GHD uses Cisco solutions to enhance collaboration and deliver global projects faster.

Challenge
GHD is one of the world’s leading engineering, architecture, and environmental consulting companies. Established in 1928, the firm employs more than 5500 people across five continents and serves clients in the global markets of water, energy and resources, environment, property and buildings, and transportation. GHD is unique in that it is wholly owned by its employees and operates without a formal headquarters. Instead, the firm strives to unite the brainpower and skill sets of global teams and deliver services across 70 disciplines driven by a fundamental philosophy of teamwork known as “One GHD.”

Historically, sustaining the level of collaboration necessary to operate as One GHD involved “a lot of telephone conversations and extensive air travel,” says Elizabeth Harper, chief information officer at GHD. As the firm grew to well over 100 offices and added new practices to the business, staying connected became even more critical and expensive. GHD decided to provide employees with tools that would enable them to collaborate effectively without constant travel. “We wanted to decrease travel costs as well as improve employee productivity overall by giving them more time to do meaningful work,” says Harper.

At the same time, GHD needed tools to enable its very mobile executive team to work and meet from around the globe. Collaboration had to be easy and convenient to facilitate knowledge sharing and improve innovation. Harper and her team prepared a business case for collaboration tools, hoping to achieve payback on the solution via travel cost reductions.

Solution
Giving Employees the Right Tools
After evaluating various collaboration solutions, GHD engaged Cisco® Gold Partner Bridge Point Communications to deploy Cisco Jabber®, working with Cisco Unified Communications Manager, allowing all 5500 employees to collaborate using a variety...
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“I have 19 direct reports and only 4 of those people work here in Sydney,” says Richard Fechner, global technical leader for energy and resources at GHD. “The ability to share screens and documents and collaborate with voice and video has helped us build the same kind of personal rapport we would have if they were local.”

Bringing Conversations to Life

For several years, GHD has used Cisco Unified Communications Manager and Cisco Unified IP Phones to deliver enterprise-class IP communications. “We chose Cisco collaboration and communications solutions because of the depth and breadth of capabilities, as well as the integration that they offer,” says Harper. “We didn’t have to combine products from different vendors to get the functionality we required.”

The combination of Cisco Unified Communications Manager and Jabber allows employees to determine if and how colleagues are available and collaborate instantly using a variety of methods. Users simply click to begin an IM session, initiate a smartphone call, or easily start a videoconferencing call. “We’ve found that people react much more freely with video,” says Harper. “You can judge reactions better than on a voice call; it’s easier to tell if people are engaged. Many of our internal calls are now video calls.”

GHD also uses Cisco routers and switches for its network infrastructure, benefiting from an intelligent Cisco Medianet™ architecture that can cost-effectively scale to support video while offering features such as auto-configuration and media monitoring. GHD contracts with Cisco SMARTnet™ Service to resolve network issues faster with expert technical support, flexible hardware coverage, and access to Cisco engineers. “We’ve standardized on Cisco in our data centers, and it’s been an excellent transition for us,” says Harper.

Results

By providing a common user experience across devices, GHD was able to get its employees up and running quickly with Cisco collaboration solutions, without extensive training or support. Teams around the world stay in touch by actively using Jabber, and a lot of meetings are now conducted via WebEx. “The softphone capability in Jabber has been a wonderful improvement for our traveling executives and managers,” says Harper. “We’ve reduced telephony costs while allowing them to still engage professionally from wherever they happen to be.”

Although GHD already had a culture of collaboration in place with One GHD, using Cisco communication tools has given the company new opportunities for increased knowledge sharing. The business impact has been increased innovation and the ability to better leverage skill sets across different geographies for reduced time to market. “Our people are our competitive advantage. Using Cisco collaboration tools we can marshal the full

of devices. Jabber users can access instant messaging, voice, video, voice messaging, desktop sharing, and conferencing. GHD also deployed Cisco WebEx® Meeting Center as a cloud-based web conferencing solution, with high-definition video, integrated audio, and real-time content sharing across its global offices. This capability is available to all GHD employees. Users can launch WebEx directly from Jabber or Outlook and easily escalate a conversation into a web conference that combines file and presentation sharing with voice and video.

The Cisco solutions are easy for GHD employees to use because of their intuitive layout and integration with common office productivity applications. Users can start or join an online meeting with one click from their email application, IM client, or web browser.

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power of GHD resources far more easily than ever before," says Fechner. "We’ve been able to build stronger teams, and improve market penetration."

GHD extends collaboration capabilities externally if a project requires it, simplifying participation for customers and partners. Employees can work more flexible hours rather than being tied to a single office location, and participate in meetings across time zones. "Levelling the playing field for collaboration has improved employee productivity," says Harper. "Our Cisco collaboration tools have made a major difference in how IT is perceived by the organization, and ultimately are improving project quality and delivery times to our clients."

Payback was achieved much faster than the business case predicted, in less than 12 months, in reduced travel costs alone. “Part of my mandate is to deliver cost-effective IT services, and our Cisco collaboration solutions have paid for themselves many times over,” says Harper.

Next Steps
GHD is considering implementing the Cisco Capture, Transform, Share enterprise video platform to deliver an engaging viewing experience for streaming video content. This capability will allow GHD to conduct training sessions, document meetings, and increase knowledge sharing even further. The firm also plans to expand its use of room-based video to more global offices and conduct external WebEx meetings over video. “We will be able to transform the way we manage, share, and consume video content, and improve communication with our customers and partners,” says Harper.

For More Information
To find out more about Cisco Collaboration Solutions, please visit: www.cisco.com/go/collaboration.

Product List

Unified Communications
• Cisco Unified Communications Manager
• Cisco Unified IP Phone 7900 Series

Collaboration Applications
• Cisco Jabber
• Cisco WebEx Meeting Center

TelePresence
• Cisco Telepresence MX Series
• Cisco Telepresence EX Series

Services
• Cisco SMARTnet