

Google unveils Beam, a 3D video calling platform that brings digital interactions to life

Based on Project Starline, Google Beam is a 3D video calling platform that makes you feel like the other person is in the same room as you.

In 2021, Google announced Project Starline, a research project that aimed to redefine video communication by making remote conversations feel like the other person is in the same room. At this year's Google I/O, the tech giant announced that "Project Starline is evolving into a new 3D video communication platform" called Google Beam.

In a blog post, Google said that its new Beam platform uses a "state-of-the-art AI volumetric video model" to transform 2D video streams into realistic-looking 3D experiences. The tech giant said that the corporate-focused teleconferencing platform will be available to early adopters like Salesforce, Citadel, NEC, Deloitte and Duolingo sometime later this year.

In case you are wondering, Beam uses hardware like a six-camera array and a custom light field display to give users the impression that they are talking to someone as if they are in the same room. On the software front, Google is using an AI model that takes video feed from cameras pointed towards the user from different angles to give them a 3D look.

The tech giant says the hardware, combined with the AI-powered software "creates a profound sense of dimensionality and depth", which allows users to make eye contact and even read subtle cues, which is similar to how one would talk in a face-to-face conversation.

Google says Beam supports "near-perfect" millimetre-level head tracking and streams videos at 60fps. Combined with Google Meet, the technology can also offer real-time AI-powered speech translation that is capable of mimicking the voice, tone and expressions of the speaker. The technology will also integrate Google Meet and other popular videoconferencing solutions like Zoom.

While the original prototype device was bulky, Google seems to have repacked Beam into a much slimmer device. The tech giant says it is tying up with HP to bring Beam devices to the market by the end of the year.