

Cisco IP/VC Videoconferencing and Job Corps **Building** an Interactive and **Scalable Training** Network



Job Corps (www.jobcorps.org) is the nation's largest and most comprehensive residential education and job training program for at-risk youth, ages 16 through 24. Administered by the Department of Labor (DOL), Job Corps centers are spread throughout the United States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Since 1964, the program has provided more than 1.7 million disadvantaged young people with the integrated academic, vocational, and social skills training they need to gain independence, high quality long-term jobs, and advanced education.

Highlights at a Glance

Challenge

Job Corps needed to train thousands of managers and staff while getting the most from its budget. Software deployment, user training and periodic policy updates had to be communicated to the Job Corps Centers on an ongoing basis, and this communication often included travel. Travel expenses were increasing each year, taking both time and money.

Staff turnover and attrition made it important to constantly train new employees and volunteers. The Department of Labor contracted with numerous small business contractors over the last five years to network the entire Job Corps program with an end-to-end solution to allow videoconferencing and video-on-demand (VOD) services for each of the service centers to provide a low-cost distance learning and training solution.

Solution

Job Corps was able to use the Cisco complete line of products to build their network from the ground up. Cisco IP/VC videoconferencing equipment made a scalable, reliable, and effective training program available to more than 120 Job Corps locations around the U.S. while saving Job Corps financial resources that could be used elsewhere for the Job Corps customer "the student".

Results

- Laid the groundwork for intricate, robust IP-enabled applications
- Enabled volunteers and employees to focus on local activities instead of traveling to far-off training seminars
- Provided real-time and VOD training on a national level
- Saved on travel-related costs, allowing the DOL to fund additional Job Corps-related programs
- Delivered higher quality of training services

- Enabled first-hand training for employees in regional offices
- Promoted student interest in IP technology
- Policy updates broadcasted nationwide instantly

Job Corps' Complete Cisco Solution

Cisco AVVID (Architecture for Voice, Video, and Integrated Data) is the one enterprise architecture that enables a new breed of robust applications, services, and technologies to help customers enhance their competitive edge and meet their business goals. Job Corps, a national education and job training program, found Cisco IP/VC, enabled by the Cisco AVVID architecture, to be an effective means of reducing travel and training costs; allowing employees and volunteers to work collaboratively and productively across geographic.

Working closely with Cisco, Job Corps Data Center's contractor recently implemented a complete Cisco solution, including IP phones, H.323 gateways, and videoconferencing endpoints, with dramatic results. With the initial launch a success, Job Corps plans to rollout Cisco IP/VC to each of its regional and local offices to expand its training network nationwide.

The Challenge

More than 120 Job Corps locations exist nationwide, including those in the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, administered by regional offices, covering several states each. Each region controls a varying number of Job Corps centers to train young people for the workplace. Once students have been admitted to the program, they receive their training at a selected Job Corps center. All students receive an integrated academic, vocational, and social skills course. Students showing outstanding performance also receive advanced instruction.

The Department of Labor's Job Corps Data Center (JCDC) in San Marcos, Texas is responsible for the payroll, reporting, and administrative data processing for the nation-wide Job Corps program. As with the management of any training program, it was apparent

that as Job Corps center staff left the program, and new staff came aboard, centers were forced to constantly repeat staff training. Policy changes and additions required traveling and training for center staff—taking time that could be used for providing support to the Job Corps student.

The Job Corps Data Center (JCDC) contractor (currently RSIS), a leading network solutions provider to government agencies, was contracted to build LAN and WAN connectivity for the job centers and the main data center. The contractor screened several network vendors, but found the end-to-end Cisco IP/VC videoconferencing solution, based on the Cisco AVVID architecture, provided a complete solution: one suite of products to connect the centers as well as videoconferencing and simulcasting services.

The Solution

“It's about consistency, the Cisco end-to-end solution, and Cisco IP/VC products made this possible, no other vendor can provide everything we need, and make it all work together.”

