

NZi3 ICT Innovation Institute – home to Australasia’s most advanced video conferencing facility

With the help of LifeSize’s HD video conferencing solutions NZi3 has created a hub for innovation and collaboration at New Zealand’s University of Canterbury.

Organisation

NZi3 ICT Innovation Institute, University of Canterbury – Christchurch, New Zealand

NZi3 is the new ICT Innovation Institute based at the University of Canterbury. The institute is a ‘hothouse’ of strategic ICT research and aims to be a globally recognised innovation centre that transforms ideas from the lab, across the innovation gap, into industry.

NZi3 was established in response to call from the tertiary education system in New Zealand to find ways to drive greater engagement between industry and academic research, particularly in IT.

The purpose-built NZ\$10 million facility was established with backing from the New Zealand Government and industry players including Tait Electronics, Jade Software, IBM and HP.

It houses 50 post-graduate students and 30 researchers all who are working on long-term projects that require a creative approach with a particular focus on projects that have a link to the industry.

The research centres on the themes of geospatial technology, human interface technology, wireless communications, assistive technology, bioengineering and nanotechnology.



The video feature wall has nine large interactive displays for conference with up to nine parties or multimedia presentations.

The building itself boasts a cutting edge design to facilitate collaboration and creative thinking. The first floor, measuring 80m by 30m, is a totally open concept and contains a wireless research centre. All of the walls are glass which creates an environment that is open, white and was intended to give the feel of a “hot house of innovation”.

According to Dr Darin Graham, the Director of NZi3 “Every nook and cranny is about interaction and innovation.”



CHALLENGE

A flexible, easy to use video conferencing system that would enable innovation and interaction today as well as provide a migration path for tomorrow.



SOLUTION

LifeSize Room 200 and Express systems deployed in every room at the NZi3 innovation centre, including a video feature wall with to enable conferencing on a grand scale.



RESULTS

NZi3 has created the most sophisticated video conferencing centre in Australasia and to enhance interaction with stakeholders around the world. In the first month alone cost savings of approximately \$NZ50,000 achieved.



Challenge

While the NZi3 is a groundbreaking building with cutting edge design and features, Darin Graham recognised that key to the success of research at NZi3 would be creating an environment for collaboration both internally and externally, by encouraging flow of ideas and information between industry partners, other universities and government research laboratories from around the world.

"It's very important to understand that we are doing this for the whole of New Zealand – not just to benefit the University. We had developed this 'hub' but we needed to reach outwards to engage with, and tap into, the expertise of others and involve like-minded organisations right around the world in our projects," said Graham.

Video conferencing was identified as a way to bring together all the elements of the NZi3 centre and to foster links with external partners.

It was essential that the video conferencing technology that could be integrated into the groundbreaking design of the centre and meet its needs today and evolve with the centre, to meet their future needs.



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DR DARIN GRAHAM, THE DIRECTOR OF NZI3

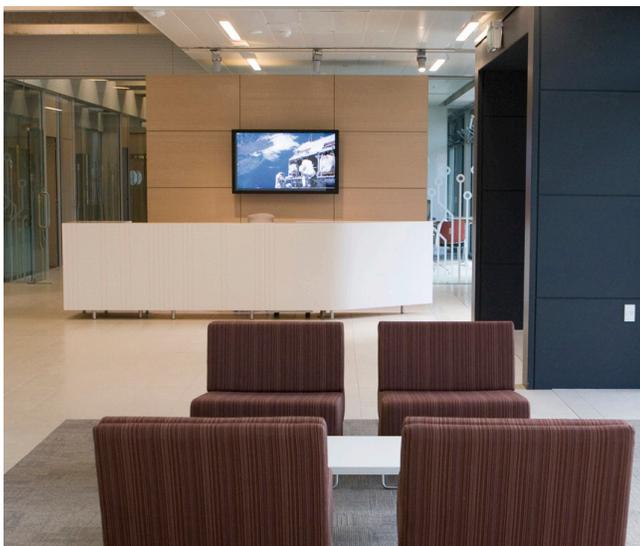


Solution

Darin Graham and his team were tasked with seeking out the latest and best in video conferencing technology. They decided that LifeSize was the perfect partner to provide a superior product for today as well as a migration path for tomorrow.

"We wanted to raise the bar and use video conferencing as a tool to share documents, capture conversations and to facilitate our interaction with external parties and outreach into NZ and the rest of the world

"LifeSize had a set of products that would allow us to do this with ease. Their user interface was a cut above the rest, it is very clear and easy to use, they brought a strong commercial focus and they have some great technology in the pipeline," said Dr Graham.



Every meeting room has been fitted with LifeSize video conferencing equipment.

Every board room and meeting room in the NZi3 has been fitted with a LifeSize video conferencing equipment – some systems are fixed and others portable. In total there are five video endpoints: three LifeSize Room 200 systems and two LifeSize Express systems and six cameras in use throughout the centre.

The main foyer has a wall entirely devoted to video, with nine large interactive displays that can be used for one conference or presentation or interactive multimedia presentations.

In the seminar rooms, the equipment has been positioned so that the conference participants can view the audience as well as the lecturer.

"We have put a video point in everywhere that we can in the centre so that we can facilitate all types of usage scenarios – such as multiple breakout groups, or viewing both audience and lecturer.

To enable this type of interaction and flexibility we need a solution that integrated well with all concepts, which had vision and audio of the highest quality and a sound technological platform.



Results

Video conferencing has become part of the innovation cycle. In the first month of operation NZi3 has had over 600 people use the video conferencing systems and was running at least four video conferences per week.

Graham estimates that in the first month, the overall cost savings have already amounted to NZ\$50 – \$60K, when compared with what they would have spent on airfares, accommodation and travel time.

Dr Graham says the benefits go well beyond cost savings.

“We’ve conducted a three way conference to demonstrate some research findings from Auckland to two points in Europe. Previously we simply couldn’t comprehend doing that before without all parties being physically present.

“We’ve had a group of people conduct a preliminary interview with a person in the UK, where previously we’d have sent one team member over to conduct the interview.

“We’ve been able to create a more inclusive, engaging environment that enables great buy-in. And we’re enabling people to be where they are most productive but still collaborate.”

Graham believes the team at NZi3 have just scratched the surface as to what can be achieved in the centre, and using video conferencing.

“We’ve created a very integrated and complex environment and we don’t know what it is going to enable yet but we know the foundation is right. The LifeSize solution has allowed us to be very flexible and creative in the way we use video conferencing to enable different types of research and ensure meaningful interactions,” Dr Graham concluded.



Richard Bishop, the local LifeSize Reseller adds, “Our partnership with NZi3 represents many years of hard work and the realisation of a dream that innovation from a remote location like New Zealand can now be taken to the world without having to physically leave our shores – LifeSize has enabled that dream to now become a reality by making the world a smaller place and proving that smart use of the right tools can achieve extraordinary results as we extend the weightless economy.”

NZi3 Innovation Institute is a hub for innovation and collaboration, assisted by LifeSize’s HD video conferencing solutions.

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