



COVINGTON & BURLING LLP



Covington & Burling takes advantage of video communications to connect partners and clients worldwide, maximizing productivity and reducing costs.

CHALLENGE

As one of the world's leading law firms, Covington & Burling has offices in Brussels, London, New York, San Francisco and Washington, D.C. Following the guiding principle of practicing as a single firm, Covington has been utilizing video communications technology for several years. However, recalls Ron Coe, Covington's Director of Information Technology Services, "When we first started, we had different systems in our offices; we had TANDBERG in D.C. and New York, but Brussels, London, and San Francisco each had equipment from different vendors."

Further, he adds, "All our systems were ISDN-connected; some had network interfaces and IP capabilities, but some of them were not licensed for IP capabilities."

As a result, any time Covington conducted meetings over video, it had to use a bridging service — a costly and complex exercise.

This arrangement preceded Coe's tenure at Covington. After he arrived, he says, "I found out about the situation and said, 'there's a better way.' I didn't have much experience with equipment from other vendors, but I had information that TANDBERG was a leader in the space and could improve service."

SOLUTION

In fiscal year 2007, Covington overhauled the firm's video communications systems and equipped all of its offices with TANDBERG products — including the TANDBERG Content Server (TCS) and TANDBERG Management Suite (TMS), which, remarks Coe, "we leverage heavily."

"The difference," he says, "is night and day. The products and infrastructure components from TANDBERG have enabled video communications to take off among all our offices. Applications run the gamut — we use video communications for meetings, training, general briefings, and interviews. With the TCS, we can record training sessions and use them in the future."

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Coe offers an example of how video communications has delivered the flexibility that enables Covington to quickly adjust to changing business requirements: "One of our partners was traveling in London. At the last minute, he needed to meet with a client in New Jersey. We contacted the client's IT department and determined that although they had a video-capable system, they didn't know how to use it. We were able to leverage our infrastructure, bridge, ISDN gateway and wide area connectivity to take that endpoint in London and bring it onto our TANDBERG multipoint control unit, and then place the call to the client through our ISDN gateway. It was not difficult."

In fact, observes Coe, "TANDBERG equipment is incredibly easy to use. We have it configured so all the lawyers have to do is push a button. TMS lets us arrange and troubleshoot video communications well in advance. Our lawyers aren't even aware of the technology — we've made the technology aware of what they need to do."

RESULTS

Improved video communications has resulted in numerous benefits for Covington. As Coe observes, "it's significant when the managing partner of our firm can effortlessly see and talk to partners in London, New York, San Francisco, Brussels, and clients in Beijing all in the same day without having to leave D.C. This is now a regular occurrence — two to three times a month."

"Reduced travel time results in significant savings for clients and for the firm," he says.

Add to that the ability to go home at the end of the day rather than sitting in an airplane and spending the night in a hotel, Coe remarks, "and that is a big plus."

Additional savings come from elimination of using a bridging service for video communications, which, says Coe, costs approximately \$50,000 per year. Further, the move from ISDN circuits has also reduced costs.

"Before," explains Coe, "we had a multitude of tri-channel BRIs (basic rate interfaces) throughout the world connected directly to a bunch of endpoints. Today, we have one tri-channel BRI for backup purposes in D.C. As long as everything is working, and it is — so far we have not had a single failure — any ISDN requirement is met by the TANDBERG Gateway and two PRIs (primary rate interfaces) in D.C., which provides a significant cost savings."

Beyond the savings, Covington is enjoying the advantage of improved communication. As Coe puts it, "The flexibility we have today means better interaction among our attorneys. The ability to see facial expressions, body language and so on results in conversations that are far more rich and meaningful."

"Video has become such an important part of what we do, and this has been so successful for us," Coe asserts, "moving forward it is clear that video will be classified as one of the primary means that the firm uses to conduct business."

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