

# LEGAL MANAGEMENT

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## Meet the Beam+ Telepresence Device

A couple of years ago, we were smitten with a robotic remote presence device (RPD) that we saw at the annual Consumer Electronics Show (CES).



**BILL & PHIL**

*The Bill and Phil Show  
Tech News & Reviews*

This gadget is made by [Suitable Technologies](#) and is called the Beam. We thought it was exceptionally cool and futuristic, but not necessarily practical for our own personal use.

As is often the case, we began to rethink the practicality of this new technology as we revisited the Suitable Technologies booth at this year's CES. No longer thinking it was impractical and desperately wanting to play with this new tech "toy," we began to think of reasons (excuses) to buy the Beam. Our reasoning won the day and we raided our gadget fund to purchase the \$1,999 Beam+ (a larger, more expensive model, BeamPro, is also available).

When our Beam+ arrived in a huge box, we anxiously unpacked the 4.5-foot robot, wondering how long it would take to set up our new remote telepresence friend. We were pleasantly surprised to note that hardly any assembly was required — just plug in the charging plate and place the Beam+ on the charger. We were even more pleased that the software setup was almost as easy. We just connected the Beam+ to our high-speed Wi-Fi, downloaded the control software from Suitable Tech and we were ready to roll.

And roll is what you do with the Beam+. Using the software app on your computer, you can maneuver the Beam+ robot anywhere you want it to go, as long as it stays within the Wi-Fi coverage area. The Beam+ has a video screen near the top of its frame that displays the camera image of the person controlling the robot from his or her computer. The computer operator can see through the "eyes" of the Beam+ by way of two internal cameras on the Beam+ — one near the top to see people in the path of the Beam+ and one near the bottom to see potential obstacles near the floor where the robot is traveling.

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### PUTTING YOUR TELEPRESENCE PAL TO WORK

Using the arrow keys on the keyboard, we were able to roll the Beam+ off the charging pad, swivel it around to the door of the office and then move it down the hallway of our office. We were able to communicate and see people in the office that we met with the Beam+ and they could see and hear us via the built-in video monitor. After folks in the office got over the creepiness of us

sneaking up on them with our robot, we were able to carry on conversations just as if we were in the room with the person — complete with eye-rolls, smirks and hand gestures — relayed via the video screen.

The Beam+ is indeed a remote presence device in that it solves the age-old dilemma of needing to be in two places at the same time. For example, Phil was out of town for a conference and needed to have a quick meeting with his litigation tech team on an important project back at home base in Nashville. Of course, he could have participated in the meeting via the traditional, boring route — a telephonic conference call. However, Phil just simply logged in to the Beam software app from his remote location, took control of the Beam+, and rolled it from his office down to the conference room. Phil then, “sat down” across the table from the other meeting attendees and fully participated in the meeting as if he was really there. He could carefully monitor reactions in the room to his suggestions (eye-rolls or enthusiastic thumbs-ups).

The advantage of using the Beam+ is that you are more fully immersed in a meeting either with a group or one-on-one. The meeting participants can both see and hear each other. Plus, the mobility of the Beam+ allows the remote attendee to maneuver the robot around the room if needed. We could see this device being used by someone to manage a remote office or perhaps even for depositions or employee/client interviews in a remote office.

One of the downsides of the Beam+ is the short battery life; it only lasts approximately two hours before needing to go back to the charging dock. We are told that the more expensive BeamPro model has a longer battery life — approximately eight hours — as well as a larger video screen.

While we purchased the Beam+ simply to scratch a techy, curiosity itch, now that we have had it for a few months, we are actually believing that our practicality argument holds some water. Yes, it is fun to operate and we get a kick out of freaking out the office from time to time. But it’s seriously a cool gadget to conduct remote meetings and consultations. We think we’ll keep it.

### **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

**William Ramsey**, Partner at Neal & Harwell, and LogicForce Consulting President **Phil Hampton** are best known for The Bill and Phil Show. The duo tours often and provides technology news and reviews on their website *[www.thebillandphilshow.com](http://www.thebillandphilshow.com)*.

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