With their Interoperable Cloud-Based Conferencing Service, Blue Jeans Network Is enabling Different Video Devices to Communicate with Each Other

Technology
Video

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Krish Ramakrishnan
Co-Founder & CEO

BIO:
Krish brings more than 20 years of successful leadership and innovation to Blue Jeans Network. A serial entrepreneur, Krish has been founder and CEO of several successful startup ventures. Prior to Blue Jeans, he was an Entrepreneur-In-Residence (EIR) at Accel Partners, where he was exploring HD video technologies including the current idea behind Blue Jeans. Before that, Krish was the General Manager for the Server Virtualization business unit at Cisco Systems, responsible for architecting Cisco's datacenter and desktop virtualization solutions. Prior to his work at Cisco, Krish was the CEO of Topspin Communications. Under his stewardship, the company reinvented itself as a datacenter virtualization player and executed strategic partnerships with IBM, Dell, HP, and Sun.

Topspin was acquired by Cisco in 2005. Before joining Topspin, Krish was the vice president and general manager for the Content Business Unit at Cisco Systems. Under his leadership, Cisco developed many industry-leading products including the L4-L7 load balancers, content caches, CDN, and micro-web servers. Krish joined Cisco in 1995 when his first startup, Internet Junction, was acquired by them. Earlier in his career, Krish worked for NET, Peer-Logic, Bell Labs, and Perkin-Elmer. He has an MSCS from Monmouth University and a BS (Physics) from Madras University, India.

About Blue Jeans Network:
Blue Jeans Network was founded in November 2009 with a passion to make video communications easy. Starting from the ground up, Blue Jeans was built as a cloud-based conferencing service to enable people to connect with each other any time, any place and from any device. Every phone call should be a video call and we are designing the technology to make that happen.

Interview conducted by:
Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor
CEOCFO Magazine

CEOCFO: Would you tell us how you do it?
Mr. Ramakrishnan: As an example, take someone who uses Skype. If they want to have a video call with someone, that “someone” has to also be on Skype. In a corporate environment, companies have invested in expensive room based video conferencing systems. However, those systems typically only communicate with similar systems within the company. What Blue Jeans has done is provide a cloud service that works as a gateway or “translator” between the disparate video platforms that are often built on proprietary protocols.

CEOCFO: Why has it been so difficult to put this together or has it even been tried before?
Mr. Ramakrishnan: To my knowledge, no one has attempted it before. For video conferencing to truly be pervasive there are a few key inhibitors that need to be overcome and until now, no one has been able to successfully overcome all of them. First and foremost, there are a myriad of incompatible video-enabled devices. System incompatibility does not scale or promote wide spread adoption. As an example, if an iPhone can only talk to an iPhone it is not going to be popular. Secondly, most business users shy away from video conferencing because it has been complex and very difficult to use. The result is they do not use it and instead fall back to audio conferencing. After all, everyone knows how to dial. The third obstacle is reach. Typically, video conferencing has been used on
dedicated, private networks. It is rarely operated over the public internet because the quality can be poor. Reliance on a dedicated network for video conferencing limits the number of people you can communicate with outside of your company. You cannot communicate with your business supplier, your partners, your vendors, and so on. It’s all of these hurdles that have to be overcome to make video pervasive. Blue Jeans came up with a technology that uses off the shelf servers to do the core video processing while delivering it at mass scale. We have focused on the ease of use ensuring people are able to use video conferencing without extensive training or handholding. Lastly, we made sure that the video looks and sounds extremely good over the internet. These three things give us an industry advantage and made customers want to have it. The usability definitely is a big, big step forward for the industry.

CEOCFO: How long has this been available?
Mr. Ramakrishnan: The service was launched in June of 2011, so we are just shy of 2 years.

CEOCFO: Who is using it today, generically? Are there particular types and sizes of companies? Where is it most applicable?
Mr. Ramakrishnan: I will go to a couple of use cases. When it comes to business customers we see the entire spectrum, all the way from small and medium businesses to midsize companies and large enterprises. We also see huge interest from schools, colleges and universities who use it; everyone needs video communication. We find adoption across the board. For example, cutting edge companies like Facebook and Foursquare use our service, universities like The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania and Stanford University use our service, non-profits, law firms, financial institutions and some of the world’s most well known brands use our service. We have quite a range of customers that use Blue Jeans as a mechanism for their collaboration.

