

# Cisco I-Prize HAN Team Heightens Productivity with WebEx Meeting Applications

About the Cisco I-Prize Home Area Network (HAN) Team

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### CISCO I-PRIZE HOME AREA NETWORK (HAN) TEAM

- Cisco WebEx services: Cisco WebEx Meeting Center, Cisco WebEx Connect
- Number of team members: 5
- Program launch: 2007

### SUMMARY

- To compete in the Cisco® I-Prize program, the Home Area Network (HAN) team needed a collaborative tool for holding conversations and developing a solid business plan. By sharing desktops, maintaining strict version control, and storing recorded audio conversations on the Cisco WebEx® Connect platform, the HAN team helped ensure complete continuity among team members for enhanced productivity and accelerated innovation.
- Spearheaded by the Emerging Technologies Group (ETG) at Cisco, the Cisco I-Prize program brings together global teams of entrepreneurs to identify and develop the next billion-dollar innovation. The winning team has the opportunity to join Cisco as the founders of a new emerging-technology business unit. By nurturing and connecting innovators from around the world with the Cisco global network, the I-Prize program reinforces the company's heritage as a leader in connecting people through the power of collaborative technologies.

## The Challenge

In 2007, as word spread about the I-Prize contest, entrepreneur Chris Herbert helped form a team to design a consumer-friendly home networking solution. "We call it the Home Area Network, or HAN," he says. "Consumers want technology to enrich their communications and entertainment experience, not complicate it. This solution manages streamlined communication between the devices in your home, coordinating everything from energy management to HD movies on demand. The result is a new and more integrated home networking experience."

The HAN team, which included only three members at first, began collaborating remotely to make their idea a reality. After the I-Prize judges reviewed more than 1200 proposals during the first round of the contest, the HAN team advanced along with 31 other teams to the semifinal round. By that point, the team had grown from three members to five, several of whom had never met in person. The need for real-time collaboration was greater than ever. "In order to

advance to the finals, we knew that we needed to work even more closely so that we could deliver a best-in-class presentation to the panel of I-Prize judges," says Herbert. "The problem was that we were scattered across two countries and three time zones. That's when Cisco WebEx Connect came into play."

## The Solution

Cisco provided WebEx Connect accounts to each semifinalist team. WebEx Connect has a wide range of collaborative tools that the HAN team could use to share documents and develop new ideas. By creating common team spaces on the WebEx Connect platform, the HAN team was able to catalyze efficient, ongoing innovation. "When you want to share a document, all you do is click and drag it into your WebEx Connect space," says team member Kenneth Wygand. "And WebEx does a great job of dealing with version control. Everyone always knows that they're accessing the latest version of each file." The team was even able to customize its WebEx Connect space by adding widgets that solved logistical issues in a hurry. "We added a widget that automatically

determines the best time for everyone to meet,” Wygand says. “That kind of easy customization makes WebEx Connect a really indispensable tool for remote collaboration.”

Not all members were able to attend the HAN team’s regular conferences in Cisco WebEx Meeting Center, so all audio conversations were recorded and stored for easy retrieval and review. “With a library of recordings in our WebEx Connect space, it was easier for all of us to maintain a little bit of work-life balance while still keeping up with the team’s progress,” says Wygand. The HAN team also conducted all chat discussions on the WebEx Connect central discussion board, where the most popular topics appear most prominently. “The discussion board was a huge help for me in particular, because I was the last to join the team,” says Brian McReavy. “You can quickly scan the discussion topics and see what everyone’s been talking about. I was up to speed in no time.”

For the HAN team, the greatest test of all was preparing a seamless presentation to submit to the I-Prize panel of judges. “We were in five different locations in two different countries,” says McReavy. “Yet we needed to construct a 15-minute presentation that would wow a panel of experts on the other side of the continent. The challenge was just enormous.” Using WebEx Connect, the HAN team was able to collaborate on a script, then create and merge audio and visual elements into a cohesive presentation. “I had no idea that a team could construct something that polished, with audio and video built right in, without ever sharing the same room,” says McReavy. “I was definitely impressed.”

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—Brian McReavy, HAN team member

### The Benefits

Cisco WebEx Connect enabled great gains in productivity. By sharing desktops, maintaining strict version control, and storing recorded audio conversations within the WebEx Connect space, the HAN team maintained complete continuity among team members, even on divergent schedules. “For anyone who has managed a team in different locations, this is an amazing tool for increasing your team’s efficiency,” McReavy says. “The fact is that we’d still be working on this project if it weren’t for WebEx meeting applications.”

Due to the efficient collaboration made possible by WebEx Connect, the HAN team was able to meet difficult deadlines comfortably. “Our proposal is very complex. It involves multiple markets and products,” says Herbert. “But even with this massive project on our hands, we never had to go into panic mode. That’s partly because WebEx Connect brought so many enhancements to our team process.”

WebEx Connect helps remote workers build relationships and make discoveries in entirely new ways. “WebEx technology absolutely helped us gel as a team,” says Herbert. “It accelerated our interaction and our innovation.” As a result, HAN team members produced a compelling presentation that clearly communicated their passion for the project, winning them a spot in the final round of the competition. “When I sit back and think about it, we’ve been able to come up with a project that could be the next billion-dollar idea for Cisco, and we’ve done it in our spare time over

the course of only eight months,” says McReavy. “That’s a tall order. But WebEx Connect has really helped us keep up with some pretty fierce competition.”

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—Chris Herbert, HAN team member

## The Future

Whether or not the HAN team takes the top prize, at least one team member has started to incorporate WebEx Connect into other projects. “I’ve started using this technology to collaborate with some of my peer advisors in the industry,” says Wygand. “I work with a lot of startups, and WebEx Connect will provide an excellent way for me to present a business plan to venture capitalists within a shared space. I’m thrilled that I’ve discovered its potential.”

## Highlights:

- By sharing and storing documents and conversations within Cisco WebEx Connect, the HAN team maintained complete continuity among team members, even on divergent schedules.
- Due to the efficient collaboration made possible by WebEx Connect, the HAN team was able to meet difficult deadlines comfortably.
- WebEx Connect helped the HAN team members build relationships and make discoveries in entirely new ways, accelerating innovation while enhancing productivity.



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