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– Tammie Crockford, Project Manager, Group Development, Aviva

Insurance giant Aviva sees business travel cost reductions, paralleled with increased productivity, thanks to the global roll out of WebEx



INDUSTRY

Financial services

WEBEX APPLICATION

Meeting Center

SUMMARY

Following a successful pilot scheme, the company integrated WebEx into a collaborative working strategy across the organisation globally. As a result it has increased productivity and made tremendous financial savings across the business.

ABOUT AVIVA

Line of Business

Savings, investment and insurance group.

Headquarters

London, UK

Number of Employees

60,000

WebEx Customer since 2004

Aviva is the world’s sixth largest insurance group and the leading provider of life and pensions products in the UK. The company has substantial businesses around the world and is a major bank assurance player in Europe, with a growing presence in Asia. The group was created by the merger of CGU and Norwich Union in May 2000 and has been known as Aviva since July 2002. Its main activities are long-term savings, fund management and general insurance.

The company operates in 25 countries worldwide and employs 60,000 staff, who serve over 30 million customers across the globe.

The Challenge

Aviva today is the product of two mergers and other corporate activity, which means the company has had to unify its business processes. With this in mind, the global finance transformation programme (GFTP) was set up to manage the roll out of Aviva’s financial reporting tool, Cartesis Magnitude. To ensure consistent financial management, the GFTP was tasked with rolling Cartesis Magnitude out to the global business units.

“Rolling out a new tool on a global basis requires a huge investment in time and resources,” explains Tammie Crockford, Group Development, Aviva. “It wasn’t just a matter of installing the software, we needed to ensure that the business units were trained up on how to use the

product and we needed to make sure there was adequate support in place to allow the teams to make the most out of it.” However, with geographically diverse business units, in locations from Europe, to Asia, Australia and the USA, this was no mean feat.

Initially, roll-out was done through face-to-face visits to install the software and provide training and support. However, this was proving a strain, not just for the GFTP, who were constantly on the road, but also for the business units, who found their financial reporting delayed as they waited for a member of the GFTP to arrive. “We wanted to make the process as smooth as possible and we wanted a tool that would allow us to collaborate in real-time and provide remote support and training,” says Crockford.

The Solution

The answer was to invest in a web conferencing platform, which would allow the team to share applications and files in a real-time environment, which would allow the team to effectively work together as a virtual team. The group development team was tasked with evaluating three industry leading web conferencing applications. In January 2004, Aviva decided to begin a three month trial of WebEx Meeting Center™.

Crockford explains: “What really swung it for us was that WebEx had no large set-up costs. With some other products, we would have had to set up licences for

international use, but with WebEx all you need is a phone and an internet browser to join a meeting.” Because it is browser based, WebEx could be implemented immediately, without IT support, which was another plus point for WebEx. Aviva was also looking for a ‘user-friendly’, interactive solution.

The Benefits

Following a initial successful three month pilot scheme, which realised £9,000 in cost savings, it was decided that WebEx would be rolled out to the rest of the Aviva group internationally. Aviva estimated that rolling out WebEx groupwide would lead to further cost and productivity benefits and the Group Development team was tasked with rolling WebEx out globally. Since May 2004 Aviva has recorded over £120,000 in cost savings from reduced travel. Aviva’s belief in WebEx was supported by its decision to use an ‘Assisted’ implementation model, which involved focusing company resources on WebEx’s deployment to ensure long-term promotion, training and development of the product.

Although initially only intended for a handful of users, WebEx has now been embraced across the company and is being used in a number of ways. The Corporate Communications team now use WebEx to conduct ‘virtual’ meetings with its global team members; the Group Financial Systems team use it to provide technical support; International Purchasing has embraced the training possibilities of web conferencing; and Aviva USA is using WebEx for relationship management. Crockford explains, “Aviva is an international group with operations in Europe, Asia, US and Canada and is quite spread out geographically as a result. Even in the UK there are multiple Business Unit locations, including London, Norwich and York. Historically, it’s been very difficult for us to work together and communicate. WebEx helps bridge this gap.”

To encourage adoption, Aviva implemented WebEx into its corporate intranet: Arena. This has increased traffic to the intranet and has had the double benefit of promoting web conferencing to regular users, while also encouraging regular WebEx users to utilise the company intranet.

Although Aviva has reported fantastic cost savings from WebEx, Crockford is keen to explain that the advantages of

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web conferencing go beyond financial savings. “The beauty of WebEx is that it overcomes geographic distance, allowing us to respond instantly without the delay or stress of international travel,” Crockford says. “Since implementing WebEx, we have increased staff morale in those teams where frequent business travel used to be the norm. WebEx’s technology has freed these teams from being slaves to road, rail and plane, giving our employees a choice of when they travel and more control over their time.” For example, before WebEx, the Financial Systems group were constantly on planes, now they can get the same result quicker and without leaving their desks.

The Future

Thanks to WebEx, Aviva has been able to increase the efficiency and productivity of meetings and improve internal communications within the organisation. As a result, the Group Development team will continue to promote WebEx globally, as part of a broader collaborative working and

knowledge sharing strategy. “We’ve seen fantastic results so far from a ‘softly-softly’ marketing approach, but we believe that there are still numerous ways that we could use WebEx within the company globally,” explains Crockford. “This year we plan to market the service more proactively to ensure that within Aviva, web conferencing becomes synonymous with communication, collaboration and productivity.”

HIGHLIGHTS

- Aviva reported tremendous financial savings thanks to WebEx. Since May 2004, Aviva has recorded over £120,000 in cost savings from reduced business travel
- Following the success of an initial pilot scheme, the company has integrated WebEx into a collaborative working strategy globally, across the organisation
- Thanks to WebEx, Aviva has been able to increase the efficiency and productivity of meetings and improve internal communications within the organisation. As a result, the Group Development team will continue to promote WebEx globally, as part of a broader collaborative working and knowledge sharing strategy