



Manufacturing

Daily Use

- Distance Training
- Workgroup Collaboration
- Interviewing

Solution

- 75 Polycom® HDX® 7000 room telepresence solutions
- Polycom Converged Management Application™ (CMA™) solution
- Polycom RMX® 2000 real-time media conferencing platform
- Polycom Video Border Proxy™ (VBP™) firewall traversal solution
- Polycom RSS™ recording, streaming, and archiving solution

Results and Benefits

- Significantly reduced travel expenses
- Increased frequency of personalized training, resulting in optimally prepared workforce
- Achieved closer collaboration across the organization regardless of location, fostering desired company culture
- Improved quality of life due to less frequent travel

UniFirst Reaps Significant Savings, Fosters Culture of Collaboration with Polycom Telepresence

UniFirst is a leading supplier of uniforms, work apparel, and related business products to companies throughout North America. Launched in 1936 as a small, family-owned business, UniFirst has grown into one of North America's largest workwear and textile services companies, serving 225,000 customer locations from its 202 facilities in the United States and Canada.

Bringing such a widely dispersed team together for training had a severe impact on both cost and time. A top-down productivity initiative from the UniFirst CEO, Ronald D. Croatti, resulted in the deployment of an extensive high-definition Polycom video collaboration network, to connect all UniFirst operations. Initially designed to reduce travel costs, which the Company is already realizing, UniFirst is now also making significant productivity gains in many aspects of its operations.

"We began as a family company, where everyone was on a first-name basis. And in fact, that's one of the things that differentiates us in this industry," explains UniFirst Training Manager, Kelley O'Leary. "Today, we're a billion dollar company with employees spread throughout North America. Our new video conferencing network is now helping us maintain and nurture that small-company culture by bringing people closer together in real time."

Hitting the Ground Running

In a remarkable feat of planning and coordination, UniFirst went live with 75 Polycom® HDX™ 7000 telepresence systems at each of its plant locations across the US and Canada in the time span of just one month. The Polycom RMX 2000 real-time media conference platform supports multisite calls and the Polycom Converged Management Application™ (CMA™) 4000 solution centrally manages the video collaboration network. To enable connections with outside organizations, UniFirst has implemented the Polycom Video Border Proxy™ (VBP™) firewall traversal solution. The Polycom RSS™ 2000 solution provides on-demand recording, streaming, and archiving of UniFirst training sessions.

Among the key reasons UniFirst partnered with Polycom was the extensive training application expertise offered by the company's Industry Solutions Team. The deployment of a training-focused video conferencing network meant that UniFirst's in-person training materials and techniques had to be fine-tuned for video delivery. UniFirst was able to move forward with confidence, knowing that Polycom's Industry Solutions Team was available for personalized, onsite training help facilitate that transition.

"Our training is much more personal over video because you're able to get the one-on-one interaction that simply wasn't possible before with our virtual classes."

Kelley O'Leary, Manager of Performance and Training Support, UniFirst

“Polycom really partnered with us. They were interested in our program’s success, not just in closing the deal. They really went out of their way to get the job done.”

Jodi Howshan, Training Specialist, UniFirst

“Polycom sent training experts for a two-day onsite session providing us with invaluable guidance and support. We simply chose the materials and information we felt were most appropriate for our deployment and integrated them into the training process,” says Jodi Howshan, UniFirst Training Specialist. “Polycom really partnered with us. They were interested in our program’s success, not just in closing the deal. They really went out of their way to get the job done.”

Usage Skyrockets

UniFirst is seeing rapid adoption and use of the technology. On average, just under 300 users are collaborating via video 7.5 hours a day, every month. The collaboration solution is being used across the entire organization for training of all kinds including management, new hire, payroll, sales, service, environmental health and safety, and even laundry training.

Brian Doiron, UniFirst Senior IT Manager for Network and Computing Services said the video network is easy to manage from an IT perspective and UniFirst employees have rapidly adopted the technology with very little training required.

“Because the visual communication solution is integrated with our Lotus Notes scheduling system, we can easily schedule and manage conferences,” said Doiron. “Our employees simply schedule meetings in Lotus Notes as they have in the past, and all they need to do is designate the meeting as a video meeting in Lotus Notes—everything else is handled automatically. This capability has encouraged rapid adoption of video conferencing and with very little required on the part of IT to accomplish to accomplish this feat.”

From the network management perspective, Doiron said, “The CMA has made managing and upgrading our Polycom HDX endpoints a simple task. With the Polycom CMA solution, we are able to manage the amount of bandwidth that the HDX endpoints use for each meeting. It also allows us to schedule upgrades of our HDX endpoints off hours and automatically reducing downtime and staff.”

UniFirst’s Kelley O’Leary noted that employees at all levels of UniFirst are finding uses for video collaboration beyond training. “We’ve had a number of regional vice presidents use video for meetings where they are discussing things like budget issues, operations, or sales with their managers or supervisors. We’ve even seen recruitment interviews now being done using video. We’re definitely finding additional ways to maximize the ROI of the network.”

Getting results

After only a few months of use, UniFirst is already on track to meet its primary goal of significantly reducing travel expenses and achieving a 100 percent ROI in the first year of implementing its new video network. “Not only is video conferencing enabling us to significantly reduce travel costs, but it’s also giving us the opportunity to offer more personalized training to more people throughout the company, more often,” said O’Leary.

The UniFirst sales team has embraced the new technology. They use it to work directly with individual sales reps on everything from role playing, to coaching and teaching new techniques, which is resulting in significantly faster sales readiness for the entire division.

“Our training is much more personal over video because you’re able to get the one-on-one interaction that simply wasn’t possible before with our virtual classes,” says O’Leary. And thanks to the Polycom VBP firewall traversal solution, UniFirst employees are also able to communicate with companies outside of their network.

Culture Shift

Moving forward, UniFirst expects to see a major shift in training delivery methods. With the help of Topsfield, Massachusetts-based integrator Totalcom Solutions, UniFirst has also installed a customized training studio at their Wilmington, MA headquarters, to further enhance their capabilities to deliver corporate training classes. “Right now, about 75 percent of our training is delivered in a traditional classroom setting, but within 18 months, we expect that to switch dramatically. We’ll have 75 percent of our training over video and the remaining 25 percent in person,” said O’Leary.

UniFirst also plans to expand the video collaboration to additional UniFirst facilities and leverage the Polycom CMA Desktop video software client to deliver leadership training on a one-on-one basis.

Learn More

To find out how Polycom solutions can help your organization, visit us at www.polycom.com or speak with a Polycom Account Representative.

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