

Manufacturer Creates Dynamic Collaborative Environment

Customer Case Study



Vermeer Corporation drives global growth using Cisco voice, messaging, and video solutions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: Vermeer Corporation

Industry: Manufacturing

Location: Pella, Iowa

Number of Employees: 2500

Challenge:

- Expand company reach to new international markets
- Enable voice, video, and instant messaging communication across all locations
- Migrate separate voice and data networks to single converged infrastructure

Solution:

- Cisco Unified Communications integrate with data network to cut costs, enhance worker mobility
- Cisco WebEx Connect provides instant messaging and presence from any device and location
- Cisco TelePresence and WebEx deliver face-to-face meetings through video

Results:

- Pervasive video overcomes geographic distance barriers with face-to-face communication
- Faster response times enhance business agility and improve customer service
- Collaboration architecture creates highly flexible work environment for global workforce

Challenge

Located 45 miles southeast of Des Moines, Iowa, Vermeer Corporation is a family-owned manufacturing company that produces equipment for the agricultural, industrial, construction, and environmental industries. Since it was founded in 1948, Vermeer has grown from a modest one-person operation to a multinational business with offices located in the Netherlands, China, Singapore, and Brazil, in addition to the United States.

Although the company has had an international presence for more than 40 years, it has even larger global plans for the future. "For the last two years, one of our high-priority initiatives has been expansion to new global markets," says Scott Vickroy, voice and data communications manager at Vermeer. "As we started making plans to deploy our executive team to different parts of the world, we realized we needed a new collaboration strategy that would keep everyone on the same page."

At the time, Vermeer collaboration tools only included email and telephone, which proved inefficient when communicating with remote offices. "In places like Beijing where we have a 13-hour time difference, it was difficult to get immediate answers and collaborate on projects synchronously," says Brent Westerkamp, a systems engineer at the company. "We needed a more diverse set of collaboration tools to help streamline communications with our international employees and distribution partners."

For IT, this situation presented the perfect opportunity to finally retire the company's legacy phone system and migrate to IP telephony, allowing integration of the voice and data networks for a cohesive experience for employees and easier administration.



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Systems Engineer
Vermeer Corporation

Solution

Initially introduced to Cisco® networking solutions in the mid-1990s, Vermeer continued to look at opportunities to integrate new Cisco products into its architecture. Seeing the business value that would come out of technologies such as instant messaging, web conferencing, business video, and unified communications, the Vermeer IT team created an aggressive deployment plan for a full suite of Cisco collaboration solutions.

Greater Mobility and Accessibility with Unified Communications

Today, the majority of Vermeer Pella-based employees use Cisco Unified IP Phones, with plans to implement IP telephony at all of the company’s remote office locations. Working with Cisco partner Vital Support Systems for implementation, Vermeer plans to have its entire global network connected through a single infrastructure built on Cisco Unified Communications Manager, helping reduce cost and improve efficiencies. Vermeer chose the Cisco Unified Communications Manager platform primarily for its integration with WebEx Connect™. “WebEx Connect is a great productivity enhancer for our remote workers and executives who travel frequently,” says Westerkamp. “They have access to their desk phone capabilities no matter where they are, while the company reduces international roaming fees, since they’re just dialing through a VPN connection from their PC and not a mobile service provider network.”



Instant Back-and-Forth Desktop Communication

One of the primary reasons Vermeer needed a web conferencing tool was to train its remote workforce in the United States and abroad. For that, the company uses Cisco WebEx® Training Center, in addition to Cisco WebEx Meeting Center for more everyday collaboration sessions. “We use WebEx to conduct both internal and external meetings with our distributor network,” says Westerkamp. “Since there’s no installation or setup required to participate, WebEx is the perfect interface to collaborate face-to-face with partners outside of our network, regardless of device or location.”

Vermeer has also found that using WebEx Meeting Center with high-quality video is an easy and affordable way to interview remote job candidates. “Since we’re located in rural Iowa, it takes time and money to bring someone into the office,” says Vickroy. “But this way, we can have a few preliminary meetings with the candidate before we fly them here for an in-person interview.”

