Web-Based Video Conferencing Enhances Employee Collaboration

PolyOne Corporation uses online tools to support online video conferences while significantly lowering meeting costs.

Challenge

PolyOne Corporation is a provider of specialized polymer materials, services, and solutions for a wide variety of industries, including healthcare, electronics, automotive, and consumer products. In addition to three corporate offices located in North America, Europe, and Asia, the company operates more than 60 manufacturing centers and warehouses in 20 countries, producing polymer materials that customers use to make polymer articles ranging from medical devices to vinyl siding. PolyOne serves over 10,000 customers in 35 countries with annual revenue of more than US$2 billion. PolyOne works with nearly all types of polymer resins, including biopolymers for sustainable solutions.

As a company with global reach, PolyOne often faces global demands to facilitate communication among its employees. Barbara Walker, director of global IT operations at PolyOne, leads a team responsible for providing a highly reliable, secure, and cost-effective technology infrastructure to support the company’s business communications systems. Like many companies, PolyOne needed to reduce expenditures, and Walker found herself looking for ways to accomplish more with fewer resources. “Our travel had really been cut back as part of companywide cost containment measures, so we were looking for better ways to collaborate, internally as well as externally, in a virtual team environment,” she says.

Meetings that involve thousands of PolyOne workers offered one of the biggest opportunities for cost savings. “Our CEO hosts quarterly global employee meetings for several thousand people, and we were looking for a way to make hosting these events easier,” Walker says. “We also wanted the ability to include video in our meetings in a cost-effective way.” Walker needed a global solution that would enable PolyOne employees to communicate more effectively while keeping costs down.

Solution

Walker and her team tried implementing other online conferencing applications, but PolyOne employees found them difficult to use. “When we were using other web-conferencing solutions, attendees were often required to find their IP address, so the first 15 minutes of every meeting were wasted looking for these numbers,” says Walker. After deciding to implement a new meeting tool, Walker explored several options and chose Cisco WebEx™. “We looked at other vendors, but we were already using Cisco network solutions, and WebEx offered all of the features that we needed, especially video,” she says. “WebEx is easy to use, which is very important to us, and WebEx is easy to scale, since it can be used for events that are large or small.”
Finding a solution that could be deployed across all of the company’s local and international offices was also important to Walker. "WebEx has global reach, which is incredibly vital to our everyday business operations in North America, Europe, and Asia," she says. "Employees in all of our regions use WebEx for web-based meetings, so having local language support is crucial as well."

Walker established internal WebEx training programs to help ensure that employees can leverage all of the solution’s features, including video capabilities. "As a company, we have been moving toward video to make our virtual meetings more interactive," she says. "Business is based on building relationships with people, and seeing your colleagues face-to-face just makes a meeting better."

As more PolyOne employees experience Cisco WebEx meetings, Walker has seen the use of online conferencing expand throughout the organization. "Word is spreading, and people have definitely started to embrace WebEx," she says. "More and more departments are using this technology because it’s so intuitive and interactive."

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— Barbara Walker, director of global IT operations, PolyOne Corporation

Results
WebEx has enabled PolyOne employees to utilize video conferencing and other features that make online collaboration more robust and effective while significantly reducing the costs of all of its web-based meetings. "By switching to WebEx, we’ve been able to lower our overall per-user cost of web conferencing by 70 percent while offering our employees more services, such as video conferences," says Walker. "We’ve seen other savings as well. For instance, we’ve saved US$15,000 on our global employee meetings alone. That means we’re providing more opportunities for our employees to interact while minimizing cost."

By using WebEx for desktop sharing in real time, PolyOne has improved support and training for employees as well. "In IT, we use WebEx to provide remote technical support to our colleagues," Walker says. "Sometimes our salespeople who are working offsite will have an Internet connection, but they can’t connect to the PolyOne network. If that happens, we use WebEx to reach their computer and identify the problem," she says. Walker points out that the ability to record web conferences is also a popular feature, allowing people to watch training sessions that they may have missed.

WebEx increases meeting effectiveness, enabling PolyOne staff to share more information and enhance the value of the time they spend interacting with colleagues. "We definitely see productivity savings because we know we’re all looking at the same documents and data," Walker says. "In IT, we have weekly change control meetings, where we use a spreadsheet to track everything. We want to make sure that everyone is looking at the same information. By using WebEx, we minimize the chances for miscommunication."
**Next Steps**

In the future, PolyOne plans to use WebEx solutions to reach a larger external audience. “WebEx would be a great tool for product demonstrations, customer training, and company presentations,” says Walker. “Using this technology to interact with our customers definitely presents an opportunity for us.”

**For More Information**

- To find out more about Cisco WebEx, go to: [http://www.cisco.com/go/webex](http://www.cisco.com/go/webex)
- To read other Cisco WebEx case studies, go to: [http://www.cisco.com/go/webexcasestudies](http://www.cisco.com/go/webexcasestudies)
- To provide feedback or participate in the WebEx customer reference program, email: real.results@webex.com

**Product List**

Cisco WebEx