ALTRON NEXUS

Case Study
EKURHULENI
METROPOLITAN
MUNICIPALITY
VIDEO CONFERENCING
SOLUTION



INTRODUCTION

New digital technologies, such as video conferencing, are fundamentally changing the way we live, work and interact. They are also providing unprecedented opportunities for municipalities, enabling them to radically transform their complex bureaucracies to become more agile, efficient, citizen-centric and innovative. As part of its drive to maximise efficiencies and drive down costs, the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality (EMM) has embarked on a technology modernisation process which sees the deployment of a leading-edge, high definition video conferencing solution from Altron and its global leading ICT partner, Huawei.

EMM's decision emanates from a strategy to transform itself into a smart and connected municipality by embracing new technologies in order to enhance service delivery for the betterment of its citizens, and ensure a better working environment and collaboration among its employees.











BACKGROUND

In an increasingly global workplace, organisations need to be more agile and responsive in the way in which they communicate and in their real-time decision making processes. No longer is the success of an organisation centred or dependent on its physical location but rather on the productive utilisation of its resources.

Now more than ever, organisations around the world depend on the proliferation of low-cost, high-performance Internet and high-definition video conferencing to enable them to conduct business across localities - cost-effectively, efficiently, and productively.

Additionally, organisations are facing increasing pressure from stakeholders, the marketplace and regulators to undertake more energy efficient choices and limit carbon emissions. Video conferencing reduces carbon emissions associated with business travel and daily commuting allowing employees to interact with each other remotely, regardless of their location. By reducing the time spent in traffic shuttling between various meeting venues, video conferencing affords employees a better work-life balance.

Video conferencing has now become simple to use and reliable, and can be easily deployed over an organisation's existing Internet Protocol (IP) network. Today's technology can provide an organisation with a high-definition, convergent, multi-level and secure conferencing system with optimal user experience and high confidentiality. Current video conferencing solutions come with simplicity and innovation. They are invariably Wi-Fi enabled with voice activation and minimal bandwidth requirements.

Local authorities are increasingly finding that video conferencing provides the mechanism to deliver services in a cost effective way, maintain communication channels, cut travel costs, lower their carbon footprint and free up additional time for officials to spend addressing the needs of their boroughs.

THE CHALLENGE

As one of the largest municipalities in South Africa, the EMM has a vast network of offices and satellite buildings spread across its region. Municipal officials are based in different locations and are required to interact regularly for meetings. With traffic becoming an increasing challenge for commuters in Gauteng, it has become increasingly difficult to coordinate faceto-face meetings. Video conferencing is the answer to these challenges.

THE SOLUTION

With EMM's new video conferencing facility, meetings can be scheduled instantly, face-to-face, for a more personal experience. Besides traditional

video conferencing, other platforms that can be used include mobile devices, smartphones and tablets, and laptops and desktop PCs, thus allowing representatives to remotely join the meeting from anywhere.

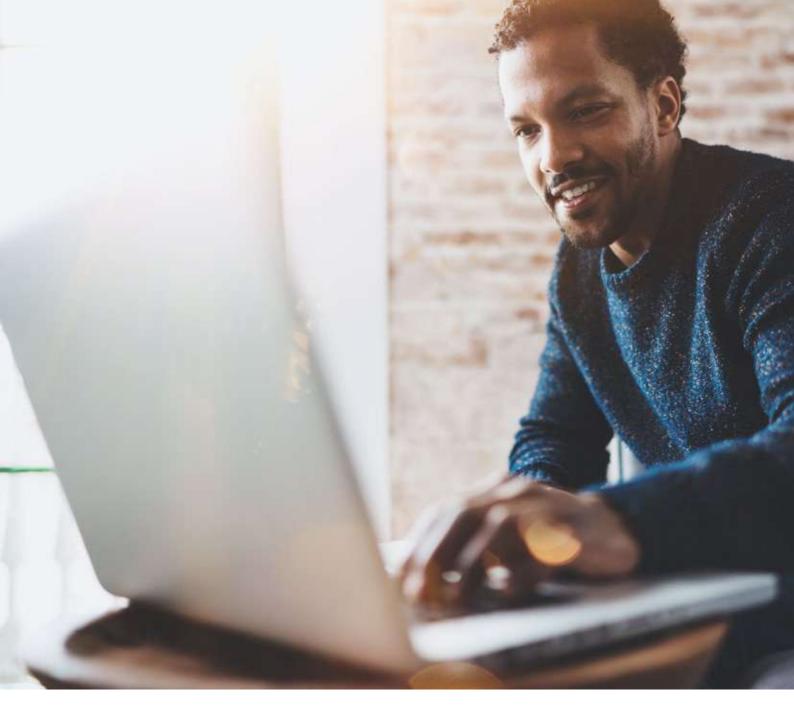
All boardrooms spread across the EMM's offices will be equipped with the latest video conferencing technology. The boardrooms range in size from small 12-seater rooms to 200-seater auditoriums. These boardrooms have different sets of requirements such as the size and number of display screens, the number of cameras, quantity of pick-up microphones and number of speakers. Alron will provide customised solutions to meet all these vastly varied requirements.

The state-of-the-art technology consists of a commercial high-definition video conferencing endpoint, providing robust performance through dual video and audio functionality, incorporating full live functionality and bridging facilities that have the ability to connect multiple video conferencing systems. The bridging and management platforms are implemented with 1+1 redundancy to ensure continuity of service and minimal downtime. The implementation is based on geographical disaster recovery (GDR) which means that the redundant platforms are implemented in two, physically separated data centres ensuring that a single disaster (grid power failure, fire, earthquake etc.) cannot affect both systems at the same time.

Studies have shown that high-definition video conferencing is the next best form of communication to face-to-face meetings. By allowing employees to see everything from facial expressions to body language, the solution increases understanding, even across language and cultural boundaries.

Outstanding Network Adaptability and Stability
Huawei's SEC (super error concealment) and IRC
(intelligent rate control) technology ensures superb
video quality even if there is significant packet loss or
low bandwidth, latency and network instability.
High Interoperability, Reliability and Security

The solution is highly interoperable with mainstream video conferencing equipment and it is possible to expand the organisation's video conferencing footprint at an organic rate in line with business requirements.



LINK TO OTHER DEVICES

Full-view video conferencing supports remote meetings to both room-based and personal endpoints including desktop, smartphone and tablet. At the same time, the technology adapts automatically, freely interconnecting with other video-enabled devices to provide a more flexible and reliable video communication service to organisations. The solution also interworks with unified communication platforms such as Huawei eSpace, Microsoft Lync and IBM Sametime. The system also integrates with Microsoft Outlook, enabling the booking of video conference facilities the moment one sets up a meeting.

USER-FRIENDLY INTERFACE AND REMOTE-CONTROL DESIGN

The solution is convenient to use and maintain, with a wireless touch panel for visualised control, a wizard for first-time installation and an LCD display for real-time local site information.

RESULTS

The first phase of the project that entailed equipping eighteen boardrooms with video conferencing technology has facilitated greater productivity, cost savings, increased efficiency and ultimately, faster service delivery at executive level. In one City Manager's weekly meeting, as many as 15 sites participated in the video conference session. The municipality expects the cost and productivity savings to increase substantially when the second phase of the project is completed by December 2015.

With the ability to support presentations, desktop sharing, mark-up capabilities and Q&A, the solution has proven to be highly effective, allowing EMM officials to work on documents in real-time and leave meetings with new knowledge and clear action items.



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