



Spanning the Distance, Musically

U.S. Service Members Use Cisco Spark to Connect and Make Music Globally

Operation Encore

Operation Encore, a group of United States service members, began work on its first music compilation CD in 2013. The mission: To help raise awareness of veterans' issues, encourage collaboration among veteran artists, and produce music inspired by military service.

The group spans military branches and includes a variety of career fields, from pilots to medics to paratroopers, and even the spouses who support them.

Like any dispersed team, Operation Encore faced several challenges, including:

- Geographic separation
- Multiple, disconnected communication vehicles
- File-sharing challenges
- Limited real-time communications

When it came time to create a second CD, group founders Erik Brine, Rob "Trip" Raymond, and Chris "Snooze" Kurek wanted a way to handle things more efficiently.

"While working on our first CD, I remember holding my iPhone in front of my computer screen so Snooze could see the mixing software on my laptop via FaceTime. It wasn't very tech savvy, but was the only way we could think of to work on the final song arrangements together."

– Rob "Trip" Raymond, Operation Encore Founder and Artis

When introduced to Cisco Spark™, they were excited by the idea of centralizing their communications and work streams.

With members scattered around the world—many still on active duty—the team needed a better way to connect and get things done. People needed to collaborate on songwriting, recording plans, post-studio edits, CD production, and launch. But none of the 12 artists were in the same place.

Everything in One Room

When considering the possibility of streamlining communications, the group's founders called it a "no brainer." Replacing the previous email strings and Facebook messages with a more centralized and dynamic tool was exactly what they needed. Now, using Cisco Spark, the group can house and share files in a secure, virtual "room," which helps with version control and accessibility. Cisco Spark messaging captures feedback from all team members in one place. Plus, Cisco Spark meetings offer basic, audio calling as well as on-demand video conferencing capabilities for live, face-to-face interaction.

“We’ve used apps like Messenger in the past, but we still had to rely on email for exchanging files, or FaceTime for video calling. Cisco Spark is the first application we’ve found that does it all.”
– Erik Brine, Operation Encore Co-Founder

Putting Video to the Test

During the post-production editing process, Trip needed to meet with Operation Encore artist Jerry Maniscalco to share editing software to collaborate on refining guitar tones. While this would be a challenge for anyone trying to collaborate from two different countries, Trip and Jerry had an added challenge—Jerry, a U.S. Navy helicopter pilot, was deployed in the Middle East.

“In the past, we’d be lucky to speak with a deployed artist once or twice over the phone, and then wait for email responses the rest of the time. Collaborating in real-time is a game changer. We are much further along than we ever thought we would be, thanks to Cisco Spark.”

– Rob “Trip” Raymon

This time around, Trip was able to connect with Jerry in a Cisco Spark meeting. They could both see the mixing software on Trip’s screen and experiment with various tones and sound treatments. That single, 30-minute video call helped them accomplish what would have taken weeks of email exchanges. By the next day, the studio had what it needed to complete the final song mix, and Trip and Jerry could shift focus to the next task—musical or otherwise.

Team Messaging Brings Everyone Together

In preparation for CD production, the Operation Encore team needed to select artwork for the new album cover. Erik created a secure, virtual Cisco Spark room to post options and gather feedback from the other members. Within two days, they had selected an image, experimented with a variety of color combinations, and completed the process.

“Posting CD artwork so that everyone can review and comment in one place is a big time saver. This has greatly improved how we work together.”

– Erik Brine, Operation Encore Co-Founder

Our world is changing—both at work and beyond. With the advances we’ve seen in technology over recent years, and new apps and services entering our lives almost daily, Operation Encore is a great example of how Cisco Spark is bringing people together in a more effective and satisfying way.

Putting Technology to Work

Cisco Spark meetings with video support song collaboration, post-production editing, and rehearsals.

Team messaging helps Operation Encore founders share updates and manage event logistics with the full team.

One-on-one messaging helps musicians coordinate travel plans and schedules.

File sharing simplifies sharing CD artwork and promotional materials to gather feedback.



Learn more about [Cisco Spark](#).