



User-Friendly Approach Creates Company



JOBS AND INVESTMENT

Research carried out by the Ontario Telepresence Project (OTP) resulted in a new, user-friendly approach to long-distance workplace communication and led directly to the formation of Telepresence Systems, Inc.

OTP, a three-year, \$4.8 million pre-competitive research project was sponsored by the Province of Ontario through Communications and Information Technology Ontario (CITO) in partnership with the University of Toronto, Carleton University and seven Ontario industry partners.

OTP's inter-disciplinary team of academics and industry researchers used

existing computer, video and telecommunications technology to develop new media space systems. The research focused on the sociological aspects of linking desktops and conference rooms in a kind of virtual office. Field trials at arms-length sites and OTP's unique user-centred approach gave researchers important insight into user acceptance of new types of workplace communication.

As part of the International Telepresence Project, OTP was linked with researchers in Germany, Spain, Italy and France. Three products that were developed with knowledge gained from OTP are Corel Video for Corel Computer Corp., Active Desk for Arnott Design Group, and Video Vise for Applied Silicon International (now a division of Alcatel).

OTP led directly to the creation of Telepresence Systems, Inc., a consulting

firm specializing in human-centred software engineering. "The Ontario Telepresence Project was the training ground that honed our skills and taught us to think innovatively. It was the stepping stone from which Telepresence Systems, Inc. was launched," said Ron Riesenbach, president and CEO of Telepresence Systems.

Since 1995 Telepresence Systems has grown from two to 14 employees and is building a strong presence in the growing digital media industry - the market for digital media products is expected to be worth \$15 billion US by next year.