Technical College in Minnesota Deploys Technology-Based Training Network

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Pine Technical College delivers interactive instruction and enhanced user experience with Cisco Telepresence.

Executive Summary

PINE TECHNICAL COLLEGE
- **Industry:** Higher Education
- **Location:** Pine City, MN
- **Number of Employees:** 110 faculty and staff; 1600 students

CHALLENGE
- Increase productivity of manufacturing and healthcare industry partners' business practices while reducing costs
- Ensure seamless connectivity and access to training programs across the state
- Engage industry partners with training courses through networking infrastructure and help them remain competitive in quickly evolving markets

SOLUTION
- Design and deliver interactive specialty training courses to industry partners and end users through Cisco Telepresence, uniting Minnesota's six telecommunications regions
- Engage local partners to promote seamless statewide connectivity by integrating multiple collaborative and video conferencing technologies into a single network solution
- Equip industry partners with on-site television and video conferencing technology to participate in training courses

RESULTS
- Achieved cost savings for industry partners through customized training programs virtually delivered to boardrooms across the state.
- Empowered industry partners across multiple markets, increasing productivity and optimizing utility of business resources
- Leveraged consolidated technologies to deliver adaptive assistance to end users with special needs

Challenge

Located in Pine City, Minnesota, Pine Technical College provides a next-generation technical education, preparing its students to be competitive in a constantly-evolving, technically-driven world. Truly embracing the spirit of an increasingly wired world, Pine Tech students choose to complete their degree virtually, or on campus, and the college is also actively engaged on multiple social media channels. Pine Tech continues to position itself as a leader in education in the region, consistently expanding its course offerings and engaging with the local community and other academic institutions.

To further demonstrate its excellence in the technical space, Pine Tech developed specialty training courses for its manufacturing, healthcare, and education industry partners, promoting the continued education of their workforce members and students, respectively. Within industries like manufacturing, where technical knowledge and management processes change quickly, it is crucial for workforce members to stay up-to-date with current information and technological advancements – not only to improve employee productivity, but also to decrease turnover, improve workplace safety and security, maintain market competitiveness, and more.

There are many advantages to investing time and resources in continued workplace education. Too often, however, employers cannot afford to grant their workforce the time away from the production or manufacturing floor to pursue continued education courses; niche subject area courses are expensive and not always available; and it is difficult to deliver streamlined end user access over differing network technologies. For these reasons, Pine Tech realized the need to unite the varied collaborative technologies across Minnesota's six telecommunications regions under one network solution to ensure delivery of customized education courses to meet end user needs.

Solution

To support its industry partners through continued education, Pine Tech joined a larger initiative of the Learning Network of Minnesota (LNM), which brings together the University of Minnesota, Minnesota State colleges and universities, and Minnesota Office of Enterprise Technology in a collaborative network to implement a Cisco Telepresence solution. Cisco's Telepresence solution delivers high-quality video collaboration and virtual communications capabilities using video accessory equipment to support virtual meeting platforms for end users with compatible technology. To the end users' advantage, Cisco's Telepresence solution is compatible with a range of technologies and equipment, allowing for ease of adoption and access. Together with LMN, Pine Tech expanded its existing

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John Norris
President, AtScott Manufacturing

educational interactive video network, consolidating various technologies used across the state's six telecommunications regions to deliver seamless connectivity and content delivery to end users across the state – namely, its business, education, and healthcare partners. In this way, Pine Tech established a technology-based training network among its industry partners, delivering not only the training content and network connectivity, but also the television and video conferencing equipment that is compatible with Cisco's Telepresence solution.

