

A Customer Success Story

Learn how CareFlight was able to provide distance learning opportunities to their staff and critical care medical students with Lifesize Cloud video conferencing.



Challenge

To maintain its accredited trainer status, CareFlight required a reliable, easy-to-access, cloud-based video conferencing solution that would enable it to provide remote and distance learning to CareFlight staff as well as to students of Australia's critical care medical colleges.

Solution

CareFlight selected a Lifesize® Cloud Service with Lifesize® Icon 600™ endpoints and Lifesize Cloud client licenses due to the ease it offered students and teachers, as well as for its ability to blend point-to-point and Internet conferencing requirements.

Results

Remote learning facilities are enabling CareFlight to meet the terms of its training accreditation, and students and staff are benefiting from the ability to participate in training from any location using any mobile device they choose.

Lifesize Cloud Video Conferencing Makes Training a Breeze at CareFlight

ORGANIZATION



CareFlight is an Australian aeromedical charity that uses helicopters, airplanes, and med-jets to provide urgent medical treatment and transportation to over 5,000 patients in New South Wales, the Northern Territory, and international waters off the coast of Australia every year. CareFlight's service relies on teamwork among aircrew, medical teams and coordinators working closely together to ensure that critically ill and injured patients receive the appropriate hospital-level care as quickly as possible.

The service also requires an ongoing commitment to training. All CareFlight doctors and nurses are specially trained in prehospital and transport medicine. The organization holds teaching accreditation with the critical care colleges of anesthesia, intensive care and emergency medicine. Over the years, it has provided prehospital and transport medicine training to hundreds of critical care specialists from a wide variety of medical institutions.



Challenge

CareFlight employs a diverse workforce of 500 medical, aviation and administrative staff across New South Wales and the Northern Territory. Many only work one shift per month or less, so keeping all employees in touch with one another and maintaining a cohesive culture is an important priority. Equally critical—if not more so—is the need to ensure that employee training is kept up to date and that professional development commitments are met. The biggest impediment to achieving this has always been the difficulty and expense of student and teacher travel.

Chief Information Officer Gary Williams explains, “I can’t overstate how much training there is at CareFlight between our aviation division and the medical division. We’re an accredited training hospital for emergency medical care, so often we have people who come and train with us for six months, do the accredited course and then leave. The training is constant.”

Because of all these factors, the potential for video conferencing has long been recognized at CareFlight. At various times in the past, attempts were made to harness the technology, with employees dabbling in Skype® and other web-based solutions. What they found was that although Skype made the idea of video conferencing reachable, the resulting choked data connections and Internet ports were too impractical.

CareFlight’s next attempt involved the services of a web-based video conferencing platform. However, when the service vendor collapsed, the company was left without a video solution.

With remote training commitments needing to be met, Williams decided it was time for CareFlight to adopt a new approach to video conferencing and training delivery.

“CareFlight has a largely distributed workforce, and we always thought video conferencing could be an important tool to use for both professional development of people and for basic communications without driving additional costs such as travel or accommodation.”

- GARY WILLIAMS, CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER



Solution

Williams turned to the market, searching for a hybrid web-based service capability. “Ideally, what we needed were endpoints as well as the ability for remote users to join from their computer, phone or tablet. We wanted the best of both worlds. I found lots of very good solutions with one capability or the other, but not many where users could join in without having to enter a whole bunch of codes. And as soon as users have to click buttons or upload files, that’s where things can go wrong.”

“You can’t spend more time training people to use the equipment than they would actually spend in video conferences. And you can’t put a technical person in every location. In the end, it took us about six weeks to discover that Lifesize could do this blending both economically and easily for our users,” he observes.

Williams selected Lifesize Cloud, a fully integrated high definition video, audio and presentation solution that requires minimal IT or facilities installation and maintenance.

“We did a proof of concept using the Lifesize Cloud on an Internet-based site. Because a lot of video conferencing solutions only work well up to the point where you involve some form of multimedia presentation, our objective was to see how the system would work if a user needed to show a movie as part of a training session. We told Lifesize, ‘We want you to show us a YouTube™ video of cats,’ and they responded by showing us how simple this was to achieve. Two clicks and the video worked fine,” Williams says with a smile. In December 2014, three video-conferencing systems were deployed—two in the Sydney head office and a third in the Darwin administrative office.

As for the hardware itself, Williams adds, “The systems are certainly robust. A Lifesize Icon 600 endpoint was put on the back of a truck filled with medical gear. It was put in place and plugged in, registered itself to the Lifesize Cloud, and worked the first time. We didn’t even get Lifesize to install it, and it’s worked beautifully ever since.”





“It’s still a bit early to quantify all the advantages of video conferencing, but the biggest benefit is clearly the continued accreditation of our training department.”

- GARY WILLIAMS
CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

Results

Since early 2015, CareFlight’s training division has made consistent use of the cloud video conferencing capability. The equipment is enabling the organization to meet its remote training obligations and has made it easier for students to access courses.

“Our objective was to make video conferencing seamless in training, to make it a background activity. I think we’ve achieved that. The training department can schedule, run and manage courses on their own, and trainers are free to focus on what they are doing rather than spend time focusing on the technology. Nor do they have to fly from location to location or fly in students,” Williams asserts.

“In theory, anyone with an iPhone®, an iPad® or a laptop computer can join in. Everyone has the right tools in their hands. Our next step is to make video conferencing an everyday part of our lives. We’re encouraging managers to use it rather than travel and physically come to meetings. Our expectation is that it will be used a lot, and we hope it will drive down travel and airline expenses,” said Williams.

While the potential for video communications is large, Williams remains realistic about its use. “When presentations are involved, I would like to see Lifesize replace the landlines of old,” he notes.

From an IT perspective, the reliability of the Lifesize cloud video conferencing system has resulted in fewer calls from users requesting support from IT, and training isn’t being delayed because of problems.

“It’s still a bit early to quantify all the advantages of video conferencing, but the biggest benefit is clearly the continued accreditation of our training department. This department underpins the viability of the entire business. Any savings we make on top of this will be a bonus, but as we spend quite a lot of money on travel, I don’t think it’s going to be too hard to find that ROI [return on investment] in time,” Williams concludes.

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