

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

Oslo Fjord Alliance Universities Incorporate a UC Solution, with Polycom Video Conferencing, Making Their Day to Day Easier, and More Efficient

Industry

- Higher education

Daily use

- Oslo Fjord Alliance internal communication
- Communication with external partners and companies

Solution

- An effective video conferencing solution allowing meetings to be organised more quickly and easily, particularly for administrative staff and researchers at the five universities and colleges within Oslo Fjord Alliance, which comprises across seven geographical locations

Results and benefits

- Cost savings
- More efficient use of time and less time spent travelling
- Easier and quicker to arrange meetings and meet with colleagues
- Faster decision making
- Stronger cooperation



Overview

In order to strengthen cooperation and to improve the distribution of resources and expertise, the universities forming the 'Oslo Fjord Alliance' decided to introduce video conferencing for their administration and research staff in 2009.

Jan Petter Thorstensen, IT Manager at Buskerud University College, is in charge of the project. Thorstensen kicked off the project by establishing video conferencing rooms at his own university, at the colleges in Østfold and Vestfold, and at the Norwegian University for Life Sciences.

The Oslo Fjord Alliance employs a total of 2300 people at its institutions and caters for 15,000 students across seven locations in the Oslo Fjord area.

Staff previously spent too much time planning and travelling to meetings which affected their other duties. A solution was therefore required to reduce travel time, improve efficiency and to increase opportunities for cooperation.

Thorstensen says they have many fields of research and relatively few academic staff. With the ability to cooperate via video conferencing, staff has been able to establish larger teams, making the institutions themselves more attractive as a workplace for researchers, and as a place of study for students.

In spring 2009, the institutions agreed to establish a video conference room at each campus within the Alliance.

Minimum support required

Thorstensen says that shares it took the universities very little time to install the equipment and put it to use.

"Almost all of the feedback we receive is positive, and although we rarely need to provide support we do have a service desk available in case of any questions or problems", he adds.

The first systems were installed in April 2009, and by the end of the year the institutions had eight systems. The installation and commissioning phases both went smoothly.

“Video conferencing has brought Oslo Fjord Alliance universities closer together. We now work more efficiently.”

Jan Petter Thorstensen, CTO, Buskerud University College

With the current capacity and equipment, up to seven meeting rooms can take part in one video conference. The biggest challenge is being able to book all the meeting rooms with the video conferencing equipment at the same time.

“The equipment is in great demand”, Thorstensen explains.

Unified collaboration

In order to combat demand for dedicated meeting rooms for video conferencing, and to further increase efficiency and cooperation, Buskerud University College has also introduced and integrated a Microsoft Office Communications Server with the existing video conferencing systems.

“This allows staff to participate in video conferences directly from their PC at their own workspace”, says Thorstensen.

At just the touch of a button, a video conference call to an expert can be initiated to receive answers or comments on issues they have encountered.

“It all works very well. Participants can also share documents via an additional screen in the video conference room, and they can communicate via instant messaging or telephone”, says Thorstensen.

Easy installation and integration

It was easy to integrate the Microsoft Office Communication Server (OCS) with Polycom’s video conference room, Thorstensen explains.

“The user threshold is low too”, he adds.

Norwegian universities and colleges are currently considering whether to establish a larger combined system (MCU) where staff from the various institutions can meet in a joint video conference. If this happens, the Oslo Fjord Alliance will take part, says Thorstensen.

Meeting expectations

“Our employees spend less time travelling and have more time for each other. We have succeeded in bringing people closer together, regardless of the time or place. If we need to go to a meeting, it’s only minutes away”, says Thorstensen.

Thorstensen views the use of video conferencing as a topic that is particularly relevant in the public sector, where several offices are often involved in processes, meaning many people must also attend meetings.

“It can be difficult to get them to agree on a meeting time at a specific physical location. It is much quicker and easier using meeting rooms with video conferencing equipment”, he says.

The frequency of meetings has escalated, making them part of the daily work. Two to four meetings usually take place each day at Buskerud University College alone.

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Jan Petter Thorstensen, CTO, Buskerud University College

High-quality meeting tools

Thorstensen explains that, as a result of video conferencing, faculties have been strengthened across geographical locations, which in turn has increased the expertise available for teaching. In administration areas, increased use of video conferencing has led to faster decision making.

The Oslo Fjord Alliance has made significant savings thanks to the use of video conferencing, and this was not even its intention. “People now don’t travel if they don’t need to. And it has become easier to arrange meetings”, says Thorstensen.

“Video conferences are preferable to meetings in person. Our staff view this equipment as a high-quality meeting tool”, he says.

“So what kind of feedback do you get?”

“We don’t get much feedback because it works so well. But the increasing level of use shows us that people like using the system. It means they don’t need to spend as much time planning”, he says.

Avikom

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Polycom product list

- Polycom® HDX® 7000 video system with HD camera
- Microsoft Office Communication Server

About Polycom

Polycom is the global leader in standards-based unified communications (UC) solutions for telepresence, video, and voice powered by the Polycom® RealPresence® Platform. The RealPresence Platform interoperates with the broadest range of business, mobile, and social applications and devices. More than 400,000 organizations trust Polycom solutions to collaborate and meet face-to-face from any location for more productive and effective engagement with colleagues, partners, customers, specialists, and prospects. Polycom, together with its broad partner ecosystem, provides customers with the best TCO, scalability, and security for video collaboration, whether on-premises, hosted, or cloud-delivered. Visit www.polycom.com or connect with Polycom on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

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