



Cutting Costs in Publishing: Vogel Business Media Deploys LifeSize HD Video Communications

With many advertising customers reducing spending due to the financial downturn, European publishing leader, Vogel Business Media, turns to LifeSize to help slash travel costs, increase productivity

Organization

Vogel Business Media, Würzburg, Germany

Founded in Possneck, Thuringia, in 1891, Vogel Business Media boasts a history of almost 120 years, with its headquarters now in Würzburg in Northern Bavaria, Germany. Vogel operates across Germany, with offices in six cities, offering a broad portfolio of print and online products with 650 employees.



The publishing house is among Germany's leading providers for expert information, offering more than 100 trade magazines and 60 different websites. Strong international activities are the basis for the company's international acknowledgement. The print and online media primarily serve the general, automotive, IT, legal, economic and tax industries. The company positions itself as a full service partner in multimedia for b2b communication. The cross-media portfolio covers four key areas: print, online, events and services. It has become obvious for a company which has distributed locations - which may even have their own management and responsibility - that high travel costs and the productivity loss caused by the travel time had a severe impact on each branch office's budget.

Frequent travelling mostly included the management meetings held by the individual branch office heads, important coordination meetings for print and online projects in progress and many conventions that required personal attendance. Some employees accepted several hours of travel for just a one-hour meeting. Mere travel costs, however, remain a secondary cost driver in this process. What counts most are all the hours of unproductive employees and the loss of labor for the company.



CHALLENGE

Frequent travel among Vogel Business Media's various offices and client locations for various projects began to impact the company's productivity. Vogel needed a solution that would allow them to meet clients and colleagues face-to-face without the need for travel.



SOLUTION

Vogel decided that LifeSize was the best communications solution to meet their needs. A combination of LifeSize® Express™ and LifeSize® Team™ systems were soon installed in Vogel branch offices in Würzburg, Munich, Augsburg, Düsseldorf and Nordkirchen.



RESULTS

LifeSize HD systems are now being used in all fields of the publishing house, from management meetings, software and portal development to simple exchanges of information between the editorial offices. Travel expenses reduced, employees can get more done in less time.



Challenge

Vogel used video conferencing at a very early stage in order to work around this dilemma. However, past approaches to slash costs and to reduce travel by standard ISDN systems failed to deliver the expected results. The reasons for this failure were poor image quality and low transfer rates.

Higher data speeds and transfer over IP (Standard Internet Protocol) triggered a new video conferencing project in 2005, with the goal to get these costs under control. Vogel went into the project with high expectations, which proved to be completely fulfilled.

Vogel started off with intensive research on available products and a thorough analysis of the costs for installation and operation. Their project managers created a comprehensive specification book during the evaluation phase. The solution was expected to provide good value for money while also delivering excellent quality and ease of use. Extensive experience with projects at the Vogel company showed that the staff will only accept new technologies when applications are reliable and easy to use. Therefore, usability was a key issue in the analysis.

Another factor in choosing a supplier was the capability to use the existing infrastructure. The system needed to be deployed via the existing IP connections between the branch offices without requiring a lot of adaptation. The challenge was even harder in the face of low bandwidth in some of the lines, which was not really helpful in achieving the required quality of sound and image.

Vogel's key needs included:

Superior quality: True-to-life, crisp HD video quality for meaningful, rich communication

Unique flexibility: Easy to deploy among all locations, simple to use, with built-in collaboration tools to keep everyone on the same page

Unmatched price-performance: High demand for video systems among offices means a communications system must make sense from an investment perspective



"We are currently using seven systems at four branch offices, and our staff has quickly recognized the advantages of video conferencing."

– PETER KRAUS, HEAD OF IT SERVICES, VOGEL BUSINESS MEDIA



Solution

As a new communications tool was an important investment, Vogel took sufficient time in evaluating the available systems in the market. Some systems were sorted out quickly due to their high entry costs and their rather mediocre quality. Out of all the systems that made it to closer consideration, Head of IT Services, Peter Kraus and his project team opted for the solution provided by HD pioneer LifeSize.

The project team began the implementation at the branch offices at Würzburg, Munich, Augsburg, Düsseldorf and Nordkirchen, which received a LifeSize® Team™ series system each. Two more systems of the LifeSize® Express™ systems were installed for the sub-division management at the Würzburg headquarters.

The installation did not require any major changes to the existing infrastructure and was supervised by LifeSize partner, Vidofon. The systems were installed at the branch offices and the Würzburg headquarters within just one week, and were immediately available.





Results

Since deploying the systems, Vogel has seen a tremendous amount of usage across all operations.

"We are currently using seven systems at four branch offices, and our staff has quickly recognized the advantages of video conferencing," says Peter Kraus. "We already have availability bottlenecks, so there is a good chance we will deploy even more systems soon."

LifeSize HD video communications systems are now being used in all fields of the publishing house, from management meetings to software and portal development and all the way down to a simple exchange of information between the editorial offices.



"First of all, the expectations were completely met. Secondly, permanent and extremely high quality can be achieved, without any failures. This is a key factor to why the staff has accepted the systems so quickly. Communication is almost like in an actual face-to-face situation, including direct impacts such as facial expression, gestures and intonation" said Kraus.

After the initial euphoria, which caused some collisions when it came to booking the video conference rooms, it showed that the systems were well accepted and were used in a frequent routine. Among the meetings that are now held by video conference include weekly/monthly board meetings, editorial meetings of the editors in chief and the departments to coordinate editing plans, topics, events and other editorial issues, project team meetings in the fields of IT, portal development, integration of new and innovative technologies and all other IT related issues.

According to the staff, exchanging information via LifeSize HD systems is almost like an actual face-to-face conversation. This way, media can be communicated without discontinuity, thus delivering quicker results in meetings.

"Moreover, video conferencing promotes inter human relations at the publishing house," says Kraus. "Thanks to functions like watching documents, video streams, live applications and 3D models together, our staff communicate more often while at the same time improving productivity."

By introducing the telepresence solution, Vogel has boosted staff efficiency thanks to significantly slashing travel time. This fact also contributed very positively to the travel budget- this led to a quick amortization of the investments. Moreover, the staff's work-life balance has significantly improved. The environmental impact is an added benefit for Vogel -- thanks to a reduction in business trips.



LifeSize[®]
A division of Logitech

LifeSize Communications:
1601 S. Mopac Expressway
Suite 100
Austin, Texas 78746 USA

Phone: +1 512 347 9300
Fax: +1 512 347 9301
Email: info@lifesize.com
www.lifesize.com

EMEA:
LifeSize Europe
LifeSize Communications,
Ltd.
Phone: 00 8000 999 09 799

APAC:
LifeSize Asia Pacific
Phone: +65 6303 8370