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Long-distance, but face to face

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Then, one day, he began to think about videoconferencing while he was stuck in traffic.

"Videoconferencing is one more way to be there without traveling," he thought. "I'd push a few buttons and I could talk to a guy. He'd be inside a TV, and I'd be inside of his TV. George Bush does it with his troops. Why can't I do it with people?"

The problem with videoconferencing, he discovered, is even the less-expensive systems depend on phone-line connections and the charges associated with those lines. The problem with sending digital video and audio over the Internet, he learned, is that there are many functions, including e-mail and Web browsing, competing for the bandwidth you need for audio and video. The answer, he learned, is a firewall that gives priority to videoconference traffic.

His years as an IT guy have made him an expert in firewalls, and that's how he was able to connect his friend in Iraq with his fellow church members at services. He built a firewall at Eagan Hills church and got Polycom, the market leader in voice and videoconferencing systems, to donate a unit that he connected through the Internet to a videophone in Iraq.

Now, he is knocking on doors of potential customers. His best prospect, he said, might be Ed Visions, a Henderson, Minn., company that is exploring a virtual charter school that will connect students to faculty through videoconferencing.

His toughest sell, he said, might be the corporations that could save millions by doing meetings for free over the Internet rather than booking executives on airliners and lodging them in first-class hotels. Those executives won't give up the travel, he said, but they might make

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[Work & Life: H.J. Cummins](#) lower-level employees meet by videoconference.

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The expert's opinion: Keith LeFebvre, vice president of product marketing and management in Polycom's video communications division, said Scott might have finally found a niche that works as more companies look at exploiting the twin technologies of Internet Protocol (IP) and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP).

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"Growth for IP-based video conferencing is about to explode, driven by VoIP," LeFebvre said. "And guys like Scott will have a new lease on life as businesses large and small jump on the bandwagon."

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