

Workplace architecture and design firm gets creative through web collaboration



Executive Summary

Customer Name: Space Matrix Design Consultants

Industry: Architecture and Interior Design

Location: Singapore

Employees: 450

Business Need

- Simplify and amplify online collaboration between remote teams, customers and partners
- Preserve natural human interactions – such as brainstorming – over web conferencing
- Ensure high levels of productivity for a geographically-dispersed organization

Solution

Cisco WebEx® Meeting Center

Results

- Greater productivity through effective collaboration between employees, partners and clients
- More flexibility in staffing and resourcing of projects worldwide
- Improved cost-effectiveness due to travel savings
- More engaged team members through a reliable, seamless web conferencing platform
- Happier clients as a result of more regular updates and interactions

Singapore-based architecture and interior design firm Space Matrix relies on Cisco WebEx® conferencing technology to enhance collaboration among geographically dispersed teams

Creativity from concept to concrete

Founded in 2001, Space Matrix has become a major design force worldwide, ranking #28 in Interior Design's Magazine's 2013 Top 100 Giants Survey¹.

Renowned for award-winning and creative work, the architectural and design firm operates four integrated business services in Asia: Space Matrix Design Consultants which has a strong focus in workplace design; Space Matrix Architects & Planners; BLINK which does hospitality design; and QSigma Cost Consultants.

Among the firm's acclaimed projects is the Cisco Systems' regional headquarters in Singapore, which won multiple awards. It received the 2014 Asia Pacific Property Award for Highly Commended Office Interior Singapore², the 2014 Design Is... Award Market Winner for large office category³, and the 2013 Outstanding Office Space Award for business park space⁴.

1 <http://www.interiordesign.net/articles/detail/34631-2013-top-100-giants-rankings/>

2 <http://propertyawards.net/asia-pacific-2014/>

3 <http://designis.shawcontractgroup.com/2014/peopleschoice/entries.php?pid=8>

4 <http://rfpmagazine.com/index.php/office-space/office-space-news/workplace/1542-outstanding-office-space-awards-nomination-cisco-systems>

“We can just use WebEx to communicate and interact as and when necessary, allowing us to be flexible with how we best staff and resource our projects.”

— Darren Rizza
Space Matrix Group CIO

Breaking barriers to collaboration

With 450 employees spread across more than 10 offices in Singapore, Australia, India, Thailand, Vietnam and China, ensuring effective collaboration between geographically dispersed teams, partners and clients is integral to Space Matrix's creative and commercial success.

Darren Rizza, Chief Information Officer (CIO) and Chief Digital Officer (CDO) of Space Matrix Group, explained, “In our business, it's very common for each project team to be made up of individuals based in different countries and lines of work. Often, employees won't only talk to each other; they'll have to collaborate with partners, and present ideas or provide regular progress updates to clients too.”

To meet demanding collaboration requirements, Space Matrix chose Cisco WebEx® Meeting Center, a leading cloud-based web conferencing solution that offers high-definition video, integrated audio and real-time content sharing across the company's regional offices.

“We've used earlier versions of WebEx over the last few years, but when the time came to re-evaluate our requirements given the growth we've experienced, we wanted to do a proper assessment of what was available out there,” said Rizza.

However, it became clear to Space Matrix that sticking with WebEx was the smart thing to do. “We stayed with WebEx because it was something that our employees were already familiar with, and knew how to use. WebEx has also built on its leadership position to continuously add new features to the service, so we never felt that we were behind the curve on any essential conferencing capability for our business.”

WebEx scales easily, supporting the present 450 users in Space Matrix as the company continues to grow its business rapidly. The solution runs on the Cisco WebEx® Collaboration Cloud – a real-time global network that delivers fast, reliable and secure performance needed for high quality web-based video conferencing.

Greater creativity through collaboration

Employees have found WebEx so easy to use that it's become part and parcel of their everyday collaboration process. On average, about six Space Matrix employees are involved in each project, alongside one to four clients or partner consultants. The employees use WebEx conferences daily, sometimes as frequently as three times a day, according to Rizza. “Calls usually have up to five participants, but we've seen it go beyond 10 for larger projects.”

Many projects are also take place in different parts of the world. Yet even if teams and clients are in different locations, WebEx ensures “100 percent engagement and participation”. So it has a key role to play in amplifying team creativity, fostering client relationships, and helping keep to project timelines.

“WebEx allows everyone – no matter where they are located – to interact as if we were all in one room. The video in the main panel automatically switches to display the person who is speaking, creating an intuitive, engaging meeting experience,” Rizza said. “Essentially, WebEx allows us work naturally, without feeling like the technology is getting in the way.”

“It makes things so much easier when employees know the WebEx service always just works. We’re in the architecture and design business... not tech geeks.”

— **Darren Rizza**
Space Matrix Group CIO

Rizza added that WebEx allows all participants to mark up changes to presentations, spreadsheets, or any PDF document shared during the web conference. “There’s also a virtual whiteboard which we can use just like a conventional whiteboard for us to brainstorm, take notes, and get creative.”

After all, the best indication of an effective collaboration technology is not so much its features, but that it does not hinder natural human interaction and the organic flow of creativity during design collaboration, Rizza stated.

Better productivity and efficiency

WebEx conferencing also helps the company overcome travel limitations that might otherwise restrict partnering with the best resources, Rizza noted.

“There are a lot of back-and-forth discussions between design members, consultants and vendors who may be in different countries. WebEx allows us to communicate and interact as and when necessary, allowing us to be flexible with how we best staff and resource our projects.”

The consistent and reliable performance of WebEx is another big plus. Space Matrix’s employees, partners and clients are never distracted by jittery video or audio lags during web conferences. Even upgrades and improvements to the solution are done under the hood and rarely noticed by users.

“We do notice new features as the result of recent upgrades. But the most important aspect for us is that the WebEx service always just works. We’re in the architecture and design business, not tech geeks. We don’t want to have to waste our time fiddling around with unreliable technology.”

That said, Rizza added that they are anticipating the new Cisco Collaboration Meeting Room (CMR) capability, which allows users to join a WebEx meeting from video endpoints (personal- and room-based), besides the usual desktop and mobile. This will not only extend the value of existing video investments, but also offer employees greater flexibility to join meetings from an endpoint that suits their meeting requirement best.

Happier clients

Ultimately, by allowing employees to stay connected with clients via WebEx, Space Matrix can deliver better experiences and enhance relationships, no matter where the clients are based.

Organizing a physical visit to office sites is not always feasible, especially when frequent visits or urgent decisions are required, Rizza explained. So the project team would run WebEx off a smartphone, and take participants through a virtual walkthrough of the site via video conferencing. For workplace clients especially, Rizza said, it is a great opportunity to show the good synergy of design and technology in the modern workplace.

“A service like WebEx allows us to maintain deep connections with clients, and gives us the flexibility to be creative as well. We’ve used Webex to get immediate, real-time feedback from our clients,” he said. “In fact, they’ve made decisions based on these virtual walkthroughs.”

As Space Matrix’s digital strategies continue to grow in the future, WebEx will play a key role in helping to enable more empowering collaborative work in client project teams, Rizza noted.

For more information

For more information about Cisco WebEx collaboration solutions, please visit:
<http://www.cisco.com/c/en/us/products/conferencing/index.html>

For more information about Space Matrix, please visit:
<http://www.spacematrix.com>

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