

# Telepresence—New or ?

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**T**elepresence is most simply defined as the virtual presence of a speaker who is at a distance. More sophisticated definitions emphasize the use of technologies that allow a videoconference viewer to feel as if distant participants are present.

There have even been marketing campaigns built around the idea that “our high definition televisions make the image real, even better than being there.” Cisco is often credited as being first at using this approach in their marketing.

Of course much of this hype was before HDTVs become the standard—it is obvious

that watching TV in high definition is more realistic and immersive than standard definition television—some HDTV vendors claim “It may even be better than being there.”

More recently the idea of telepresence has evolved to the way the image on the computer or television screen is depicted. Actually, attention to how the teleconference screen is organized is not really evolution, rather, it is a rediscovery of the basic rules of photographic composition. Today, the instructional designer need only dust off the publications distributed by Eastman Kodak several decades ago to learn about the composition of visual images. Often, the basics of what we now call telepresence fall under the heading of visual literacy, popularized by Frank Dwyer and others.

A quick look at old college textbooks on photography, or a visit to the any of the volumes in classic LIFE/TIME book series (or even a good online search for rules of visual composition) remind us of much of what we learned but probably forgot about composing images.

Some authors have 10 rules of composition, others six, and others list 11. A quick analysis of them shows considerable overlap, with a few classic and critical guidelines. Here is a quick overview to what to consider when creating a telepresence image of a single speaker in a videoconfer-

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