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After years of promise, the age of the videophone has finally arrived. And your company could be among the first wave of users.

Just as "talkies" followed silent movies, and television followed radio, the videophone is set to follow the voice-only phone. The advantages are beyond question. Using a videophone is the next best thing to a face-to-face meeting, the ultimate way for people to communicate. What's different, of course, is the cost and convenience of videotelephony, which completely eliminates the expense and wasted time of travel.

A major step in the evolution of videotelephony was taken earlier this year when six leading European telecommunications companies formally agreed to co-operate in establishing a pan-European videophone service.

The initial members of the consortium are BT, Deutsche Bundespost TELEKOM, France Telecom, Norwegian Telecom, PTT Telecom (Netherlands) and SIP (Italy). Other telecommunications operators are being invited to join the initiative, which aims to implement the standard not just for Europe but for the rest of the world as well.

Everything is in place for the era of the videophone to begin.

Videophone terminals have gone through the experimental stage and will soon be available from a range of manufacturers. ISDN is being developed throughout the world, with its coverage expanding all the time. Also, equipment costs and network charges have fallen to the point where videotelephony is demonstrably cost-effective.

The pan-European videotelephony service will be launched to the business community at large during 1993. But in advance of this date, there is an opportunity for a limited number of companies to participate in a trial service, running throughout 1992.

Videophones are going to change the way we work. As a participant in the trial, your company can gain hands-on experience of the implications of videotelephony while other businesses remain in the dark. It's like getting off the starting blocks before the pistol has even been fired.

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