The major catalyst for a change to Cisco IP/VC and Cisco IP/TV products was the savings that Job Corps could achieve. The savings in people hours, travel fees, and ability to leverage instructor time with cost-effective reach and usability made Cisco IP/VC not only a

powerful teaching tool but a sound investment.

The contractor had a unique opportunity with Job Corps; because, the Department of Labor could start with a “wish list” of features and attributes to build into the network. Hardware that could provide a complete end-to-end solution was the only way to ensure that all of the systems worked perfectly. Cisco helped in testing, mapped the network, and upgraded Job Corps existing network to make bandwidth available for the Cisco IP/VC implementation as well as the entire Cisco-supplied network.

The Cisco solution supports videoconferencing, video on demand, video broadcasting, a range of video management features, and IP telephony; enabling a broad spectrum of Job Corps functions including training, corporate communications, collaborative meetings, and distance learning. Enabled by Cisco AVVID, the



Cisco IP/VC solution seamlessly integrated into Job Corp's Cisco-powered network, allowing Job Corps staff, for the first time, to work collaboratively and productively across geographical boundaries.

The Result

The Cisco IP/VC solution has been installed in 18 test locations, and Job Corps end goal is to have the entire Job Corps network up by mid-2001.

The IP telephony and video calling capabilities offer by Cisco, and enabled by the Cisco AVVID, also played an important role in Job Corps' decision.. The Chicago Job Corps center tracked the return-on-investment realized by using the Cisco IP/VC solution and IP calling, finding that long-distance fees have dramatically decreased with the change from "switch pricing" to "dedicated service" to save 5c a minute in long-distance fees. The year-to-year savings are expected to top \$900,000.00 per year.

The Cisco IP/VC solution is more than just a training tool. Cisco IP/VC is creating student interest, prompting some centers to launch technology-focused classes to teach basic networking essentials.

The Cisco IP/TV VOD provides new volunteers and employees with initial Job Corps policies and procedures, as well as periodic policy changes and multicast updates. Employees no longer have to travel outside the center for training courses, keeping them at the Job Corps center to devote more time to support the Job Corps program.

Eric Vazquez, the Director of Technology for the Data Center contractor (RSIS), points out that the technologies enabled by Cisco AVVID provided all of the pieces to make the Job Corps network a reality. "It's about consistency, the Cisco end-to-end solution, and Cisco IP/VC products made this possible, no other vendor can provide everything we need, and make it all work together."

Job Corps and the DOL have been won over by the flexibility of Cisco IP/VC, Mr. Vazquez commented, "A multi-service backbone is not only feasible but desirable. The interoperability of voice, video, and data can exist over the same network quite easily."

Ethan Johnson a trainer at the Gary Job Corps center best summed up, "Cisco IP/VC has made a big impact on our center. We don't have to trust that we took good notes or our memory; now training is immediate and first-hand. For the first time our course options aren't limited by budget constraints, but by how many ideas we can come up with!"

**Corporate Headquarters**

Cisco Systems, Inc.
170 West Tasman Drive
San Jose, CA 95134-1706
USA

www.cisco.com

Tel: 408 526-4000
800 553-NETS (6387)
Fax: 408 526-4100

European Headquarters

Cisco Systems Europe
11, Rue Camille Desmoulins
92782 Issy Les Moulineaux
Cedex 9
France

www.cisco.com

Tel: 33 1 58 04 60 00
Fax: 33 1 58 04 61 00

Americas Headquarters

Cisco Systems, Inc.
170 West Tasman Drive
San Jose, CA 95134-1706
USA

www.cisco.com

Tel: 408 526-7660
Fax: 408 527-0883

Asia Pacific Headquarters

Cisco Systems Australia, Pty., Ltd
Level 17, 99 Walker Street
North Sydney
NSW 2059 Australia

www.cisco.com

Tel: +61 2 8448 7100
Fax: +61 2 9957 4350

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