

Runge Turns to Video Conferencing for More Effective Collaboration

Organization

Runge Mining Software and Mine Consulting Services, Australia

Runge Limited is a company that values technology. For almost 35 years, the world-leading mining consultancy and software developer has been helping clients to improve mining and business outcomes through the use of technology and better processes. Runge provides engineering support services for mines worldwide, from start up to production, including feasibility studies, due diligence and valuation, mine planning and scheduling, mine optimisation, business systems and software implementation. It employs more than 400 professionals operating from 20 offices across almost 20 countries.

It's a global business with a widely distributed workforce; one that is required to collaborate extensively across international borders.



Runge is one of the world's leading mining consultancy and software development companies.



CHALLENGE

Because Runge operates in almost 20 countries, it is imperative that the company has a strong communications model in place. The company decided that it wanted to supplement audio calls and email with HD video conferencing to make collaboration even stronger among offices.



SOLUTION

Runge turned to valued LifeSize channel partner, eVideo, to purchase HD video endpoints that provided crystal-clear picture quality and could run on Runge's private global network. After much consideration, the company purchased Lifesize® Team 220™ endpoints to place in office locations worldwide.



RESULTS

In order to maximize usage, almost all video conferencing units have been placed on mobile carts. Reception has been overwhelmingly positive and video conferencing has now replaced previous teleconferences. Employees are now comfortable enough to use the systems on a daily basis.



Challenge

Until recently, much of the company's global communications relied on email and telephone. When travel was not an option or not merited, teleconferences were used to facilitate discussions between project groups and software development teams, or to tap into the advice of technical experts in other offices. As Scott Henderson, Runge chief technology officer noted, "the ability to communicate globally is key."

In early 2010 however, Henderson decided it was time to supplement existing tools with a more personable, more effective form of communication. He began evaluating video conferencing solutions and developed a business case based on the benefits the technology could bring to internal communications. As an added advantage, he noted potential for improved external communications, particularly with the company's mining industry clients, many of whom were already equipped with similar facilities.

Henderson's requirements were simple: the solution had to provide a quality image and work efficiently across Runge's global private network. The best way to ensure this, he realized, was to install and test prospective video conferencing solutions in his office. "We were fairly particular about testing equipment first," he said. "We tested a few brands over a month or so to make sure they suited our business and the network."

Within a couple of months, the tests had been run and the decision made. Henderson placed an order with eVideo Communications for multiple LifeSize Team 220 high definition video conferencing systems complete with IP phones for deployment in the company's Sydney, Brisbane, Johannesburg, Denver and Kuala Lumpur offices. "We chose LifeSize because pretty well as far as we could tell, it had the smallest bandwidth for the best quality. And that was not based on reading the brochure. It was based on real, empirical data," he explained.



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- SCOTT HENDERSON, CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER, RUNGE



Solution

To manage the implementation and training, Runge appointed eVideo Communications, Australia's only LifeSize expert partner and global video conferencing deployment specialist "We wanted to deal with one entity that could manage the project worldwide. We also heard good raps from other eVideo customers that we talked to," Henderson said.

The first deployments were conducted in Australia, with international sites following shortly. "It took us about a month each time, from the time of order, to getting the equipment into a new site. This was mainly due to juggling international logistics," Henderson noted.

By mid-2011 all the initial sites were up and running, and Runge commissioned a second set of deployments to be carried out internationally. "We've got nine offices equipped with LifeSize right now and we will be rolling out another five this year," he continued. "We're looking to eventually deploy LifeSize to every office. Some at present are relatively small offices but as they grow, we'll put the equipment in. It will be part of our corporate standard to do so."

To ensure maximum usage, almost all video conferencing units have been placed on trolleys that can be wheeled from office to office or boardroom. "If you have a unit installed in just one room, the room is going to be used for lots of things and the video conferencing equipment won't always be available. The way we've done it, we've placed network ports at multiple logical places around the office and it just requires pulling a trolley into a room," said Henderson. The single exception to this practice is one LifeSize Team 220 unit that has been permanently placed in the boardroom at Runge's head office.



Results

Despite the diverse ages of employees – from developers just out of university to experienced, long-term mining engineers – the shift to use video conferencing has been swift and smooth. “Once people are taught how to use it, we see a very fast take-up. There’s no push back,” Henderson acknowledged. “Already the units are in use much of the time.”

Monthly video conferences have replaced the previous global communications teleconferences and many employees are turning to video conferencing as a standard method of contact with peers in the same time-zone. “It makes a big difference,” Henderson said. “Video conferencing is a very human thing. It has more interaction and makes for richer communication. You get to read the other person’s body language and can see if someone is uncomfortable with something. It makes communication more efficient at the end of the day.”

Another benefit is reduced travel time. In Jakarta, where traffic congestion makes travel within the city extremely time-consuming, the office manager is saving up to four hours a day by using videoconferencing to catch up with clients. It’s allowing him to do far more in a day than was previously possible, and similar effects are likely to be experienced in other Runge offices.

Henderson also anticipates benefits for the company’s travel budget in the long term. “We didn’t put the business case up on travel but I realize that as it gets into the psyche of people, video conferencing will reduce travel bills ultimately.”

Henderson believes that after six months videoconferencing experience, the choice of LifeSize technology has proven to be sound. “It works. The quality is good and the bandwidth is well managed. We move a lot of spatial data around the network and sometimes the network is fairly stretched but despite this, we’ve not had any problems with video or with voice. It’s all a pretty seamless set-up. When we put a system in a remote office, our guys in Brisbane configure it up. If someone needs a hand, we get on the web interface and work things out. Other than that, there’s just international logistics to keep on top of, and even they haven’t caused any delays. eVideo do a great job of keeping on top of all that.”



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