Employees rely on WebEx Connect and its presence indicators as a way to get instant answers. The instant messaging solution is especially beneficial when

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communicating with international colleagues whose first language is not English. Says Westerkamp, “Many international employees can read and write English perfectly well, and IM is what allows us to have more effective back-and-forth conversations.”

Personalized Executive Communication through Telepresence

As Vermeer expands globally, its executive management team resides around the globe. This was the impetus for deploying Cisco TelePresence®. “Our executive team values the importance of face-to-face communication,” says Westerkamp. “They want to be able to see facial expressions and pick up nuances, which is something you can’t do easily over the phone. Immersive video through Cisco TelePresence was the perfect way to address this need.”

Currently, the company has Cisco TelePresence units in Pella and Latin America, with plans to install units in five remote offices. Executives favor the dual displays, one for video, the other for content, for an optimal experience. “Our goal is to maintain the Vermeer close-knit corporate culture, without having to rely on travel to facilitate communication between our remote executive teams.” Approximately 150 Cisco TelePresence Movi clients are also being deployed to traveling employees, so they can participate in telepresence meetings using their laptops.

A Smooth Collaboration Experience for Users

With all of its collaboration solutions housed under a single Cisco umbrella, Vermeer IT staff enjoys simplified administration and faster deployments, while employees get a consistent user experience no matter which tool they are using.

Results

For Vickroy and Westerkamp, the most notable benefit of the Vermeer new global collaboration strategy has been greater business agility. Cisco WebEx Connect, in particular, plays a crucial role in streamlining communication between geographically dispersed employees. “Say someone is on the phone with a customer who has a question,” says Westerkamp. “The help desk can IM the engineer and get an answer in a matter of seconds versus having to take a message and call back later. This faster response translates into improved service to our customers.”

The Vermeer Cisco collaboration network also helps attract recent graduates looking for jobs. “Today’s younger generation is used to IM and texting, so communicating only by phone and email would make us look behind the times,” says Westerkamp. “Using products like Cisco Unified Communications, TelePresence, WebEx, and WebEx Connect helps us stay a step ahead of our competition, creating an infrastructure better suited to 21st century business collaboration. With these tools, we’re able to attract the best and brightest new hires.”

As a family-owned business, Vermeer has a long-standing commitment to keeping its relationships and manufacturing operations local, so that good service will never be compromised. And although the company’s footprint is increasingly more global, with pervasive video and collaboration technology, it can continue to maintain a local-like interaction among employees, partners, and customers. “Our Cisco collaboration strategy is helping us transform the way we operate, as well as how we look to the future,” says Westerkamp. “These technologies will assist us in becoming a truly global company, while staying true to our core business values.”

Next Steps

Over the next two years, Vermeer plans to complete its deployment of Cisco TelePresence and IP phones to its remote office locations. Currently, the IT team is piloting Apple iPads and iPhones with Cisco mobile solutions to extend worker mobility. Says Westerkamp, "As our business continues to grow internationally, I'm sure we'll continue to reap new benefits from our Cisco collaboration infrastructure."

For More Information

- To find out more about Cisco collaboration, visit: <http://www.cisco.com/go/collaboration>.
- To read WebEx success stories, go to: <http://www.cisco.com/go/webexcasestudies>.
- To join conversations and share best practices about collaboration, visit: <http://www.cisco.com/go/joinconversation>.

Product List

Collaboration Solutions

Conferencing

- Cisco WebEx Meeting Center
- Cisco WebEx Training Center

Messaging

- Cisco WebEx Connect

TelePresence

- Cisco TelePresence C40, EX90

Voice and Unified Communications

- Cisco Unity® Connection
- Cisco Unified Communications Manager
- Cisco Unified IP Phones 7937, 7945, 7965, 7975

Routing and Switching

- Cisco Catalyst® 3750 Series and 6509-V-E Switches
- Cisco Nexus® 5010 Switches
- Cisco Nexus 2000 Series Fabric Extenders (FEX)



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