

CASE STUDY FOURTH CIRCUIT PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE

Overview

- Public defender office needed to communicate with distant staff
- Vidyo solution was used to establish virtual conferences
- Staff now saves time and money using the new video conference solution



Office of the Public Defender
Florida's 4th Judicial Circuit



In northeast Florida, the Office of the Public Defender for the Fourth Judicial Circuit of Florida was seeking ways to reduce costs. One of the larger budget expenditures each month was team travel costs. Every week, Matt Shirk, Public Defender, holds a team meeting with his staff of attorneys and administrators. They would drive in from several different counties, with at least a 45-minute drive in each direction. This contributed to high travel costs, a loss of productivity, and misalignment with "green" business initiatives.

Matt, a big proponent of using technology to improve communication, thought of using video conferencing as a solution. He asked the department's IT director, Joe Frasier for help finding a workable yet cost effective solution. "I knew traditional video conferencing systems were not going to work with our budget, so I had to search for something else," Joe said.

Action

Joe began looking for a solution and as he suspected many traditional video conferencing solutions were simply not within the department's budget and free offerings delivered too poor of quality to be considered. "We looked at several products where the video would stutter and there were major audio problems," said Joe. They also wanted to stay away from a system that would charge monthly connection or recurring fees for licensing the software.

The department also needed a simple to use interface and a system that would be compatible with PC computers. Finally, Joe found an article about Vidyo in a magazine and he turned to their integration partner, IDS, to learn more. The IDS team immediately performed a demonstration for Joe and he was hooked. Not only did the Vidyo solution meet the budget requirements, but all other requirements as well.

With Vidyo, users communicate with their own desktop computers. This eliminated the need for any propriety equipment, an advantage over other video conferencing manufacturers.

Vidyo also uses scalable video coding, which allows the application to detect the available bandwidth of each person's connection. Vidyo can then adjust audio and video parameters to custom fit each user. The result is a smooth, high quality video picture for everyone in a video conference, regardless of the quality provided by their Internet connection.

"At first, I couldn't believe it," Joe said. "Once I saw it working, that was it."

Results

The department uses Vidyo regularly for their weekly meetings, and while it may be too early to calculate the exact dollar amount saved, it has most definitely increased productivity. "I can now have meetings with my entire staff, and there is literally no down time," said Matt. Employees attend a meeting and afterwards can quickly transition back to their regularly work. This reduction in travel alone saves days' worth of lost production.

The department has begun expanding the use of their new Vidyo conferencing solution to other areas as well. Attorneys regularly attend continuing education sessions, and the plan is to start making these available through Vidyo so that attorneys can attend from their own

offices. In addition, notable or subject matter expert speakers are frequently brought in for staff presentations. One such speaker recently reduced his fee significantly with the prospect of eliminating travel and completing the presentation via a Vidyo conference.

The hope is that by using Vidyo they will be able to save an increasing amount in travel and associated fees while bringing in more speakers and subject matter experts, hosting motivational seminars and delivering other types of training for the staff through use of their Vidyo system.

Another cost saving application is using Vidyo for depositions. In one case, a witness came into a deposition room in one county and the hour-long discussion was broadcast to a courtroom in another county. This could potentially save thousands of dollars a year in travel and improve overall process efficiency.

"We are learning a lot more about how we can benefit from using this technology, reaching far beyond what we had originally hoped," said Matt.

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*MATT SHIRK
PUBLIC DEFENDER*



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