



CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

Colorado Department of Transportation saves more than \$1 million annually with Polycom

Industry

- Government

Daily use

- Team and administrative meetings
- Project management
- Management and executive meetings
- Remote site and interoffice communications
- Distance education and training

Solution

- 14 Polycom® HDX® 7000 telepresence solutions
- 8 Polycom VSX® 8800 video conferencing solutions
- Polycom RMX® 1000 conference platform
- Polycom Converged Management Application™ (CMA®) 5000 solution

Results and benefits

- Annual savings of nearly US\$1 million in travel costs
- Boosts in productivity and worker safety due to dramatically reduced time spent on the road
- More rapid decision making based on ability to meet and exchange content more frequently
- Ability to include more team members in meetings

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) is responsible for a 9,161-mile highway system handling more than 28.6 billion vehicle miles of travel annually. To keep roads open and safe, the Denver-based agency's maintenance crews repair roadways and, in 2008 alone, plowed over 7.1 million miles of snow. CDOT engineers, planners, and managers direct operations from six regional offices located throughout the state. But traveling to group meetings in Denver and other regions was proving too costly, both in actual expenses and in work hours lost to driving.

"Engineering projects require a lot of collaboration from specialized groups, such as hydraulics and materials, and many are based in Denver," says Thom Rivera, enterprise architect for CDOT. "Traditionally, if a project kicked off in a rural part of the state, planners from that region would have to come to Denver to meet with these specialists to get their projects to move forward."

CDOT professionals could spend up to three days out of the office just to attend a meeting. The size and topology of Colorado doesn't help. The Rocky Mountain state stretches 380 miles east to west, and 280 miles north to south. Winter storms, rock slides, and other severe weather can make already long drives even longer, and CDOT employees based in regions to the west must traverse passes and tunnels that thread through the state's more than 100 mountain peaks.

The budget impact of travel can be substantial, particularly for offices located far from Denver. When the agency began assessing alternatives to streamline its communications, Richard Reynolds, transportation director for Region 5, calculated that employees in his region spent \$49,000 in travel costs in a single month.

"My main office in Durango is about seven hours from Denver, and that's in decent weather," says Reynolds. "In bad weather, it's a full day's drive. So traveling to Denver for a meeting usually means spending at least one night in a hotel, and at least two days of per diem, not to mention the costs for mileage and lost productivity."

In Denver, Rivera was running his own numbers. "We brainstormed a few real-life scenarios," he recalls. "We drew on the kinds of trips that were happening every day: an engineer driving to Denver for meeting, a maintenance supervisor traveling to Craig to visit a job site, and a construction engineer driving up to Craig or down to Eagle. If each of these scenarios played out once a day for a month, it would cost \$35,000."

“We made up our investment in Polycom, including a year’s worth of operating costs, in four or five months.”

Richard Reynolds, Transportation Director, Region 5 Colorado Department of Transportation

Exploring video communications

Faced with those costs in an uncertain economy, CDOT began exploring the idea of using video conferencing to connect CDOT facilities throughout the state.

Rivera said he and CDOT video engineer Dalton Brooks “looked at lots of vendors and technologies. We wanted to make sure it was a level playing field. In researching our options, it appeared Polycom was well ahead of the market, not just in terms of product but also in pricing and support.”

Following an initial deployment of Polycom® VSX® 8800 video conferencing solutions, CDOT video engineers, headed by Rivera in Denver, designed and installed a statewide video conferencing network. Today, the year-old CDOT network includes 22 video conferencing sites equipped with 14 high definition (HD) Polycom HDX® 7000 telepresence solutions and the eight original VSX 8800 systems. Using a Polycom RMX® 1000 conference platform, the systems link CDOT’s Denver headquarters and main regional offices with additional engineering and maintenance facilities around the state.

“We originally envisioned having the systems installed on carts that could be rolled into conference rooms as they were needed,” says Rivera, who with Brooks determined that standardizing the set-ups would make it easier for employees to learn how to use the system. “It’s been such a success that we decided to fix this equipment into conference rooms.”

Hitting a home run with users

Both Rivera and Reynolds report that CDOT users can’t seem to get enough of the systems. “Throughout the system, the rooms are running about a 75 to 80 percent booking rate,” says Rivera.

In Durango, the Polycom telepresence system is even more popular. “It’s getting extremely difficult to book time in this room,” says Reynolds. “The room is booked non-stop.”

It’s easy to see why. Polycom telepresence enables CDOT workers to freely and naturally collaborate and communicate with fellow employees in Denver and across the state, whether in meetings or in training sessions. “The system works really well,” says Reynolds, whose CDOT region employs more than 340 people. “And it gives you some face time with people you might not otherwise see. Because they don’t have to travel,

you’re able to get more people involved in meetings. There’s very little cost associated with ensuring that every person can participate in a meeting.”

Rivera says Polycom’s UltimateHD™ technology—which enables users to see and interact with HD video, HD audio, and HD content—makes a difference for hydraulic engineers and others who need to communicate details that matter. “Even in some of our conference rooms with a whiteboard, you can pan the camera and zoom in a bit, and it appears clear as day,” he says. “It’s like being in the room. In the old way of doing business, we’d have been driving back and forth and e-mailing documents to one another. It would take weeks to make a decision. Now everyone can collaborate because everyone sees the same things at the same time, and they can make decisions a lot quicker.”

Among CDOT employees, says Reynolds, some Polycom features are particularly popular. “People really like the feature we call “Hollywood Squares,” where you have a grid of small windows with different conference participants, and the system zooms in to the person talking so they appear life-sized, just like they’re in the room.”

Saving \$1 million with Polycom

For CDOT management, the bottom-line benefit of keeping employees in the office and productive speaks for itself. “We’ll save close to a million dollars this year,” says Rivera. “In the 18 months since we made our first purchase, these Polycom systems have paid for themselves.”

In Durango, where employees rely on the Polycom systems to collaborate with other Region 5 offices located up to 3½ hours away, payback came even faster. “We made up our investment in Polycom, including a year’s worth of operating costs, in four or five months.”

Rivera and Brooks now are aiming to expand CDOT’s successful network to additional locations. To scale the network, the CDOT team wants to make it even easier to schedule meetings, and to bring more parties into a single conference. For that, they have invested in the Polycom Converged Management Application™ (CMA®), a solution for centrally managing and deploying video communication across an enterprise.

“With CMA, we build the room profiles and we have schedules automated,” says Rivera. “I just tell people to leave their end point on and when meeting time comes, we just dial them.”

Rivera says the CDOT team expects to work closely with Polycom for the implementation of CMA and for future system expansions. “I’ve dealt with enough vendors over the years that there are always people lined up when you want to buy something, but they disappear when something goes wrong,” says Rivera. “But that doesn’t happen with Polycom. That’s why we went with Polycom. It’s the industry leader.”

About Polycom

Polycom is the global leader in open standards-based unified communications (UC) solutions for voice and video collaboration, trusted by more than 415,000 customers around the world. Polycom solutions are powered by the Polycom® RealPresence® Platform, comprehensive software infrastructure and rich APIs that interoperate with the broadest set of communication, business, mobile and cloud applications and devices to deliver secure face-to-face video collaboration in any environment. Polycom and its ecosystem of over 7,000 partners provide truly unified communications solutions that deliver the best user experience, highest multi-vendor interoperability, and lowest TCO. Visit www.polycom.com or connect with us on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn to learn how we’re pushing the greatness of human collaboration forward.

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