps have become widely available along with HD quality screen solution and Internet providers are providing abundant bandwidth to yield video/audio quality not only on computers but also on tablets and smartphones. Multipoint videoconferencing providers are also abundant which has the capability to meet together with more than two people to groups of 250+. Some multipoint plans can be free while other have fees. But the cost of setting a 30-day subscription with videoconferencing app are substantially less than the costs of hosting a traditional family reunion. And a number of them offer free 14 day free-trials which could keep your virtual technology expenses to zero dollars. Consider my situation in which I have an annual subscription with GoToMeeting. With their beginning service package, there can be 150 different computer connections with family members attending world-wide with 10 webcams displaying simultaneously at a monthly rate of $14 for a single month along with no contracts. For $19 a month, their business plan has automatic voice recognition capabilities to transcribe the conferencing sessions seamlessly plus you can record the video transmissions as well and post them for participants to view and download plus a host of many more special features. Again, no contracts. That's a bargain to say the very least when considering if videoconferencing is a good option for your first virtual family reunion. Most family reunions require 12 to 18 months to plan thoroughly. With video conferencing, the timeline can easily be reduced significantly so staging a virtual family reunion this summer could be feasible.

What You Should Know About Video Conferencing Software

Video conferencing software can be an incredibly flexible tool in communicating with individuals and groups with a personal touch with spontaneous multimedia interaction in either social or business venues. These solutions can be used for family reunions plus conference calls, external meetings, and presentations. Many video conferencing tools also offer additional functionality outside of video conferencing itself, in providing file sharing and instant communication features that support collaboration within families, even when the primary video calling capability isn't being used which can be perfect for hosting virtual family reunions.

Outside of the straightforward video calling capability, many video conferencing products come with extensive feature sets that support collaboration and communication on several fronts. This can include the option for simple audio calling without video, whiteboarding and screen sharing tools, and call recording tools. For example, these call recordings can be posted on the memories section of FamilySearch for your elderly family members so future generations can hear the voices of these family members before they pass on which can be conveniently accomplished through video conferencing software. Understanding which of these features your family reunions might desire outside of video conferencing is key to finding the best product for your use.

Key Benefits of Video Conferencing Software

- Save money and resources with cheaper long-distance and international communication options.
- Eliminate geographic barriers and allow your extended family members to share and work remotely.
- Enhance extended family collaboration by allowing for increased engagement through screensharing and file sharing.
- Reduce travel costs by allowing people to join meetings from the comfort of their homes.

Consider These Top Ten Videoconferencing Software Products

- [Skype](#)
- [Zoom](#)
- [Cisco Webex Meetings](#)
- [GoToMeeting](#)
- [Abode Connect](#)
- [Jabber](#)
- [Google Hangouts](#)
- [join.me](#)
- [BlueJeans](#)
- [UberConference](#)

For in-depth details of how these top ten videoconferencing products compare with each other and what features each of them offer, click here and you will be able to assess which product(s) might best suite your needs. And with free two-week trial periods offered, you really should try it before ever making a final decision on whether videoconferencing options can work well or not for your particular family reunion situation.

Closing Comments

Many of us may never have the opportunity to stage or attend a family reunion because of the complexities involved beyond financial, traveling and scheduling considerations. Instead, consider hosting a mini-virtual family reunion as a preliminary challenge to field test this venue for broader implications. The technology is well in place when compared to how I used videoconferencing in the 1990's when multipoint conferencing wasn't available while point-to-point conferencing was expensive and very inconsistent with its video/audio quality because of limited Internet bandwidth availability. I have been professionally utilizing videoconferencing since 2007 in teaching music technology and instrumental music lessons in addition for genealogy. In particular, videoconferencing has provided a creative bonding opportunity between our children especially when combined with genealogical opportunities.

In the next posting installment on this topic, I will cover a multitude of creative activities that can be included which might work well for a virtual family reunion to establish and maintain a positive relationship with those you love as well as with those whom you may not know well. Today most of us have access to computers, tablets and smartphones with adequate Internet access. By taking advantage of its creative communication and sharing attributions, you can experience added inspiration in addressing family history endeavors through its many available technology features especially when compared to the "snail mail" approach I used for first 25+ years without technology until the later half of the 1990's. To me as a member of the "ancient generation," technology is a godsend directly from heaven for conducting genealogical activities in today's life style where power, speed and convenience have been become the norm without any excuses for not incorporating it. And as exhibited in this posting, the cost is very minimal in today's market while the performance expectations are extraordinary!