

Video Conferencing Brings the World to Telecom Firm's Door

Powerwave Technologies saves \$700,000 in annual travel costs using WebEx technology to underpin international presence.

Executive Summary

Customer Name:

Powerwave Technologies

Industry:

Telecommunications

Location:

Santa Ana, California

Number of Employees:

2165

Challenge:

- Support mass migration of engineering function from EMEA to APAC
- Train new remote employees cost-effectively
- Reduce reliance on travel to collaborate on detailed designs and processes

Solution:

- Cisco WebEx technology provides interactive, visual tools for knowledge transfer
- WebEx Advanced Services delivers onsite training for new users in native language
- WebEx application for smartphones enables teleworking and greater productivity

Results:

- Reduced annual travel costs by \$700,000, with projected future savings of up to \$4 million per year
- Gained collaboration model that supports future growth and rapid expansion
- Created more close-knit relationship between international teams

Challenge

At Powerwave Technologies, the key to success is staying small, swift, and tightly knit. That's why even with a relatively modest number of employees, the telecommunications company serves some of the world's largest wireless carriers, including Verizon, Sprint, and AT&T. Its nimbleness as a small company, as well as its strong focus on engineering and design, has allowed the company to experience significant growth since 2000. And with new wireless technologies and solutions continuing to enter the industry, Powerwave recently began an aggressive expansion to the Chinese and Indian markets.

To accommodate this expansion, the company decided to transfer the bulk of its engineering and design operations from Europe and the United States to Asia. "With our growth and global reach, we realized we needed an audio and video conferencing tool to help us collaborate with our new remote employees," says Claude Zamboni, vice president of Global IT at Powerwave. "Because we had to transfer our European and American engineers' knowledge to those in India and China, having that constant communication became paramount."

Lacking an effective collaboration tool, however, Powerwave engineers were frequently required to travel overseas. "With many of us having to travel internationally multiple times a month, our travel budgets were becoming astronomical," says Zamboni. "Of course, there was always the telephone, but when you're trying to look at detailed infrastructure plans from an engineering and design perspective, visualization is very important. That's why face-to-face meetings were the most pragmatic way to get things done."

Solution

What Zamboni and his team needed was a way to maintain this visual contact, yet do so without incurring travel expenses. That's when one of Powerwave's network providers, which also happened to be a Cisco partner, suggested looking at Cisco WebEx solutions. Since Powerwave's network is built solely on Cisco® switching and routing technology, Zamboni was well aware of the reliability that the Cisco brand offered. Delving deeper into the WebEx solution, he found that it met everything he was looking for in a collaboration tool.

"We needed to be able to connect from home without incurring charges, and have the flexibility to join a meeting from a wireless device as well," says Zamboni. "WebEx technology is a web-based service, so it provided us the opportunity to reduce the international teleconferencing charges we were incurring in our long, three- to four-hour design sessions."

Because employees are so globally distributed and working in various time zones, a good portion of the company's workforce telecommutes. This made mobility another important factor to consider. "With the WebEx application for smartphones, we wouldn't have to run back to our desk or PC to initiate a meeting," says Zamboni. "The convenience and simplicity of WebEx technology helped convince us that this was the solution we needed."

When Powerwave began rolling out WebEx solutions to India, the WebEx team was happy to help. “A WebEx representative traveled onsite to Hyderabad, India, to teach our engineers how to use the technology in their native language,” says Zamboni. “This 12-hour session was extremely effective, and in the end they realized they had a lot more flexibility than they were aware of.”

But it wasn't just training that the WebEx Advanced Services team provided; it was also a proactive approach toward customer service. “What we saw from Cisco WebEx was a willingness to engage without us making the first move,” says Zamboni. “They took the initiative to come to us with suggestions for lowering our costs and even gave us advice on how to approach the cultural differences of working between Western and Asian-based teams. From tips and training to lowering costs, they really helped us get the most out of our WebEx experience.”

Interactive features such as chat and whiteboard were obvious online meeting enhancers, but video proved to be an unexpected bonus in Powerwave's engineering meetings. “We use webcams in the lab to visually troubleshoot hardware issues,” says Zamboni. “So an engineer in another part of the world can see firsthand how a particular titanium screw isn't fitting properly, for example. Now instead of telling them about the problem, we can show them the problem, which is a huge benefit.”

Zamboni also highlights the convenience of the WebEx Productivity Tools, which allow users to control and participate in an online meeting directly from popular desktop applications. “Everybody knows how to use Microsoft Outlook,” he says. “So the add-ins that WebEx offers, like one-click meetings, make everything so seamless and easy to use. We're able to get things done even more quickly and effectively.”

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— Claude Zamboni, vice president of Global IT, Powerwave Technologies

Results

Though it originally implemented WebEx as a way to train and collaborate with its overseas engineers, Powerwave has since been using the technology in myriad ways. Whether it's sales and marketing meetings, IT troubleshooting, or executive and all-hands meetings, the company uses WebEx technology as often as it can to reduce its overall travel spending.

In 2010 alone, WebEx enabled Powerwave to reduce its annual travel budget by approximately \$700,000. “Eventually, we're hoping to see a cost savings between \$2 million and \$4 million per year,” says Zamboni. “That's a lot of money for a small company.” In addition to travel savings, WebEx technology helps Powerwave maintain the same operating expenses per month. Says Zamboni, “Now whenever we have, say, a new product launch coming up that might spike up demand, we don't have to worry about our budgets. With WebEx solutions, we're not going to have to bump up our costs.”

The software-as-a-service (SaaS) delivery model used for WebEx technology also helps reduce IT administration for Zamboni's team, especially in the face of growing acquisitions. "When you acquire a company, you can end up doubling your employee population very rapidly," says Zamboni. "But with SaaS solutions like WebEx, I don't have to worry whether my servers can handle the extra bandwidth or whether I have the right PBX [private branch exchange] on the other end to integrate. So from a scalability perspective, this implementation has been extremely valuable."

For a global company with a presence spanning four continents, maintaining constant communication with remote employees is crucial to Powerwave's business success. With WebEx technology, remote engineers are able not only to share knowledge more effectively, but also to build more personal relationships with colleagues they may not be able to meet in person. "WebEx solutions have enabled us to bring together our international community," says Zamboni. "It adds a human touch that's quite important when relating with our global peers. Because in the end, we are a relationship company. No matter how great your products are, they can only take you so far. It's the relationships you build and the interactions you have with your employees and customers that make for a viable company."

Next Steps

Looking ahead, Powerwave hopes to extend its reach to more customers using WebEx solutions. To facilitate this increase in usage, Zamboni suspects the company will continue to train new users on best practices for using the technology. "I think we'll see more training and engaging with end users to make sure they understand the power at their fingertips," says Zamboni. "Our goal is to better utilize the WebEx solutions we have and become even more productive than we already are."

For More Information

- To find out more about Cisco WebEx, go to: <http://www.cisco.com/go/webex>.
- To read other success stories, go to: <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 Enterprise Edition
- Cisco Routing and Switching



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