

## Architectural Firm Expedites Multinational Projects Online

KPF relies on web meeting applications to improve productivity and reduce travel for global project teams

### Executive Summary

#### Customer Name:

Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates (KPF)

#### Industry:

Architecture

#### Location:

New York, NY

#### Number of Employees:

500

#### Challenge:

- Coordinate complex design projects with large teams across diverse locations
- Engage in real-time working sessions globally while reducing travel expenses
- Use technology to gain an edge in a fast-paced, highly competitive industry

#### Solution:

- Cisco WebEx™ technology robust enough to handle heavy image files in real time
- Web meeting applications enable fast online support for staff around the world
- Cisco® technology, from networking to IP phones, integral to day-to-day operations

#### Results:

- WebEx increases global productivity, expediting project cycle times with less travel
- Online meetings help maintain business continuity even in an epidemic
- Web conferencing enables more environmentally sustainable business practices

### Challenge

One of the most prestigious architectural design firms in the world, Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates (KPF) is an award-winning, international practice with studios in New York, London, Shanghai, and Hong Kong. The practice provides full architectural design, programming, urban design, master planning, and graphic and product design services to clients in both the public and private sectors. Developed over the past 30 years, KPF's extensive design portfolio includes many building types—from institutional and commercial projects to the design of entire cities. Staff members represent 43 countries and speak 30 languages.

For KPF, working effectively with multinational teams is essential to success. At the start of each project, architects located in the firm's four offices assemble teams of structural, mechanical, civil, and other engineers and consultants situated in locations as diverse as Moscow, Abu Dhabi, and Beijing. "Real-time working sessions are imperative during all phases of a project, requiring our project leaders to travel extensively," says James Brogan, AIA, senior associate principal and director, firmwide technology at KPF. "We needed a better way to communicate with geographically dispersed teams in a synchronous way."

Prior to 2003, the firm tried to coordinate global projects by mailing materials or distributing informational CDs, but team members would view and interpret the data differently and separately. "Without an online solution, we just couldn't get everyone coordinated in a cost-effective way," says Brogan. "We compete in a very fast-paced global environment, so we needed a solution that could keep up. That's why we turned to Cisco WebEx."

### Solution

To address KPF's communications challenges, Brogan began investigating online meeting solutions. In addition to WebEx, he evaluated solutions such as Raindance (now InterCall) and Microsoft Office Live Meeting. The choice was clear. "As soon as we trialed WebEx, we knew that it was robust enough to handle our firm's requirements, including easy desktop sharing and working with heavy image files in real time," says Brogan. "Plus, the global WebEx infrastructure helps ensure that the technology will remain stable regardless where or when we conduct meetings."

Today, KPF uses Cisco WebEx Meeting Center™ to conduct highly effective project and client meetings worldwide. Typically, 5 to 10 people from two or three global sites attend each meeting. "WebEx gives us the ability to share data in conjunction with video, and that combination is very powerful," says Brogan. "It has made our online sessions as efficient as in-person meetings." KPF meetings include multiple 3D animations that present different views of architectural structures. These animations often feature virtual walkthroughs as well as external front and top fly-throughs that show the architecture from all angles and in context. "WebEx enables us to confidently launch

a variety of applications and interactively present 3D models, CAD files, digital sketches, PowerPoint presentations, and Excel spreadsheets to our global teams and clients,” says Brogan. “WebEx integrated telephony makes audio setup and access simple and straightforward.”

In addition to conducting international project meetings online, KPF uses Meeting Center to provide technical support to staff members around the world. “WebEx enables our New York and London IT staff to access a computer in our Shanghai office and troubleshoot technical issues instantly,” says Brogan. “That capability makes it easier for us to streamline our IT operations and keep all four of our studios up and running.”

WebEx is just one of many Cisco technologies that KPF depends on to maintain a fast-paced global operation. “We rely on Cisco for our network infrastructure,” says Brogan. “We keep our four offices connected through a Cisco wide-area network (WAN), and we use Cisco IP telephony throughout the firm as well. Along with WebEx, these technologies are really integral to how we operate on a day-to-day basis.”

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— James Brogan, AIA, Senior Associate Principal and Director, Firmwide Technology, KPF

## Results

WebEx significantly increases KPF’s global productivity, helping the firm expedite project cycle times while improving the quality of meetings. “With WebEx, it’s easy to create an instant meeting and share information in real time,” says Brogan. “Travel is no longer a bottleneck in carrying out our projects, execution moves more quickly, and our teams optimize their time.” In a fast-paced industry, higher productivity translates into a clear competitive advantage. “Our clients know that we can maintain more frequent contact with them, no matter the time or location,” says Brogan. “Especially in times of economic challenge, it’s crucial for us to offer that level of availability while keeping our travel costs low.”

Shortly after implementing WebEx, KPF had to suspend all travel to Asia due to the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic. “Our work couldn’t stop, so we used WebEx to keep our projects on schedule,” says Brogan. “Without WebEx, we wouldn’t have been able to continue working with colleagues and clients in Asia, and a large number of our multinational projects would have come to a complete standstill.” The SARS epidemic created a turning point for WebEx usage at KPF. “Since the execution of every project suddenly required WebEx, it became an even greater asset to our organization during that time,” says Brogan. “WebEx has since become a standard firmwide application for KPF.”

WebEx is an environmentally sustainable way to work, eliminating a great deal of paper and nonessential travel. That aligns perfectly with KPF’s own commitment to environmental concerns. “In our field, it’s increasingly important for us to remain aware of sustainability issues, especially in regard to designing buildings that consume less energy,” says Brogan. “We’ve reflected those concerns throughout our internal operations, eliminating paper and going digital whenever possible. WebEx certainly plays a role in those efforts to preserve natural resources.”

## Next Steps

WebEx usage is widespread at KPF, and Brogan sees no reason for that to change. “We’ve been using WebEx now for more than six years,” he says. “It’s really become integrated with all of our project work. In fact, teams typically don’t say ‘Let’s do a web conference.’ They say ‘Let’s do a WebEx.’ So this technology has really become part of our corporate culture.”

## For More Information

To find out more about Cisco WebEx, go to <http://www.cisco.com/web/products/webex/index.html>.

## Product List

Cisco WebEx



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Cisco Systems (USA) Pte. Ltd.  
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