LifeSize®
Experience Communication in High Definition

Case Study:
WILLCOM, INC.

WILLCOM Improves Quality Assurance Practices with HD Video

Leading telecommunications carrier shortens troubleshooting time, reduces man-hours with LifeSize

"Quality control efforts have improved dramatically because we can now resolve the issue in less time, with fewer technicians."

Yasuhiro Nagasawa
Chief of Technological Operations
WILLCOM, INC.

Organization

WILLCOM, INC., Tokyo, Japan

WILLCOM, INC. is a telecommunications company operating a Personal Handy-Phone System (PHS) network covering almost all of Japan. This technology is unique to Japan and WILLCOM currently has the largest share of the PHS market, offering flat-rate wireless network data transmission and flat-rate voice calls for its more than 4 million subscribers. Headquartered in Tokyo and with a subsidiary in Okinawa, WILLCOM reported 5 billion yen in capital for the fiscal year ended 2007. WILLCOM has built a firm position as the only PHS operation in the country with approximately 160,000 cell stations across Japan providing service and support for its unique solution.

Challenge

One of the key components of WILLCOM's business is their mobile data communication service, AIR-EDGE. The maintenance behind this network infrastructure, the backbone of their communication quality, is vital. "It takes a lot of effort to keep steady quality control day and night," said Yasuhiro Nagasawa, Chief of Technological Operations. "But when problems do arise, we must have immediate notification from both outside and inside the office of any emergency."

WILLCOM previously adopted a telephone conferencing system as the base for their quality control efforts. The system would notify the appropriate contact whenever a failure occurred, however it was designed for a time when information came only by voice and it took time to get a detailed understanding of the situation. It was especially difficult to confirm the name of the suspected failure devices due to the complex alphanumeric character assigned to the problem.

Another issue facing the company was educating employees on how to use new equipment and technology. With such a widely dispersed workforce, training on new information and internal communication was time-consuming and costly. WILLCOM clearly needed an improved internal communications solution.

Organization: Leading telecommunications carrier with over 4 million subscribers

Challenge: Improve information transmission for quality assurance purposes

Solution: LifeSize HD video systems deployed in key areas

Results: Quality control efforts improved by 15%, issues resolved faster and with greater accuracy

Solution

Quality was a significant part of WILLCOM's selection process for a new communications solution. With the technical guidance of Hitachi High-Technologies, Mr. Nagasawa and his team selected the HD video offering from LifeSize. Because all LifeSize systems are high definition, 1280 X 720p resolution, 30fps at 1Mbps, this was a natural fit for WILLCOM.

"It would be meaningless to purchase if the image of the video is not distinct," Nagasawa said. "If it's not high definition, it's just not significant."

Interoperability with their current telephone system was also considered in the selection.

"I wanted a video communications system that would easily connect to traditional telephony devices for interactive teleconferences," Nagasawa said. "Each LifeSize codec has an analog port, so we can connect the right people for quality control troubleshooting, whether they are in the office or dialing in from their cell phones. It is very important that everything be compatible with our existing system."

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Another key driver in the selection process was the ability to share data with remote parties. All LifeSize systems come with standards-based data sharing capability including H.239 as a standard feature. WILLCOM also connected an electronic whiteboard to the system for intelligence sharing. This is easily connected to the built-in VGA input on every LifeSize system.

Results

WILLCOM has seen improved customer satisfaction and increased productivity since the LifeSize HD video implementation.

"Quality control efforts have improved dramatically because we can resolve the issue in less time, with fewer technicians," Nagasawa said. "And because our issues can be resolved faster and with greater accuracy, our progress report shows an increase of 15%, thus significantly increasing customer satisfaction."

Now when network issues arise, a detailed description of the problem is written on the electronic whiteboard. Then, the technician in charge of site maintenance can quickly share information with their support colleagues at headquarters while working through the problem face-to-face.

Previously, problems occurring during regular business hours were easy to troubleshoot because engineers were typically in the office. However, when issues arose at 2:00AM, a special engineer would not be onsite. Now, even if the onsite technician is not a specialist, they can easily use the visual technology and report the trouble situation accurately. Improved voice quality also contributes to the speed of issue resolution because LifeSize audio is clean and crisp.

"We have sped up the trouble resolution," Nagasawa said. "In addition, we can detect the specific problem faster than ever by projecting the workstation screen onto the HD plasma TV."

Company-wide training and communication has also improved since the LifeSize implementation. Now monthly meetings and internal trainings are held over video from headquarters to all remote offices. An IPVCR was also installed, so each training session is recorded and a DVD of the session is distributed to each location.

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