

The Academy of Montpellier Expands Educational Opportunities to Students with LifeSize Technology

Disabled and geographically-dispersed students can now receive the same educational benefits as their peers through HD video conferencing

Organization

Rectorate of Montpellier, Montpellier Languedoc-Roussillon Region, France

Throughout France there are more than 30 administrative educational districts called “academies”. The Academy of Montpellier manages national education for five regions in Languedoc Roussillon. The departments in this region include Aude, Gard, Hérault, Lozère and Eastern Pyrenees. The academy has full jurisdiction over all public service of higher education in its geographical district.

Within the Rectorate, there are various initiatives to improve different facets of the region’s educational sector. The committee responsible for the initiative of Information Technology and Communication for Education decided to redesign its communication network to bring constituents throughout the region closer in proximity through technology.



Challenge

When the committee first started researching Unified Communications (UC) tools, including instant messaging, multiparty chatting and ISDN video conferencing, they were looking for a sophisticated technology to meet their specific needs.

Unfortunately, the committee’s foray into UC, especially video conferencing, was short-lived. The expensive costs and connectivity issues were simply too complex and budget-restrictive to move forward with the project. Though the need was still there for video communications, it wasn’t the right time to invest in the technology.

Nearly a decade later, Internet usage had risen exponentially and connectivity was better than ever. IP had replaced outdated ISDN lines and the academy was at the forefront of these changes.

“Before we knew it, our facilities were equipped with high-speed Internet and we wanted to make the most of it by installing a professional tool for video conferencing over IP,” said Frederic Woillet, ICT adviser deputy rector of Montpellier.

For the Rector, the benefits of video conferencing were threefold. First, it could enable communication between the different institutions and allow them to work more collaboratively than ever before. Secondly, HD video conferencing could be used to train new teachers, as well as continue to provide ongoing support to staff. Finally, it could help broaden the educational field, particularly in foreign language learning and remote schooling of disabled children and athletes.



CHALLENGE

Unified Communications tools were too expensive and complex when the academy first researched solutions a decade ago. The organization needed a system that was sophisticated enough to meet its specific needs.



SOLUTION

The Rectorate of Montpellier implemented LifeSize® Express 220™ endpoints to connect in HD quality of high-speed IP Internet.



RESULTS

Since implementation, the academy estimates that it has saved more than 6,000 hours due to travel reduction and reduced its carbon footprint by 3,000 tons.



Solution

When choosing the right technology solution, the Rector of Montpellier had three key principles in mind: interoperability, price performance and flexibility. After evaluating various vendors' solutions, LifeSize emerged as the front runner on all accounts.

Because schools and universities needed to connect with each other for various video conferences, interoperability is essential for the Rectorate. Since LifeSize endpoints are open and standards-based, users can enjoy a wide range of communication services within a single interface. The academy could thus combine video conferencing systems from different manufacturers and implement solutions in remote areas, if needed.

In order to have the most lifelike experience possible over video conferencing, The Rectorate wanted high definition audio and picture quality. For language learning and distance classes, it was vital that the image be sharp to contribute to the highest quality of education possible. LifeSize provided the quality that the Rectorate was looking for. One of the solutions chosen, LifeSize Express 220 is ideal for small groups and classes. Even if bandwidth is low, the image remains natural and realistic, retaining its clarity and sharpness. By supporting Full HD at 1080p30 and True HD at 720p30 and 720p60, video images are crystal clear and latency-free for end users.



Results

Because LifeSize technology is intuitive and easy to use, even for novice users, widespread adoption occurred quickly. The simplicity of the system reassured students and teachers and gave them confidence to use the technology on a daily basis.

Students experienced benefits from HD video conferencing almost instantly. For example, a disabled student named Charles was unable to attend school and receive an education before LifeSize was introduced. By attending classes over video, his presence has been completely normalized and he has become part of the class.

"Video conferencing has changed the life of that child. HD video collaboration opens a new door to educational opportunities," said Woillet.

In terms of results, the figures speak for themselves. The Academy of Montpellier estimates that it has saved more than 6,000 hours due to travel reduction and reduced its carbon footprint by 3,000 tons since implementation.

Through LifeSize technology, the Academy of Montpellier is now able to provide opportunities that were never before possible. The future is bright for all of the academy's teachers and students, regardless of location, disability or any other obstacles.



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FREDERIC WOILLET
ICT ADVISER, ACADEMY OF MONTPELLIER



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