

South Texas City Connects Law Enforcement in New Ways



City of McAllen installs a Cisco TelePresence® solution to enhance numerous time-sensitive functions.

Executive Summary

City of McAllen

- **Industry:** State and Local Government
- **Location:** City of McAllen, Texas
- **Residents:** 130,000

CHALLENGE

- Need to enhance time savings in law enforcement
- Desire to expand collaboration services
- Need to streamline content and document sharing

SOLUTION

- Deployed an immersive, remote video solution
- Standardized collaboration technologies across the network
- Integrated voice, video, data, and network services

RESULTS

- Streamlined use of the city's collaboration resources
- Connected police officers with municipal judges in new ways
- Enabled remote distribution and approval of warrants

Challenge

The City of McAllen is located in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, and in comparison to more prominent cities like Austin, Dallas and Houston, McAllen is a relatively small city. The city's local government employs roughly 1800 people and provides a variety of services through more than 30 departments, making increasingly innovative choices when it comes to technology.

Several years ago McAllen's government realized that the internal phone systems were fragmented with no overarching standard. Nearly every building and department had its own system and billing process. These systems were implemented reactively and existed outside of a comprehensive plan that unified the city's communications.

Understanding the changes that needed to be made, Jeff Teer (a telecom analyst in McAllen's IT department) spearheaded a project to standardize the city's existing phone systems. In 2008, the city deployed Cisco Unified Communications Manager (CallManager)—a call control platform that connects endpoints and provides voice, video, messaging and web conferencing services—to simplify maintenance and management.

After deploying Cisco Call Manager, the costs of internal telephony decreased from \$32,000 to \$12,000 per month, saving almost \$20,000 in taxpayer dollars. With the new, interoperable voice solutions fully functioning, Teer then set his sights on further services and scalability.

"We wanted to make a quick turnaround from voice services to video services, so we could better connect functions within law enforcement," says Teer. "As a small city, we began to make big progress with our technical upgrades, and our search for an integrated video solution was no different."

Solution

Teer and his team knew they needed to explore more efficient ways to connect court activities with police departments and officers in the field. Obtaining warrants from judges who are off duty has always been a waiting game, filled with scheduling roadblocks and wasted time.

As an expansion of McAllen's collaboration offerings, Teer hoped that police officers could use video to connect with the city's judges and receive paperwork for a warrant immediately.

"We went through a competitive evaluation of video solutions and consulted with other cities in order to find the best fit for McAllen when it came to supporting law enforcement," says Teer. "Nothing seemed to fit until we got acquainted with Cisco

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Telecom Analyst, City of McAllen, Texas

TelePresence and the way immersive video could work with our existing systems without customization.”

The Cisco TelePresence solution is a high-definition video and spatial audio technology that links two physically separated rooms so that they resemble a single conference room regardless of location. In 2014, Teer began to design a new more fully-integrated collaboration network, and the IT team began to install Cisco TelePresence units in the police station.

After deployment, the Cisco TelePresence units connected police officers with on-call municipal judges, who installed Cisco Jabber® clients on their laptops, which can be easily accessed through basic mobile broadband. The Cisco Jabber integrated application is a communications tool providing video, instant messaging, voice, and conferencing.

In addition, Teer and his team also connected the Cisco TelePresence units to the police department's servers, allowing officers in the field to share documents and paperwork from the station with other personnel. This function was also combined with electronic signature capability, enabling on-call judges to validate court orders and warrants on demand.

“Our idea was to minimize wasted time and maximize potential value,” says Teer. “Using this integrated video network, our officers can discuss what they need and import content, which can then be reviewed, evaluated, and potentially signed by a judge in minutes.”

Results

A groundbreaking achievement in state and local government, the City of McAllen now uses video to streamline and advance law enforcement proceedings almost instantaneously. Now, when an officer needs something after hours, that officer can immediately connect with an on-call judge to expedite legal proceedings.

This connectivity not only saves government employees travel time (because judges no longer have to travel to court and process time-sensitive content), but also it encourages the efficient processing of warrants, which can make or break a legal case.

“We have municipal judges who are on call in the field that now use their laptops wherever they are to join TelePresence sessions with our officers,” says Teer. “This is a big win. It's an advancement for the city, but more so, it's a force multiplier for the judge.”

Due to the fast nature of proceedings in law enforcement, using Cisco TelePresence technology has changed the way that officers in McAllen move, often speeding up

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“Cisco worked with us to customize our approach and accommodated individual needs while maintaining the overall platform to standardize our systems.”

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the process of search and discovery.

“In the past officers were delayed in transit and stalled waiting for evidence. But time is of the essence when it comes to granting a warrant,” says Teer. “These collaboration tools help us to complete missions faster and more effectively.”

In addition, the installation of the Cisco TelePresence solution has helped to streamline other change management processes for McAllen. A catalyst in other areas, video technology is helping to streamline workflow by allowing city leaders to clean up paper processing and the collecting and mapping of materials. Due to these advances, the police department is starting to adopt other more updated methods of data sharing and management.

“Due to the interconnectivity of our new systems, the resources we allocate toward one project translate into benefits for another project. That’s the effect of our new type of collaboration environment,” says Teer.

Next Steps

The City of McAllen is looking in to expanding the benefits of video to remote arraignment and meetings between attorneys and their clients. Because arraignment involves transporting nearly a dozen people, it can be a time-consuming and expensive resource. Using a ruggedized version of its new Cisco TelePresence strategy, Teer hopes to bridge the gap for judges, attorneys, and their clients, and establish extensive cost savings for the city.

In addition, the city is looking to expand the reach of its content servers. While access to those servers on the go is benefiting municipal judges, Teer and his team are hoping to spread availability to human resources so that other government departments can benefit from this type of beneficial document exchange.

For More Information

To find out more about Cisco Jabber solutions, visit: <http://www.cisco.com/go/jabber>

To find out more about Cisco TelePresence solutions, visit: <http://www.cisco.com/go/telepresence>

To find out more about the Cisco Unified Communications, go to: <http://www.cisco.com/go/uc>

Product List

VIDEO

- Cisco Jabber solution
- Cisco TelePresence solution

VOICE

- Cisco Unified Communications Manager (CallManager)
- Cisco Unified Communications