

Global Healthcare Company Improves Communications for Dispersed Employees

Baxter Healthcare Corporation uses Cisco TelePresence to enable face-to-face communication.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
BAXTER HEALTHCARE CORPORATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthcare 46,000 + Employees
BUSINESS CHALLENGE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enable effective communication and collaboration among globally dispersed teams Accelerate decision making
NETWORK SOLUTION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deploy Cisco TelePresence technology to enable “virtual” collaboration that is as effective as face-to-face meetings
BUSINESS RESULTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More effective collaboration Reduced time required for troubleshooting, decision making, and go-to-market Reduced travel costs

Business Challenge

Baxter Healthcare Corporation assists people with some of the most complex medical conditions, such as hemophilia, cancer, immune disorders, and kidney disease. With more than 46,000 employees and manufacturing facilities in 26 countries, Baxter is a global enterprise with 2007 sales in excess of US\$11 billion.

Baxter depends on the abilities of its teams to communicate and collaborate effectively. Engineers and quality assurance personnel work with research and development (R&D) specialists and other partners to develop and refine products. Often, team members are located around the globe, yet they must collaborate effectively on a wide variety of projects to meet business goals and ensure quality of patient care.

All across the company, high-quality communication and effective collaboration are vital to Baxter’s mission. With manufacturing plants, R&D facilities, partners and clinical experts located throughout the world, Baxter’s globally dispersed teams must be able to share their vision and ideas clearly and solve problems efficiently.

The global nature of Baxter’s business means that its employees face communication challenges daily. Traditional conference calls and teleconferences were not meeting teams’ needs for immediacy and clarity, and teams were finding it difficult to compensate for cultural barriers over small-screen video with poor resolution. Faced with rising travel costs and some technological limitations related to existing infrastructure, Baxter needed a solution that would deliver the benefits of in-person meetings, thereby facilitating faster troubleshooting, decision-making, and go-to-market capabilities.

Network Solution

One way that Baxter addressed its global communication challenges was with an initial deployment of six Cisco® TelePresence™ meeting rooms. Cisco TelePresence combines high-quality audio, high-definition video, and interactive elements to deliver an in-person meeting experience over Baxter’s network no matter where participants are located. Cisco installed the first units at Baxter’s main campus sites, focusing on users in R&D, manufacturing, and marketing.

The company discovered that Cisco TelePresence adds important depth to meetings. “Our quality assurance organization has discovered that TelePresence is ideal for important face-to-face meetings involving distributed teams,” says Ron Chase, vice president of IT for Baxter’s BioScience business. According to Chase, Cisco TelePresence meetings help bridge the cultural divide by providing the ability to see and feel human interaction. Attendees gain additional insights through the “in-the-room” experience enabled by Cisco TelePresence.

Baxter’s quality assurance (QA) teams use Cisco TelePresence for staff meetings and one-on-one discussions among managers. Using visual cues delivered by ultra-high-definition video (1080 progressive scan) on large plasma screens, QA teams have a clear understanding of the commitments and plans for which they are responsible.

Cisco TelePresence also helps Baxter develop new products and perfect existing ones. Using Cisco TelePresence, Baxter’s R&D organization conducts working sessions between developers and project managers in Austria and California, for example, taking advantage of virtual, face-to-face interaction to quickly troubleshoot defects, perfect designs, and make decisions efficiently. Because of the immediacy of Cisco TelePresence, teams understand problems much more quickly and can talk through them to find creative solutions, benefits that they had not experienced with traditional teleconferencing. During one Cisco TelePresence session, engineers and quality control staff worked together on a problem with a product component. Being able to share a life-size image of the component with the whole team on the call introduced an entirely new dimension to the meeting. The team quickly gained complete understanding of the issues and rapidly resolved the problem.

Training personnel now use Cisco TelePresence to show training videos about Baxter products to physician consultants, who review, critique, and help modify them. Such collaboration is not possible on poor-resolution or desktop video, and the traditional method has been to fly all of the consultants and video personnel to one location.

“TelePresence has enabled faster decision making and problem solving among groups who use it. It’s streamlining the way projects move through the system.”

—Ron Chase, Vice President of IT, Bioscience, Baxter Healthcare Corporation

Business Results

Some of the business benefits of Cisco TelePresence were immediate: communication among globally distributed team members improved; misunderstandings due to cultural differences decreased; better collaboration created a new immediacy that led to faster problem solving and greater creative synergy. In fact, some teams plan to use Cisco TelePresence instead of conference calls for staff meetings because of the effective troubleshooting that it allows.

These immediate communication and collaboration benefits enabled greater R&D productivity and shorter go-to-market time. Baxter’s hiring process also benefited from the technology as managers now have the ability to interview candidates using Cisco TelePresence and avoid the missteps and incomplete impressions that can occur over the telephone.

The quality of the interaction using Cisco TelePresence has enabled Baxter to reduce travel costs. When effective meetings are possible with team members in multiple locations, people feel less compelled to travel.

Lessons Learned

To help ensure maximum benefit from a Cisco TelePresence investment, Will O'Shea, Cisco TelePresence program manager, recommends an internal marketing campaign and ongoing training to show employees the possibilities of the new technology. This campaign should help ensure that as many targeted users as possible have the opportunity to use Cisco TelePresence so they can truly understand the experience. Companies can also maximize the product's value by creating and enforcing a travel policy that focuses on Cisco TelePresence use whenever possible, and targeting internal marketing communications to the most frequent travelers between Cisco TelePresence-equipped locations.

Baxter's experience also shows that a user's first-time experience is crucial. Switching to Cisco TelePresence involves changing the mindset and culture of a company. Humans are naturally resistant to change, however, and users are often accustomed to telephone and email in preference to meetings or teleconferencing. If these users do not have a good experience the first time, they could resist using Cisco TelePresence indefinitely.

Ron Chase and others who have used Cisco TelePresence are optimistic about its future role at Baxter. They anticipate a time when Cisco TelePresence equipment will be easily accessible in even more locations at Baxter, as well as in locations of its customers and suppliers. With fewer obstacles due to distance and miscommunication, Baxter can execute its mission more effectively and continue to improve the healthcare of individuals around the globe.

For More Information

To find out more about Cisco Telepresence, go to: <http://www.cisco.com/go/telepresence>.



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