

Case study

Philips

Advocating Board-Level Global Collaboration

Global manufacturing giant Royal Philips Electronics employs 116,000 people in more than 60 countries, offering a world-leading portfolio of healthcare, lifestyle, and lighting products.

Fast-moving business conditions demand that the Philips executive committee in the Netherlands stays in close touch with managers elsewhere around the globe. So, to strengthen collaborative capabilities, an innovative boardroom using Cisco TelePresence® technology was conceived in Breitner Tower, the company's Amsterdam headquarters.

The new video-enabled boardroom is enhancing insight into global operations, accelerating decision-making, and eliminating travel. The Philips executive committee now functions even more effectively as the hub of a global wheel of virtual communications.

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Jap Jongedijk
Deputy Secretary
Philips Executive Committee



Working together

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Deputy Secretary
Philips Executive Committee

Philips puts innovative multimedia Cisco TelePresence system at center of strategic decision-making worldwide

Challenge

Philips has used Cisco® TelePresence companywide since 2008 and has a well-established videoconferencing ethos, internally branded as Philips Connect Meeting, with some 50 Cisco TelePresence suites around the globe. Elsewhere in Breitner Tower, Philips uses Cisco TelePresence 3000 units, a highly-effective solution for mid-range video collaboration needs.

Jap Jongedijk, deputy secretary of the Philips executive committee, says: “While executive committee members could already attend TelePresence meetings in separate rooms several floors away, what we envisaged was much more ambitious—a bespoke solution that would place collaborative tools right at their fingertips at any time of the day or night.”

The design was to embrace every aspect of physical and virtual executive need, featuring a leading Cisco TelePresence suite, including screens set at optimal angles in a triple wall array. A unique flattened-hexagon board table was specified, with one open side and able to accommodate 15 participants. The plans also covered decor, lighting, and furnishings, including electronically-controlled curtains. “Our vision was a state-of-the-art multifunctional boardroom,” says Jongedijk, “combining everything we needed to integrate videoconferencing and multimedia into our management meeting cycle.”

For additions to the Philips Connect Meeting collaboration infrastructure BT Global Services, which provides worldwide managed network services for Philips,

normally runs installation projects. But, in this instance, Cisco Services was invited by BT Global Services to take design and technology leadership because of the complex and groundbreaking nature of what Philips had in mind.

The joint effort required to bring Philips’ vision of boardroom video enablement to life is a vivid demonstration of the ability of Cisco Services to work closely with multiple partners. These partners naturally included BT Global Services and the Philips IT Infrastructure & Platform team itself. Others were facilities management firm, Procure; audio-visual technology experts, Mansveld; and IT engineering specialists, aap3. Philips also supplied a sophisticated lighting system (as it does for all Cisco TelePresence installations worldwide), while a skilled joinery firm crafted the table.

Solution

The new boardroom was to be equipped with a top-of-the-range Cisco TelePresence System 3210 with three supersize 65-inch plasma screens, each one providing virtual meeting seats for three remote executives. Four 40-inch LCD screens would sit alongside for document sharing and rich media applications. In pursuing its multifunctional vision, Philips specified that the 65-inch screens should also be capable of displaying multimedia presentations when the room was not being used for videoconferencing. Not only that, but live TV reception had also to be incorporated.

“When we said we wanted the new boardroom to be multifunctional, we meant just that,” says Nico Hofman, network

solution expert in the Philips IT Infrastructure & Platform team. “It needed to give us a higher return on the high-tech investment than just immersive videoconferencing, vital though that was. The unparalleled expertise and technical knowledge inherent in the Cisco Services team ensured we would meet that objective.”

The Cisco TelePresence System 3210 is naturally optimized for videoconferencing. The inner workings of the system are designed around a custom-built chassis. Components and cabling are dimensioned and positioned to micrometer tolerances to carry massive video bandwidths interference-free. The nonstandard Philips requirement meant that the system would need to be dismantled and much of the componentry located in a separate equipment room, along with the audiovisual, TV reception, control, and switching gear needed for the new multimedia functions.

Hofman says: “We were in effect designing a new product from the ground up. In early trials, carrying the video and control signals over extra distances introduced some rather strange behaviors. Technologists from Cisco Services and Mansveld had to work very closely together to redesign and recalibrate sensitive system elements.”

Elsewhere, from the outset, the Cisco Services team played a key role in moving the project forward. For example, it carried out a full assessment to calculate camera angles, setting all participants at equal distances from the lenses to equalize image size, working closely with other team members on multiple iterations of the design drawings to get the details just right.

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Also, working with BT Global Services, the Cisco Services team confirmed that existing optimization technology in the Cisco-based WAN, connecting other Philips TelePresence suites elsewhere in the world, would cope with the additional high-bandwidth traffic. BT Global Services then set about smoothly integrating the new video-enabled boardroom into the Philips Connect Meeting global collaboration infrastructure.

Results

With blackout curtains that close at the push of a button, a boardroom table offering well-balanced visibility of all participants, a neutralized color scheme, and clever Philips lighting to adjust the room's mood temperature, the Philips global executive committee is now empowered by the most advanced Cisco TelePresence system available.

“A single iPad controls all room functions including the Cisco TelePresence system and the multimedia display facilities,” says Hofman. “Writing customized applications for the Apple device and seamlessly integrating them into the technology was another area where Cisco Services made an invaluable contribution.”

The new video-enabled boardroom is enhancing insight into global operations, accelerating decision-making, and eliminating travel. On that last point,

Philips has management teams in places such as the United States and China. They would traditionally fly to Amsterdam for strategic briefings and operational reviews, incurring huge flight costs and wasting days of travel time. Not anymore.

“We're now able to talk to the regions using video, instantly and effectively, when in the past they would have had to come all the way here,” says Jongedijk. “Cisco TelePresence is a huge improvement on audio conference calls, which we had tried as a halfway house. When people are up there on screen, it's absolutely clear they are part of the meeting; on the phone, people might get forgotten or go missing. It's as interactive as a live meeting.”

The executive committee now functions even more effectively as the hub of a global wheel of virtual communications, enabling better all-round business coordination. The company is well equipped to make top-level use of instant collaborative communications in a tough and ever-changing business environment.

“We have vast experience of using TelePresence, and the benefits generated by the new multifunction boardroom are literally taken as read,” says Jongedijk. “Members of the Philips executive committee have always been ambassadors for global video collaboration, and this project takes that advocacy to a new level.”

Next Steps

With the technology proven and the know-how now embedded in the Cisco Services team, Philips will be able to extend the multimedia concept as required. Nevertheless fine tuning is still in progress, for example increasing the size of the LCD screens, tweaking the table design, and adding new functionality to the iPad software. Philips is also looking to extend boardroom video meetings to partners and outside organizations, which will be simple using tools such as BT Global Video Exchange.

Finally, another Cisco TelePresence benefit is that full interoperability with other Cisco collaboration solutions is designed-in from the start, bringing lower total cost of ownership and further increasing return on investment.

Product List

- BT Global Services worldwide managed network services
- Cisco Services
- Cisco TelePresence System 3210 (highly-customized)



Offices worldwide

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