

Competitive Profile

VuLink™ vs. Polycom

ViewStation™ H.323



Positioned to Win

The VuLink Set-top systems place Gentner Communications squarely at the heart of the latest developments in video conferencing, while offering a unique blend of "appliance" and "PC-centric" technology that addresses diverse needs without sacrificing performance or functionality. On one hand, the VuLink offers the reliability and ease of use of a set-top video appliance, complete with simple dialing capabilities, powerful one-piece remote control unit, flexible remote camera models, and robust network management through its VuConsole remote management software. At the same time, the VuLink provides high performance PC and data conferencing capabilities through the popular Windows CE operating system, along with an integrated Internet Explorer® browser for accessing web or Microsoft Office content during a call and Microsoft Outlook® integration through its VuMeeting™ software. Truly an advanced, best-of-breed product, the VuLink provides resellers and integrators a new, differentiated opportunity for delivering total solutions to their customers.

Polycom's ViewStation is fine for limited "talking heads" video conferencing. It even includes a low-end web server that provides some limited Powerpoint-only presentation capabilities. But the ViewStation H.323 is a *single-mode* system (H.323, LAN-based video) only, whereas the VuLink offers both H.320 and H.323 video (dual modes). Even better, the VuLink--with its internal ISDN interface--costs \$1,000 less before one considers adding an external ISDN upgrade to the ViewStation H.323. And what the ViewStation does not provide are those special features that offer greater *flexibility* and *value* to the VuLink. While the ViewStation *can* support VGA output for improving presentation quality, it achieves this through an attached laptop with PCMCIA card (and resulting inferior image quality) or a more expensive XVGA option. Most important, the Windows CE-based VuLink can be adapted easily to international or vertical, user-oriented applications with a minimum of effort. For the customer looking for a complete solution at unquestionable value, Gentner's *dual-mode VuLink* is the obvious winner.

Similarities

ITU Standards	Connectivity	Audio/Video	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.323 • H.261, H.263 Video coding • Annex D • T.120 • G.711, G.722, G.728 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethernet LAN • 2 RS-232 ports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 fps max frame rate • Acoustic Echo Cancellation • PTZ Camera included • Supports 2 video inputs • Noise reduction and automatic gain control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JPEG via browser • Hand held remote • Auto SPID detect • Remote management • Picture in Picture (PIP) • VCR support • Dual monitor support

Major Differences

Gentner VuLink	Capability/Feature	ViewStation H.323
Windows CE	Operating System	Proprietary
ISDN & LAN	Transmission Mode	LAN only
Keyboard, PCMCIA card slots for attaching hard drives to system	PC capabilities	No PC functionality without attaching external PC
Integrated web browser for slide send; MS Office/web content	Presentations support	Embedded web server w/ Powerpoint and web only; limited presentations
Yes	Integrated VGA output	Expensive option on other models
VuMeeting option for integration with MS Outlook Express	Scheduling	Not available
Software Development Toolkit (SDK)	Developer/integrator support	Not available

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Other Unique Differences

Gentner VuLink	Capability/Feature	ViewStation H.323
Yes	Remote Camera System for flexibility	Not available
H.320 only	Far End Camera Control	H.323 only
Yes	Power Save Mode	Not available
Yes	G.723 audio	Not available
Not available (see footnote)	Optional H.263+ ¹	Yes
Yes	Video setting adjustment	Not available

Gentner Value Difference

Gentner VuLink 326	Capability/Feature	ViewStation H.323
\$6,299 MSRP	Base System @ 384Kbps	\$5,999 MSRP
Included	VGA Monitor Support	\$8,999 (XGA) capability on FX model
\$399	Integrated scheduling via VuMeeting	Not available
\$249	Network management	Expensive option per unit monitored
\$6,947 MSRP (single worldwide price with no international markup)	Total Value Difference	\$14,999 + NETWORK MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE, intl. markups

SALES TIPS

Sales Approach--Polycom's sales approach consists of mass distribution through numerous channel partners, resulting in over distribution. This size makes it less able to be responsive to partner requirements, instead treating all partners alike. Gentner is focused, selective in its partners, and responsive. Because of its relative size, Gentner is willing to try harder to please its partners.

Applications Approach--Gentner's approach is to add audio/video to applications; Polycom's approach is to add applications to audio and video. Everything about Gentner's product architecture focuses on data conferencing, from the ability to share Microsoft Office software with a remote site to the ability to use the PCMCIA card slots to add flash cards or hard drives to expand the product. Industry analyst Andrew Davis of The Wainhouse Group has said "The future requires building applications and infrastructure to enable integrated audio, video, data, and web conferencing..." (July, 2001). In many ways the more recently designed, Windows CE-based VuLink is a more advanced platform for the latest wave in video conferencing than is Polycom's hardware, which is based on a proprietary architecture designed back in 1997.

SDK--Gentner's architecture avoids locking its partners into a hardware design. By providing an SDK, Gentner offers greater flexibility for developers and integrators to customize the VuLink for specific vertical markets and applications.

VGA Support--The VuLink provides built-in support for an SVGA Monitor. The ViewStation SP and SP384 models only support S-Video and composite monitors. The impact? Difficult to read presentations. To achieve high quality VGA output requires a much more costly ViewStation model. The best conclusion is that the VuLink offers the greatest value over the ViewStation when comparing models.

¹ H.263 extensions have been the subject of many overstated, inappropriate marketing claims from some vendors. Various vendors have implemented *very slight* improvements to H.263 video algorithms, but not enough to warrant consideration as offering additional value.