One of the advantages of Cisco's Telepresence solution is its compatibility with a number of different technologies and equipment. In many cases, end users already had equipment compatible to Cisco's Telepresence solution, allowing quick, consistent, and customizable access to any number of Pine Tech's 65 courses, ranging from "Performance Enhancement" and "Excel for Team Leaders", to "First Aid and Infection Prevention Control" and "Press Break Safety." In example, Pine Tech's Science Lab is equipped with three presentation screens, laptop computers, a high resolution document camera, microscope camera, a personal computer, audio equipment, and more – all integrated and compatible with Cisco Telepresence. Thanks to Cisco technology, video computing allows the management of in-room presentations, while Pine Tech's content server captures lectures to distribute as podcasts and streaming media, which is helpful in delivering the most innovation and convenience to its industry partners. In addition to offering specialized topics – tailored to enable competitive advantages for its end users – Pine Tech provides a superior learning experience through its interactive environment. Without Cisco Telepresence and video conferencing capabilities, Pine Tech's end users would not experience the advantages of a personalized learning experience, as if a teacher were in each room, for each training course, interacting with the group.

Industry partner end users access Pine Tech's courses in-house, in-factory, in-classroom, and more, communicating real-time with instructors, as well as with trainees from other companies throughout the state. This interaction also informs Pine Tech on how to tailor its courses to meet real-time industry demands, providing the optimal returns for its end users. There are few limitations for Pine Tech thanks to Cisco's Telepresence solution – no attendance minimum, no requirement to gather at a central location – to administer this on-the-spot training. Lessons learned are applied immediately in the workplace, and training topics remain relevant both to market trends and to employer ambitions.

Results

Though budgetary constraints limit the number of industry partners able to engage Pine Tech's interactive Telepresence trainings, tangible value and benefits are evident to those that collaborate through the education network. End user insights and feedback have improved training topics, placing continued education at the

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"We knocked out about 30 percent of the assembly cost with the LEAN program – looking at the best use of manpower and materials…"

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Product List

· VCS-Control
· VCS-Expressway
· MCU
· Content Server
· Telepresence Management Suite
· Mobile Carts
· Movi

forefront of the workplace and preventing both employees and companies from becoming stagnant in the continually-evolving market economy.

For Pine Tech's manufacturing partners, some of the most consistent cost savings come from its "LEAN" trainings, named after a manufacturing term that describes a method of doing business in such a way that removes waste from the production process. A perfect example of training courses that can be applied immediately within the workplace, these LEAN trainings aim to eliminate unneeded costs, motions, resources, and processes on the manufacturing floor, to increase productivity, efficiency and revenue. John Norris, president of AtScott Manufacturing and beneficiary of LMN and Pine Tech's government grant program, shares that LEAN trainings have eliminated "about 30% of the assembly cost" at his facility, which – he shares – is a conservative estimate for the result that can be expected at other companies with this program. Facilitated by Cisco's Telepresence solution and video conferencing technology, these trainings allow employees to "pop into a meeting room" and complete various courses, building a common understanding of goals and purpose of process changes.

The use of Cisco Telepresence has also added value to Pine Tech's trainings for employers as they arm their workforces with a strong and uniform skill set from the beginning of the working relationship, rather than addressing complications related to unskilled labor after making personnel investments. Norris from AtScott Manufacturing contributed, "My investment has mainly been in people, but after seeing what [Cisco Telepresence] can do, I'm willing to pay for equipment, time or whatever is needed to continue these classes beyond the grant." The success of trainings among Pine Tech's manufacturing partners is matched by that of its healthcare partners, as they collaborate through their own interactive education network, supported by Cisco's Telepresence solution. The interactive, customized nature of training sessions made possible through Cisco Telepresence has been of particular interest to Pine Tech's healthcare partners, as a large component of medical education is building hands-on experience. These healthcare partners have taken interactive learning a step further, utilizing Cisco's lifelike video conferencing capabilities to supplement their training sessions using patient simulation manikins, immersing care providers in near-real life scenarios. With its education partners, Pine Tech serves K-12 school districts and high schools throughout the state, delivering courses otherwise beyond the capacity of the schools to provide.

In the coming months, Pine Tech will continue engaging industry partners and working with LNM to provide statewide connectivity and access through Cisco's Telepresence solution as well as collaborative communications and video conferencing technologies. In this time, the federal government will determine if additional funding will be available to maintain and to further expand this training network through the state of Minnesota.

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