

Ada County Improves Efficiencies with Videoconferencing



Ada County Sheriff's Office turns to Cisco to upgrade its video infrastructure to keep up with demand and decrease spending.

Executive Summary

Ada County Sheriff's Office

- **Industry:** Public Safety
- **Location:** Ada County, Idaho
- **Number of Employees:** 613

CHALLENGE

- Upgrade aging and outdated infrastructure
- Keep pace with demand for video technology
- Cut spending and increase efficiencies

SOLUTION

- Updated network foundation to support new technology
- Increased number of video end-points

RESULTS

- Reduced spending through use of video technology
- Increased productivity of detention officers and other staff
- Improved public and facility safety

Challenge

The Ada County Sheriff's Office is located in Boise, Idaho and provides law enforcement services to a population of approximately 400,000 residents. Along with the sheriff's office, three other municipal departments provide police services to Ada County (Boise, Meridian, and Garden City). The Ada County sheriff maintains a jail consisting of 1100 beds, with an average daily population of 800 inmates and an average length of stay of 36 days.

The jail is located approximately six miles from the Ada County Courthouse and 15 miles from the nearest state correctional facility. The sheriff is responsible for all court transports to and from the jail and the Department of Corrections, which made the transportation of inmates one of the highest operational expenses for the sheriff's office.

Ada County first implemented videoconferencing for arraignments in 2003. The infrastructure and majority of the hardware in use were from the initial implementation and had not been upgraded to meet business practices or technology standards. Because of the antiquated equipment, the county could not move forward to increase video functionality or capability, and, therefore, could not continue to sustain existing video usage.

Additionally, restrictions to the county's budget continually affected operations. Functional areas were required to do more with less or more with fixed staffing and resources. Although detention staff were reallocated to the transport team, the Jail Bureau still incurred significant overtime costs. The sheriff's office soon realized that the apparent need for additional or increased resources was misleading, and the consequence of losing current video functionality could not be supported with limited staffing levels.

With the existing network infrastructure in place, the county was at risk of losing the ability to conduct videoconferencing for day-to-day court arraignments. In addition, Ada County could not connect with outside agencies using this system. The existing system lacked the necessary hardware components to manage conference calls to external networks and did not allow multiple users to connect simultaneously. The system also did not have software for scheduling conferences or provide user-friendly controls for daily operation.

Facing limited budgets, an antiquated system, and the need to increase community services, the Ada County Sheriff's Office had two options. The first option was to continue to operate "as is," with limited resources and staffing, which would further the cycle of inefficiencies and create the false need for additional resources. Or, the county could define the business practices driving the need for increases in budget, which were causing a high operational cost, decreased efficiency, and indirectly decreased public safety.

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Kelsey Proctor, Business Systems Specialist, Ada County Sheriff's Office

Solution

To solve its budgetary problem and increase efficiencies, the Ada County Sheriff's Office turned to Cisco for its latest video solution. With its infrastructure already based on Cisco technology, Ada County planned to upgrade any outdated hardware and add new end points across the county to help enable videoconferencing. Additionally, the sheriff's office needed a vendor that could host a secure private video call for lawyers and their inmates.

Cisco was uniquely suited to help Ada County solve its problems, because it had recently developed a solution set called Connected Justice. The Cisco® Connected Justice platform is transforming how courts, law enforcement officials, correctional facilities, and healthcare systems collaborate with each other. Through video technology, the Cisco Connected Justice solutions are serving citizens across multiple geographies and driving down significant costs while speeding up the judicial process.

Currently, two courtrooms within the courthouse are outfitted with videoconferencing, and both connect back to one satellite courtroom inside the jail. Video court arraignments are conducted on a timely schedule Monday through Friday. Inmates remain at the jail and are escorted to the jail's satellite courtroom. Public defenders or private defense attorneys travel to the jail's satellite courtroom to provide client representation. Interpreters are also often requested at the jail to provide interpretation to in-custody inmates during the arraignment. All other court personnel remain at the courthouse inside of the videoconferencing courtroom, where they have access to live audio and video of the proceeding.

To solve the problems they were facing, increase functionality, and deliver higher quality video, Ada County again turned to Cisco to upgrade its videoconferencing hardware and install new end-points. However, to really achieve lifelike video, the county also upgraded its standard definition projectors, screens, and cameras. The upgrade was a complete end-to-end refresh, which revitalized the once-aging videoconferencing network in Ada County. Additionally, Ada County upgraded its video infrastructure to allow the ability to connect with outside agencies. With this ability, Ada County could partner with other agencies throughout the state to complete expert witness testimonies remotely, and to complete in-custody violation hearings via video.

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Product List

VIDEO

- Precision HD Cameras
- Precision Microphones
- Cisco TelePresence Management Suite
- Cisco Video Communication Server Expressway
- Cisco Video Communication Server Control
- Jabber
- Digital Media Switches, Receivers and Transmitters

Results

"By using videoconferencing, Ada County is able to save on the cost of deputies that accompany each inmate when they make a physical appearance at the courthouse, in addition to freeing up time to perform other law enforcement functions," says Kelsey Proctor, business specialist for the Ada County Sheriff's office.

"In some cases, these are people that require three deputies to move them, which is costly and time-consuming," she says. "The refreshed system and new infrastructure provide us options we did not have before. We can partner with other agencies and the courts to do high-risk appearances remotely. We are already doing video arraignments, and we've expanded to video for attorney-client visits, so our public defenders can stay at their offices in the courthouse, and they have immediate access to their clients that are in custody. Ultimately, it takes out that travel to and from the courthouse to the jail." Using video as a vehicle for such court appearances can save costs and also enhances safety in the community.

Ada County Trial Court utilizes videoconferencing technology to conduct initial court arraignments with inmates at the Ada County Jail. The ability to conduct court hearings by video with the Ada County Jail has proven beneficial and prevents more than 150 inmates each week from being transported to the courthouse for these appearances.

Integrating video technology in criminal justice business processes has increased public safety, increased efficiency (for all stakeholders), and decreased operational costs. These benefits offer a return on investment for the technology and provide opportunities to expand to other areas if proper funding and ongoing support are maintained.

For More Information

For more information on Cisco Connected Justice solutions go to:
<http://www.cisco.com/go/connectedjustice>.

