

# Meeting Room [www.astro.org](http://www.astro.org)



By Ryann K. Ellis

*Do you have an extra copy of the memo? Who will type and distribute the flipchart notes? Robin, can you hear us OK on the speaker? The field agents aren't joining us today, but we'll try to get input from them later.*

If that sounds like the opening chorus at your meetings, maybe it's time to try meeting online. The technology has developed so that anyone with a browser and a telephone can use it—anytime, anywhere.

So, what do online meeting rooms look like? Companies investigating these tools will encounter dozens of solutions—from rooms for small groups that need to share data quickly to broadband solutions that broadcast high-quality video. Likewise, you can have your meeting room hosted on a supplier's Website, or purchase software and manage the meeting room on your own Website or network.

Here are some basic features common to almost all services:

- application sharing
- document sharing and editing
- presentation viewing
- instant messaging
- real-time chat
- polls and surveys
- whiteboards
- integrated telephony services
- group scheduling and calendars.

When selecting an online meeting solution, you need to determine whether you plan to use it for small, collaborative work groups (fewer than 20 participants) or large presentations (more than 50 participants). That will determine the features and tools you need.

Next, you need to decide whether to outsource or host the meeting room in-house. For most companies, outsourcing will be more prac-

tical. The technology is changing so rapidly that you may not want to commit to a particular software that will need technical support, periodic upgrades, or in-house expertise.

And don't forget to consider security, platform versatility, technical support, set-up, and pricing!

To help you sort through the remote collaboration options, *Training & Development* surveyed several providers—from software packages hosted in-house to free services hosted on the Internet.

Our picks include

- Contingo i2i
- WebEx Meeting Center
- PlaceWare Conference Center
- SneakerLabs iMeet
- Microsoft NetMeeting
- Intranets.com.

There are many other services that you can check out online, such as Astound.com, e-Conference, Presentation.net, Eloquent.com, and NewPodium.

The Software Roundup chart includes product features, minimum system requirements, and cost. Contact information is provided. Most services have online demos you can review.

Whether outsourced or in-house, whether a video-enabled solution or a basic room with a bulletin board, we recommend that you start small. You will need to get yourself and your company comfortable with the new technology—technically and culturally. □

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## Online Meeting Rooms

Tool	Contact Information	Feature Highlights	Minimum System Requirements	Cost
<p><b>WebEx Meeting Center</b> Set up instant meetings—with the click of one button—and demonstrate software: review, annotate, and edit any document; share desktop applications; integrate teleconferencing; and access remote-control technical support.</p>	<p>WebEx www.webex.com 408.435.7000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Video- and audio-enabled</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> File transfer</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Program sharing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Remote desktop sharing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Polling</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Web co-browsing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pentium Processor</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Netscape 4.x or Internet Explorer 4.x</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 56k Internet connection</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mac OS and UNIX (limited features)</li> </ul>	<p>Free: 4 participants, under 10 minutes</p> <p>Pay-per-use: \$.20 per minute, per participant</p>
<p><b>PlaceWare Conference Center</b> Select the best type of virtual conference room—auditorium or meeting room—to share graphical content, broadcast applications from your desktop, take Web tours, conduct instant polls, and create on-the-fly content.</p>	<p>PlaceWare www.placeware.com 888.526.6170</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Video- and audio-enabled</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Whiteboard</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Chat</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Scheduling and invitations</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Web tours</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Program sharing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Technical support</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Security</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Customized appearance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pentium Processor</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Netscape 3.x or Internet Explorer 3.x</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 28.8k Internet connection</li> </ul>	<p>\$400 per seat</p>
<p><b>i-Meet</b> Hold real-time, Web-based conferences and meetings with PowerPoint presentations, whiteboards, discussions, polls and surveys, access to software applications, and live customer and technical support.</p>	<p>SneakerLabs www.imeet.com 877.244.6338</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Video- and audio-enabled</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Whiteboard</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> File transfer</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Program sharing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Polling</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Web co-browsing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Live technical support</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pentium Processor</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Netscape 4.x or Internet Explorer 4.x</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 28.8k Internet connection</li> </ul>	<p>Subscription: \$500 setup (one-time) \$250 per month per 10 users</p> <p>Event: \$10 per hour, per user (\$1,500 minimum)</p>
<p><b>Microsoft NetMeeting</b> Share information from one or more applications, exchange or draw graphics with the whiteboard, send messages, record meeting notes and action items with the text-based chat, and send files to other participants.</p>	<p>Microsoft Corporation www.microsoft.com/ windows/netmeeting 425.882.8080</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Video- and audio-enabled</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Whiteboard</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Chat</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Internet directory</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> File transfer</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Remote desktop sharing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Security</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Advanced calling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pentium processor</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Internet Explorer 4.x</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 28.8k modem or LAN</li> </ul>	<p>Included in Microsoft Office 2000</p>
<p><b>Contigo i21</b> Use the software and host your own meetings. The basic package offers software demos, chat, whiteboards, and polls. Upgrade the software to access advanced scheduling, complete seminar management, secure HTTPS connections, recorded meeting playbacks, and more.</p>	<p>Contigo Software www.contigo.com 858.792.8206</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Video- and audio-enabled</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Whiteboard</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Chat</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> File transfer</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Program sharing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Polling</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Activity reports</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Any PC (including Mac, UNIX workstation, or network computer)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Netscape 3.x or Internet Explorer 3.x</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A voice phone line for audioconferencing and a separate Internet connection</li> </ul>	<p>Meeting: \$2,799 Meeting Pro: \$11,499 Seminar: \$18,499 Enterprise: \$44,999</p>
<p><b>Intranets.com</b> Use this (free!) service to centralize important company information, post documents, have group discussions, create group schedules, and announce events. Also included is an industry and financial news feed.</p>	<p>Intranets.com www.intranets.com 781.932.0960</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Whiteboard</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Chat</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Group directory</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Group calendar</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Program sharing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Instant messaging</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Announcements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Frames-compatible browser</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Netscape 4.x or Internet Explorer 4.x</li> </ul>	<p>Free</p>