

# Videoconferencing Supports Water Corporation of WA's 'Zero Harm' Corporate Objective

Water Corporation of Western Australia

## industry:

Government

## country:

Australia

## business challenge:

Build a videoconferencing system that enabled the Water Corporation of Western Australia to minimise travel so it could meet environmental and business requirements.

## solution:

An integrated videoconferencing system based on Cisco management, control and networking technologies and endpoints which eliminated the performance and user experience problems impeding takeup.

## services:

Deployment of a new video conferencing environment.

## results:

- Increased use of head office videoconferencing system by several hundred per cent and paved the way for converting a second room to meet demand
- Eliminated obstacles to collaboration and decision-making, and reduced the technical and performance issues often experienced by users
- Enabled the organisation to start upskilling its workforce by conducting training sessions via videoconference
- Allowed the Water Corporation to progress towards meeting its corporate objective of 'zero harm' to staff and the environment

## Executive Summary

The Water Corporation of Western Australia engaged Dimension Data to design and implement a new videoconferencing system to **improve communications between** its geographically distributed locations, and **reduce the cost** and environmental and human resources impacts of travelling for meetings.

## Client Overview

The Water Corporation of Western Australia provides water, wastewater management and drainage services to homes and businesses across the state, while delivering these services and bulk water to farms for irrigation. To run projects and support customers across a region spanning 2.5 million square kilometres, the organisation operates offices in Perth, Bunbury, Albany, Karratha, Geraldton, Northam and Kalgoorlie. It has invested close to A\$9 billion in water services infrastructure.

## Business Challenge

The Water Corporation uses videoconferencing to enable collaboration between its offices and facilities across the state. It also promotes environmental sustainability and occupational health and safety by reducing the obligation for staff to travel long distances to attend meetings. In addition, minimising travel lowers the drain on staff productivity and enables business to be conducted more efficiently.

Between 2005 and 2008, the organisation relied on a videoconferencing system that used standalone public ISDN links with

speeds ranging from 128Kbps to 384Kbps to enable communication between staff and managers. However, the system was unable to support the demand for videoconferencing.

"We were experiencing a range of issues, including the fact that if we needed to link staff from three locations into a videoconference, we had to approach an external provider to bridge the call," said Hardip Bhoday, Communications Coordinator, Water Corporation of Western Australia. "This would require making a booking a few weeks in advance."

Poor video quality and frequent dropouts or 'hanging' further exacerbated these problems. "With a public ISDN link there were no guarantees of quality of service," said Bhoday.

"We had no way of prioritising our video traffic over public links, so often senior managers would be waiting for proper service to resume. Also, if a technician had to be called, resolving a problem could take 30 minutes or longer. As a result of these difficulties, use of the system dropped to negligible levels."

In 2006, the Water Corporation migrated its voice, data and video traffic from three networks to one. "We deployed voice-over-IP using Cisco hardware to integrate our voice and data networks and it made sense to put video onto a fully consolidated network," said Bhoday.

The organisation investigated a range of options for videoconferencing. It required a system that integrated seamlessly with its Cisco Call Manager system, which is used to manage call processing across all of its locations.

The system would also have to work with Microsoft Exchange so staff could schedule videoconferences easily.

“We needed a partner that had strong relationships with Cisco and Microsoft, **a deep understanding** of their technologies and a proven ability to deliver. Dimension Data met all the criteria.”

Hardip Bhoday, Communications Coordinator, Water Corporation of Western Australia

## Solution Delivered

The Water Corporation engaged Dimension Data to deploy a system based on Cisco's TelePresence platform and endpoints. The system includes a Cisco Unified Videoconferencing 5230 Multipoint Control Unit to provide video bridging for conferences; Cisco Unified Videoconferencing Manager and Media Convergence Servers to provide a user interface for scheduling, resource allocation and recording capabilities; Cisco IOS Gatekeepers to control calls and register endpoints; and Cisco Unified Videoconferencing PRI Gateway to enable calls with third parties over ISDN.

It also includes several Cisco 1700MXP endpoints, each incorporating an integrated, compact, high-definition camera and portable 20-inch widescreen LCD screens, as well as Cisco C20 endpoints, each incorporating a codec (set-top box), camera, remote control and microphone to transform any flat panel display into a high-definition videoconferencing unit.

Dimension Data integrated the system with Cisco Call Manager, Microsoft Exchange and Microsoft Active Directory. The Water Corporation also plans to integrate the system with a yet-to-be-deployed Webex web conferencing system for room-based systems and conferencing over 3G mobile devices.

The Cisco Unified Videoconferencing Manager integrates with Microsoft Exchange so videoconferences can be easily scheduled, while the Cisco Multipoint Control Unit bridges video streams for multipoint conferences. Microsoft Office Communications Server provides communication with desktop clients, while Microsoft Live Meeting enables collaboration with shared presentation and whiteboards.

## How We Delivered

Dimension Data adopted an approach that prioritised ease of use and fulfilment of technical and business requirements. This included completing a video optimisation and readiness assessment to understand the Water Corporation's requirements and ensure its network was adequately configured to enable videoconferencing.

To gain support from senior managers that had lost faith in the previous videoconferencing system, Dimension Data suggested running a pilot at the corporation's head office.

Dimension Data took a two-stage approach to the project. The first scoping and planning stage included interviewing staff and management about features and functionality. Dimension Data also completed technical workshops and developed a lab at its staging facilities to determine integration and deployment requirements. This allowed the company to develop a roadmap covering the initial endpoint deployment, and longer-term activities such as videoconferencing and collaboration.

The design and deployment stage included rolling out the central videoconferencing equipment and the room-based Cisco endpoints at 15 locations – plus two 'floating' videoconferencing units.

“We needed a partner that had strong relationships with Cisco and Microsoft, a deep understanding of their technologies and a proven ability to deliver,” said Bhoday. “Dimension Data met all the criteria and because we had worked with them on a number of consulting and technical services engagements, we were very comfortable selecting them to undertake this project.”

“Thanks to Dimension Data's knowledge of the Water Corporation environment and previous project experience, both

organisations quickly forged an excellent working relationship to ensure that as a team, we were able to meet an aggressive schedule,” said Hemmy Mistry, Western Australian Project Services Manager, Dimension Data.

According to Bhoday, Dimension Data's expertise and knowledge ensured the Cisco videoconferencing system was deployed in only three months, while its expertise ensured managers and staff could confidently use the service once it was implemented.

## Value Derived

The new videoconferencing system provides crystal-clear video quality and eliminated the degraded performance and issues that prompted the Water Corporation's senior managers to lose faith in the previous system.

“The room at head office is constantly booked out, which is an improvement of at least several hundred per cent over the previous situation,” said Bhoday. “We are currently assessing whether or not to create a second videoconferencing room to meet demand.”

The new system has also removed the obstacles to effective collaboration and decision making caused by the previous system running on dedicated ISDN links, while the productivity of managers and staff is not compromised by outages, hanging or jitters.

The Water Corporation is now able to progress further to meeting its corporate objective of 'zero harm', reducing travel between distant locations, which may have required flights of up to four hours and overnight stays. This has lightened the load on staff and cut the organisation's carbon footprint.

The Water Corporation is extending its use of videoconferencing from staff and manager meetings to training sessions, cutting travel requirements and costs.