



Entertainment

Daily Use

- Project management
- Team meetings
- Remote site communications
- Client/partner interaction
- Demonstrations or presentations

Solution

- Polycom® HDX™ 8000 Telepresence solutions

Results and Benefits

- Reduced travel saves time and budget
- Remotely editing and mixing content streamlines production
- Script run-throughs and planning keeps crew on schedule

For Bad Robot—Producers of the Hit TV Series *Fringe*—Telepresence Is Not Science Fiction

Bad Robot Productions makes fantastic things happen every week on the hit FOX TV series *Fringe*. Bad Robot is responsible for coordinating all aspects of production between New York, where the show is shot and edited, and Los Angeles, where studio executives, writers and effects artists reside.

Like all television producers, Bad Robot faces strict deadlines, tight budgets and countless real-world logistics. But with its crew straddling two coasts, the Bad Robot team faces another challenge: having to work across three time zones and 3,000 miles.

Bad Robot's Brooke Kennedy, an executive producer for *Fringe* (along with *Third Watch*, *Numb3rs* and *Pushing Daisies*), spends much of her time ensuring that the challenges of geography don't threaten productivity.

For this, Kennedy and her team rely on high-definition (HD) telepresence solutions from Polycom. Despite a distance of three time zones and 3,000 miles, Kennedy says the Polycom system "makes it seem as if we're all in the same room."

"Any tools that help bridge the gap between the two coasts are vital," says Kennedy, who first discovered the value of video conferencing while working on *Third Watch*.

"Within 10 minutes of accepting the job of executive producer for *Fringe*, I said, 'Get a video conferencing system here.'"

Kennedy says the key advantage is communication. "You can't accomplish everything we need to do by talking on the phone," she says. "It's kind of an empty experience to just hold a piece of plastic in your hand and try to get across all you need to communicate. It doesn't work."

Establishing A Face-to-face Presence

Even in the pre-production stage, the need for a face-to-face presence is vital. "The writers need to communicate to the production staff, which can involve 12 to 15 people, even before shooting begins," she says. "It's the ability to explain what's not on the page. It's the ability for the crew to know what they can and can't do."

For a show like *Fringe*, where special effects and visual imagery are often central to a storyline, that's important. "Once you're in the sci-fi world, it's very subjective," says Kennedy, who knows that proper planning and effective collaboration help keep projects on deadline and on budget.

"We might have 40 people in a video conference. It's hard to imagine doing this any other way."

Brooke Kennedy, Co-Executive Producer, Bad Robot Productions

“We work at a phenomenal pace. Yet no matter what you’re working on, the connective pieces are still people. And that’s what the Polycom system brings together.”

Brooke Kennedy, Co-Executive Producer, Bad Robot Productions

Three or more times a week, *Fringe* crew members collaborate using two Polycom® HDX™ 8000 room telepresence solutions. Two meeting rooms—one in New York and the other in Los Angeles—host the systems, which are connected via cable modem.

“With *Fringe*, there’s so much coordination. At any given time, we might have 40 people in a video conference. It’s hard to imagine doing this any other way,” says Kennedy

Ensuring Realistic Sights and Sounds

Polycom’s award-winning HD telepresence solutions deliver smooth, natural motion and sharp images from 42-inch LCD displays. When producing a TV show rich in special effects, says Kennedy, HD quality is not optional. “We’re people who stare at screens all day,” she says. “In our business, you absolutely must have HD. It’s as close to face-to-face as you can get.”

The advantages aren’t confined to what producers see. The Polycom HDX 8000 telepresence systems also use Polycom StereoSurround™, which delivers 22 KHz audio more than six times clearer than a standard phone signal. “Everything about this system helps us do our jobs better, including the audio,” says Kennedy. “What you hear is just as important as what you’re looking at.”

“With Polycom, we can even bring over the audio mix at a level of quality that lets us make production decisions on that content. It’s invaluable.”

Staying on Deadline and on Budget

From preparation through post-production, the *Fringe* team relies on telepresence to save time and money, and to keep schedules on track.

“We work at a phenomenal pace,” says Kennedy. “Yet no matter what you’re working on, the connective pieces are still people. And that’s what the Polycom system brings together.”

For instance, she says, Los Angeles-based actors participate in script readings during the planning phase of an episode, saving them the time and expense of flying to New York. And a New York-based director of a *Fringe* episode will meet with West Coast animators to review and approve special effects—all over the Polycom system.

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Maintaining the Freedom to Create

Kennedy even ties the system in with local production facilities that the *Fringe* crew uses regularly, such as editing and mix houses. “There was a time when you had to drive from one place to the other for each piece of the production,” she recalls. “But with Polycom, we’re hooked into the editing room, so we can go in, make a cut, and get on with it.”

In the pressure cooker of TV production, Kennedy says, time is everything. “Anytime you have a technology that allows you freedom, it’s a big deal. It seems anywhere we are, we can tie the system in. Anything we need to do, we seem to be able to do it.”

And on a show where anything is possible, that may be the biggest advantage of all.

