

City Government Deploys Video to Collaborate More Efficiently

Customer Case Study



City of Edmonton keeps employees and citizens better informed using Cisco video solutions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: City of Edmonton
Industry: Government
Location: Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
Number of Employees: 10,000+

Challenge:

- Deploy innovative IT solutions that support and align with city's overall goals
- Allow City departments to do more with less money
- Integrate robust, enterprise-level video solution into existing Cisco network

Solution:

- Cisco Show and Share helps enable live, interactive webcasts and post-recording sharing via video
- Cisco Enterprise Content Delivery System enhances reach, quality, and user experience for weekly webcasts
- Cisco Media Experience Engine converts media for viewing on any device

Results:

- Improved productivity of employees and efficiency of services
- Provided means for executive team to reach geographically dispersed employees anytime and personally
- Positioned IT as catalyst for innovation and continual growth and livability of city

Challenge

From the world's largest living history museum to North America's largest mall, the City of Edmonton is as well-known for its various attractions and festivals as it is for being the capital of the Canadian province of Alberta. Spanning 264 square miles, Edmonton is Canada's fifth-largest metropolitan area and is home to approximately one million residents. Dedicated to building a thriving community where residents enjoy an excellent quality of life year-round, in 2009 the city launched "The Way Ahead," a strategic plan driven by four key principles: integration, sustainability, livability, and innovation.

As the chief information officer for the City of Edmonton, Chris Moore is responsible for aligning the IT Branch's overall goals with the business planning tied to *The Way Ahead*. "Our citizens are very tech-savvy," says Moore. "When they need to know something, they look it up on their smartphone or tablet. If we in IT don't continue to innovate, our citizens will soon have better technology in their homes than their city has."

The City of Edmonton had been leveraging video technologies to facilitate information sharing and live webcasts for a number of years with much success. In 2010, Moore and his team decided to expand its video strategy to a much broader scale. In doing so, however, the team realized that not only were some of its legacy technologies lacking certain capabilities, but that managing disparate technologies was not the most efficient and integrated way to operate.

"The challenge with any video solution is that if it is not designed well and implemented well, it can really chew up bandwidth and disable your network," says Moore. "We needed an enterprise-level video solution that we could easily put in place on top of our Cisco network infrastructure."



“By hosting weekly interactive webcasts and making them available anytime via Show and Share, we are providing context to our team, which helps them do the best job they can and contribute to achieving the city’s overarching goals.”

Chris Moore
Chief Information Officer
City of Edmonton

Solution

The City of Edmonton has relied on Cisco technologies not just for switching and routing (more than 200-plus devices), but for unified communications solutions such as Cisco® Unified IP Phones, Cisco Unity®, and voice over IP as well. “Seeing that Cisco was already so embedded in our organization, it made the most sense to deploy Cisco video technologies into our existing Cisco foundation,” says Moore.

From a features perspective, Cisco met all of the city’s key requirements. “We needed a high-quality video solution that would allow us to deliver video anytime, anywhere on any device, whether live or on demand,” says Steve Allison, a senior analyst for the City of Edmonton. With Cisco Video solutions, Edmonton’s IT Branch found its answer, and promptly began a staged deployment.

Building engaged and informed teams through weekly interactive webcasts

The City of Edmonton’s IT Branch consists of approximately 345 employees, and like any large organization, it found itself spending a large sum of money to get everyone together for meetings. “Not only did you have to consider the travel and full day away from each employee’s time, you also had to account for the banquet facilities and food,” says Moore. “The reason we began doing webcasts really came from my desire to have a connection with 343 people that I cannot spend time with every day.”

Moore likens the IT Branch’s weekly webcast to something like “running our own TV station.” Each week, Moore hosts a 20-minute webcast, inviting guest speakers to talk about specific projects, in addition to covering status updates, important departmental information, and employee kudos. Viewers can also submit live questions to the program, fostering a more interactive component to what traditionally was a one-way feed.

“Our numbers are definitely rising,” says Allison, noting the fact that employees can now watch webcasts from anywhere in the city live or post-recording via Cisco Show and Share®, regardless of whether they were in the office, at home, or on the go. “There was one episode where we reached close to 412 hits, even though we have 343 people in the organization. We’re up to episode 45 now.”

With the adoption of the Cisco Enterprise Content Delivery System (ECDS), the City of Edmonton’s IT Branch is able to share these webcasts cohesively. “Cisco ECDS is really the solution to our previous bandwidth problem,” says Allison. “It allows us to distribute the video effectively using multicast and not impact the network, so we’re not eating up bandwidth, and people are not losing their applications. We can already deliver the webcasts to both PCs and Macs, and we’re planning to expand that to iPads, iPhones, Android devices: you name it.”

