Video Conferencing Transforms Public Service Delivery

Customer Case Study

The U.K. Department of Health makes significant travel savings at a time of sweeping organizational change

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: Department of Health

Industry: Public Sector

Location: London, Leeds, and other sites in the U.K.

Number of Employees: 2500

Challenge

- Meet government efficiency targets for departmental savings
- Support restructuring by improving remote video communications and eliminating travel

Solution

- Cisco TelePresence® rooms providing a natural meeting experience for multiple users
- Regional Cisco® personal video deployment initiated at senior executive level
- Video capabilities extended to multiple devices and integrated with digital media system

Results

- Fast return on investment
- Conferencing routinely used outside normal office hours, morning and evening
- Videoconferencing rooms usage rate doubled just three months after going live

Challenge

The Department of Health was a keen early adopter of first-generation videoconferencing technology more than a decade ago. It provides UK-wide services with employees in four principal London sites, a fifth major center in Leeds, and a number of smaller offices mainly co-located with regional strategic health authorities. Organizational complexity is compounded by overall responsibility for administering the National Health Service (NHS), Europe's largest employer with a budget in excess of £100 billion.

The department is now in the throes of a major restructuring exercise. The aim is to transform the way UK public health services are commissioned against a backdrop of cost cutting across all departments. To help meet these challenges, the department decided to revisit its video communications strategy. Despite having 55 in-house videoconferencing rooms, taking up a whole floor of one London office, the existing technology could not meet either demand or expectation.

Video, voice, and data ran on separate networks, lacking the advantages of an end-to-end, fully-converged infrastructure. That legacy technology lacked flexibility and scalability, while user experience issues, such as voice and video quality and poor content sharing, became reasons not to use the videoconferencing service. Also it was not possible to connect with anyone outside the department except, at additional cost, via an ISDN gateway.

Building on its early videoconferencing leadership, the department was looking for a solution that would rapidly pay back. If it went well, the project would not only bring benefits to the Department of Health, but would also be used as a model for other government agencies.

Solution

The department was looking for more than a straight replacement of end-of-life endpoints with up-to-date equipment. The aim was to relaunch and embed videoconferencing firmly into day-to-day business processes. Cisco collaborated closely with the department's videoconferencing outsource partner on a strategic development program.

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Neill Goulder
Head of Workplace Operations
Department of Health

A three-phase delivery plan started with the installation of 16 Cisco TelePresence® System EX60 endpoints, and 22 Cisco TelePresence System C20 Quick Set units in the refurbished conference rooms. That initial deployment provided the ability for individuals to join TelePresence sessions via a variety of Cisco endpoints in a wide range of locations.

Phase Two will focus on providing wider desktop video access for local teams, while Phase Three will make Cisco TelePresence available to a range of external partner organizations over IP and will also integrate the solution with Cisco® Digital Media Suite. Ultimately, this will enable and expand direct communication between the department and citizens using digital signage and live video streams to the desktop.

Orchestrated by the Cisco TelePresence Management Suite for complete control and management of videoconferencing, infrastructure, and endpoints, the solution enables life-sized, face-to-face video meetings at the push of a button. It's built on two Cisco TelePresence Video Communication Servers, providing flexible conferencing applications. Those servers are supplemented by two multipoint control units (MCUs), acting as an HD multimedia conferencing bridge, and delivering superior video and voice using a versatile management interface.

Results

The department's videoconferencing usage has doubled within just three months. Demand for Cisco TelePresence rooms is so high that they are often booked solidly from 07.30 to 19.30. The number of rooms has grown to 80, with new locations added in London and Nottingham.

Cisco TelePresence is already providing significant advantages. Reductions in travel, combined with extension of the system to even more users, mean that the solution paid for itself within an astonishingly short time of three weeks.

Steps have already been taken to initiate Phase Two by providing Cisco desktop video for top executives. Regular users include senior staff from the department and its associated bodies including ministers, the permanent secretary, and chief executive of the NHS Commissioning Board. This is set to extend further down the hierarchy.

Larger conferences, meanwhile, are defined in the department as special events. These include big face-to-face gatherings at executive conference venues blending local and remote speakers. The department's current policy prevents the hiring of facilities, so the move to Cisco TelePresence has taken off in a big way.

Event management is also much easier and less expensive to run. In the past, the department would have to hire a specialist firm to film a major event, and a second firm to stream the material. It no longer needs this cumbersome and costly process. Big events can be managed more easily and cheaply. Meanwhile, video recording and storage for later access, with keyword tagging to enable quick archive searches, will enhance the value.

"The video suites we have here are very high quality and easy to use," says Neill Goulder, head of workplace operations at the Department of Health. "What Cisco TelePresence allows is close to a face-face-meeting, which hugely cuts down on travel between London, Leeds, and other locations, while also speeding up our decision-making."

The department has embarked on a groundbreaking journey that will fundamentally redefine how its people work. The redrawing of organizational boundaries is tightly bound up with a transformation of operational processes, and the department believes it will gain significantly from smarter working, new efficiencies, travel savings, and inbuilt sustainability benefits.

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Robert Edmondson-Jones
Director of Information Services
Department of Health

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Next Steps

The second and third phases will entail installation of Cisco Digital Media Players linked to enterprise-quality displays, with Cisco Show and Share capabilities for wider distribution of video content. The Cisco Media Experience Engine will transcode video for viewing on a wide range of portable devices, along with further HD cameras and a content server to enable the streaming of live TV.

Wider deployment of Cisco desktop video is also well under way. Cisco Jabber client software will extend video to laptops and other devices, allied with the ability to record big events for wider distribution. Also planned is document and slide-sharing. Although already possible now, this will be further enhanced with other Cisco Collaboration technologies such as WebEx.

For More Information

To learn more about Cisco Collaboration Architecture and the solutions described within this case study, please go to:

www.cisco.com/go/collaboration
www.cisco.com/go/telepresence

Product List

Telepresence

- Cisco TelePresence Endpoints
  - Cisco TelePresence System EX60
  - Cisco TelePresence System C20
  - Cisco IP Video Phone E20
- Cisco TelePresence Infrastructure
  - Cisco Video Communication Server
  - Cisco TelePresence MCU 4505 and 4520 Series
  - Cisco TelePresence Management

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