

Demolishing Barriers of Distance and Time



DHL uses Cisco video collaboration technologies to extend the reach of major customer events while transporting their power and inclusivity

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: Deutsche Post DHL Group

Industry: Logistics

Location: Germany

Number of Employees: 470,000 worldwide

Challenge

- Establish and maintain intimacy with customers unable to attend conference
- Enable industry experts to share their expertise with large audiences irrespective of their time zones
- Make experience and insight from the event available online

Solution

- Cisco TelePresence enabling virtual interactive participation in real time
- Event broadcast via Cisco website to customers and DHL staff
- Video-on-demand for viewing after the event

Results

- Customer intimacy achieved, even with those unable to physically attend
- Content and conference insight available to customer and DHL organizations
- Creation of a proven and replicable solution for other events

Challenge

Understanding customers' needs and developing solutions that meet those requirements is the foundation on which every business is built. It is a formula that has been highly successful for Deutsche Post DHL, the world's leading mail and logistics services group. It is also one that is increasingly difficult to manage in a world where supply chains are becoming longer and more complex.

In 2009, the group announced its 2015 Strategy aimed at developing integrated, cross—divisional solutions for three priority industries. One of those was the technology sector—which includes many important DHL customers such as Intel and Oracle—and a team was set up to help drive success.

The team's early work included a series of one-to-one customer workshops, leading to the first Technology Sector Conference in Frankfurt in 2011. This flagship event was attended by 70 key decision makers in customers' supply chain organizations. Some customers are also suppliers, however, and the same year saw DHL and Cisco Systems run a joint innovation workshop looking at how the two organizations could better support each other.

"One of the main topics of the joint innovation workshop was collaboration," says Thomas Dammann, vice president for technology sector strategy at DHL Customer Solutions, "a subject with particular relevance for me." His team was planning the next Technology Sector Conference, a two-day event to be held in Berlin in 2012. While customers were responding positively to invitations, the number who had to pull out due to corporate travel restrictions or other commitments was proving a challenge.

"Our objective is to build a community where our customers can network and discuss their supply chain issues," says Dammann. "Our target audience is senior supply chain decision makers and every single one of them is vitally important to us." Also of concern was the fact that internal demand from each of the divisional account teams working with customers was impossible to meet due to the limited number of places available for DHL people.

Solution

With just eight weeks to go, lessons learned at the Cisco DHL joint innovation workshop became relevant right then. Cisco had explained how it uses TelePresence and other video and web-based collaboration technologies for its global all-hands meetings. DHL realized that might just provide a solution to the Berlin 2012 Technology Sector Conference problem. A call to Cisco set matters in motion.



“This has opened up a whole new field of thinking for us, as we continually strive to better understand and meet customers’ needs. Using collaborative technologies one can have higher quality, more frequent customer interactions and get messages across more powerfully.”

Thomas Dammann
VP, Technology Sector Strategy, DHL
Customer Solutions
Deutsche Post DHL

“I was a little skeptical at first, given the very short timescales,” says Dammann, “but the Cisco people were very professional. They took time to understand the strategic importance of what we were doing and of the need to build our technology community. It became very obvious, very quickly, that they knew exactly what they were doing.”

Plans were rapidly put in place, not just to enable customers who could not physically attend to benefit from the conference, but also to open the conference to wider participation, irrespective of geography and time. For example, using Cisco TelePresence high definition immersive video, a Cisco supply chain specialist located in Istanbul was able to take part in real time in an emerging markets discussion panel.

Cisco provided a producer and an engineer to work with the video team already contracted by DHL to film the event. Together they captured and streamed live high definition video of plenary sessions via a Cisco website, with secure log-in for DHL customers and its own people. To avoid the boring talking-head syndrome of having static cameras focused on single speakers, a three-person camera crew with two vision-mixing desks ensured that the broadcast was lively and dynamic.

After the event, the footage and supporting materials were posted onto a secure DHL website for customers to access. The content was also made available for DHL people via the company’s intranet.

Results

With excellent feedback from the ninety DHL customers from 23 countries who physically attended—a 20 percent increase on the previous year—the conference was a great success. Its value, however, was boosted by the Cisco video streaming and TelePresence solutions. Of the 81 customers who registered to watch the conference live on-line, over 50 actually did so. And, after the conference, another 70 subsequently logged on to the DHL customer website to view the video-on-demand content. Similar numbers of DHL people viewed the conference during and after the event.

“We received emails from senior decision makers saying that it was absolutely fabulous to watch online and that they very much appreciated the entire conference,” says Dammann. “This was exactly what we wanted to achieve from those customers unable to attend.” Internally, DHL sales teams reviewed the content as part of their account planning sessions.

DHL plans to host the next Technology Sector Conference in the Asia Pacific region and remote attendance will help maintain the sense of community, especially for those unable to travel. Similarly, guest speakers will join via TelePresence from around the world.

“This has opened up a whole new field of thinking for us, as we continually strive to better understand and meet customers’ needs,” says Dammann. “Using collaborative technologies one can have higher quality, more frequent customer interactions and get messages across more powerfully. We can also use this approach for such things as account review meetings with customers, as well as connecting them with our subject matter experts.”



Americas Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
San Jose, CA

Asia Pacific Headquarters
Cisco Systems (USA) Pte. Ltd.
Singapore

Europe Headquarters
Cisco Systems International BV Amsterdam,
The Netherlands

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