Google’s new Project Starline prototype isn’t a giant booth

Google has revealed a new, smaller version of its Project Starline 3D telepresence technology as part of its bevy of updates announced at Google I/O.

In the past, I’ve described Project Starline as a video chat booth because it was a booth you could actually sit in to talk to lifelike holographic projections of another person. I got to sit in a Starline booth last October, and I thought it was really impressive. But this new Starline prototype looks more like a big TV that I can more reasonably imagine fitting in an office or conference room.

In addition to the smaller size, the updated Starline apparently doesn’t require the special array of infrared light emitters and cameras used by the version of the technology that I saw. Instead, the new prototype uses “new AI techniques” that allow Starline to rely on “a few standard cameras” instead, according to a blog post from Starline GM Andrew Nartker.

Nartker says Google has already shared the new prototypes with Salesforce, T-Mobile, and WeWork, but since I haven’t tried it myself, I can’t vouch for how it compares to the giant booth-size version. Nartker’s blog post also doesn’t say anything about if or when Starline will be widely available, so it’s unclear if it will ever be something you’ll actually be able to buy.

Still, it’s interesting to see that Google is continuing to invest in Starline, a technology that does make for more natural-feeling virtual conversations, even as many companies

have brought employees back to the office (including, well, Google). I’m curious to see if Starline becomes a real product someday.

https://www.theverge.com/2023/5/10/23718836/google-project-starline-prototype-booth-ai-io