With plans for the city manager of Edmonton to deliver citywide addresses to all employees via 7800 end points, helping ensure smooth, error-free video streaming becomes especially critical. “For us, Cisco ECDS really is the lynchpin of our video delivery network,” says Allison.

Fostering innovation any place, any time, on any device

One of Edmonton’s key city goals is an initiative called Workspace Edmonton. Led by the city’s IT Branch, this strategy will help ensure that all city employees have access to the tools and services they need, anytime and from anywhere, regardless of physical locations. “We have thousands of employees who don’t have computers; they’re driving buses and trucks and are out there serving the public. With the Cisco Media Experience Engine [MXE], employees will be able to watch any video on any

device. They won't have to worry about formats and bit rates, and whether or not it will play on an iPhone or Android device," says Allison.

Cisco Show and Share will also play a key role in furthering Workspace Edmonton by helping enable on-demand video playback of previously recorded webcasts. Currently, the IT Branch is posting its weekly webcasts to Show and Share, but it has plans to start uploading the rest of the city's pre-recorded video content into the solution as well. "We have quite a bit of archived video, anything from Fire Rescue safety training videos to public waste management videos," says Moore. "Eventually, we'd like to share all of this footage on our internal Show and Share site."

Mobility is enhanced by the use of collaboration applications such as Cisco WebEx® Meetings. "That solution works on my iPhone, so in terms of allowing us to work any place, any time, it's really ideal," says Moore.

Enhancing information sharing with digital signage

Digital signs can be found in Edmonton Transit's public Customer Service Centre transit stations and transit garages, displaying information for riders as well as bus operators. "We have around 1600 operators who are out driving buses all day, so there's not much opportunity to communicate with them," says Janis Noble, interactive marketing and applications team lead. "Because they're just popping in and out, we needed our messaging to be short and sweet and attention grabbing, not to mention available 24 hours a day." Today, digital signage is prominently displayed in nine of ETS' transit garage facilities. They share a continuously changing range of internal communications, including schedules, driver shifts, road closure information, health and safety messages, new products and community involvement opportunities.

In the Community Services department, more than a dozen digital signs have been deployed at Edmonton's Terwillegar Community Rec Centre, which includes an aquatic centre and Subway Arena. Eight signs are in the arena complex and are heavily used to display rink schedules and dressing room assignments. Three sit above the main information desk, where customers come to get information and pay fees.

Says Jacqueline Dalziel, a project coordinator for the City of Edmonton's park and facility development, "Not only are digital signs a more sustainable and greener way to display information, when compared to our old paper signage, they also make our frontline staff's jobs easier by providing information that customers would otherwise be waiting in line to get an answer for."

Results

For an organization that is "trying to do more with nothing," the substantial cost and time savings that it expects to achieve by adopting Cisco video technologies will be a key benefit of the overarching video project. First, there are the cost savings that come with weekly video webcasts versus in-person meetings. "By doing these weekly webcasts, we'll be able to reduce the number of times we all meet in one physical place per year," says Moore. "Meeting face to face is still an important part of building a team, so we don't intend to eliminate these meetings, but by supplementing them with live video sessions, we expect to save a significant amount each year."

Perhaps more important than hard monetary savings, by delivering richer and timelier information to customers and employees, Moore believes the City of Edmonton will contribute to greater efficiencies and better use of people's time. "The key thing for us in terms of our staff and service to the citizens is that to be most productive, they need to know what is going on," he says. "By hosting weekly webcasts in Show and

Share, we are providing context to our team, which helps them do the best job they can and contribute to achieving the city's overarching goals."

Adds Allison, "If you're doing your job as an IT staff member, you're making things easier for people. And I believe our collaboration video project is doing just that."

Next Steps

One of the City of Edmonton IT Branch's next objectives is to help enable searchable video. "We've got terabytes of archived videos, and we're creating more and more every day," says Allison. "We hope to leverage Cisco MXE and its PULSE media analytics soon to deliver an easy way for employees to search video for appropriate content in the same way we can search text. Being able to search through four hours of meetings in fifteen minutes is an incredible time saver and enhances our productivity."

"I really have a vision for the future where every employee will be able to pull up the City of Edmonton website and have access to a full range of video assets, live and archived, from live webcasts to training videos to employee-created content, and view it on any device," says Moore. "As an organization, we'll be better able to serve our citizens, and that's always the bottom line."

Product List

Business Video

- [Cisco Enterprise Content Delivery System](#)
- [Cisco Media Experience Engine](#)
- [Cisco Show and Share](#)

Unified Communications

- [Cisco Emergency Responder](#)
- [Cisco Unified Communications Manager](#)
- [Cisco Unified IP Phones 7962, 7941](#)
- [Cisco Unity](#)

Collaboration

- [Cisco WebEx Meetings](#)

Routing and Switching

For More Information

To learn more about Cisco Business Video solutions, visit:
www.cisco.com/go/collaboration.



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