CEOCFO: How do people find out about Blue Jeans or does everyone know these days?
Mr. Ramakrishnan: I wish everyone knew. People find out primarily through word of mouth. There is a strong influential community of video conferencing users who know about us. They have been very influential in spreading the word to other IT professionals. Beyond that, just the demand from business professionals who no longer want to travel, who want to be able to communicate over video with their partners, suppliers, or whatever; they are urging the IT professionals to go and find solutions that work and we are the only real solution that is out there. Business users are constantly championing our service. It has become a vital tool in terms of collaboration for them. We often see if company “A” uses our service to video conference with company “B,” company “B” then says “this works pretty well, let me also get a subscription.”

CEOCFO: What have you changed since the product first came out? Are there features that you would like to add or that you are working on that you can talk about?
Mr. Ramakrishnan: One of the beauties of cloud service is that you can continually innovate and improve a service by releasing software without having to ask the end user community to constantly upgrade their software. This is the power of a cloud or a “software as a service” business model. We have continually innovated and added more features since we launched. For example, when we launched the service we were able to interoperate between Skype and the corporate room systems. Since then we have added support for Microsoft Lync, which is hugely popular in the enterprise. We have added support for Google Chat and various other platforms that come along the way. In addition to that, people who collaborate on video may want to share their desktop via HD content sharing. While most recognized for our interoperability, the industry will start to see us innovate and expand our service to include more robust collaboration solutions. We’ve already expanded our collaboration focus to include an easy way for mobile users to host or join meetings from smartphones and tablets. Mobile users can also view and share content easily from our iOS application so they don’t miss a beat in the meeting. We are focused on making sure our platform stays in trend with the needs of business users while pushing the boundaries of what traditional video conferencing has been able to do. This will be a strategic direction for us going forward.

CEOCFO: How is business these days? It sounds like it is quite robust!
Mr. Ramakrishnan: Yes. Business is going very well. We are growing very fast. We are hiring sales people like crazy, because we have so much demand and we are expanding internationally.

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CEOCFO: Is it a direct sales model? Since there are so many targets how do you decide who you should be targeting?
Mr. Ramakrishnan: We support a hybrid model. We primarily sell through channels with direct sales assisting our channel partners in selling the service. We have a partnership with InterCall in the United States. That is one example. We have a partnership with Deutsche Telekom in Germany. There are many channel partners and our direct sales team assists those partners in selling the Blue Jeans service.

CEOCFO: You have been recognized with a number of awards. What stands out in the awards area?
Mr. Ramakrishnan: When we are recognized for the breakthroughs in terms of the innovation that we bring to the video conferencing industry that is great. The awards that I am very proud of are the awards that recognize Blue Jeans as a great place to work. We strive to create an environment where employees can come and
not only create great innovative products, but I want my employees to be happy, creative and productive. That is what we strive for and any award that recognizes our workplace excellence is something very meaningful to me.

**CEOCFO:** Why should investors and people in the business community pay attention to Blue Jeans Network?

**Mr. Ramakrishnan:** Blue Jeans is here to change the way people think about and conduct meetings. Investors have long been interested in video and web communication solutions but up until now, customers have been given solutions that required them to adhere to the process and guidelines of the provider. Blue Jeans changes that. We give customers who have not been able to get started in video a low cost, easy way to get started. We also let customers who have invested millions in video infrastructure leverage their investments and have an easier, more cost effective solution that gives them flexibility they have never had. From a market perspective, there is huge opportunity to convert every audio call into a video call.

**CEOCFO:** What might people not understand or miss about Blue Jeans Network that they really should know?

**Mr. Ramakrishnan:** You always hope people understand what you do. Whether people know it or not, the one thing that people should understand about Blue Jeans is that our mission is to make video conferencing as simple and reliable as audio conferencing. It is as simple as that. If we can turn every audio call into a video call we have done our job.
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