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— Harald A. Hanssen, Service Manager, Visma Unique

Visma Unique strikes a healthy balance.



INDUSTRY
High-Tech

WEBEX APPLICATIONS
Training Center

SUMMARY

Visma Unique has optimized their consulting practice using WebEx Training Center, minimizing travel time and expense to train clients, and finding new opportunities to improve employee knowledge and productivity with more internal training.

ABOUT VISMA

Line of Business

Accounting, Financial, Human Resource Management, Health Services, Internet/Intranet/Extranet/TripleNet Software and Services

Headquarters

Lysaker, Norway

Number of Employees

150

WebEx Customer Since 2001

Visma Unique is a Norwegian software services company that develops and sells financial services applications to both private sector and local government. The main products are Unique ØKONOMI (financial), Unique ANSATT (salary and personnel management), specific systems for local government social and health sectors, and systems that cover the Internet, as well as Intranets and Extranets (TripleNet). Established some 20 years ago, it has never hesitated to adopt the latest technology serve its customers efficiently. Selling internationally in the Nordic countries, Visma Unique employs 150 people.

The Challenge

Although the company has proven successful, with good market share, Visma Unique’s overhead was comparatively high. The cause: the high level of post-sales service that Visma Unique pride itself on. The brand of software that Visma Unique brings to the market requires a good deal of professional services and support after the point of sale, and traditionally the company managed this with face-to-face meetings to train users on the software. This meant servicing a geographically diverse group of customers and making a number of visits to each of them to ensure they were getting the optimum usage from of their software. In a country the size of Norway this meant both travel expenses and lost time.

Internally, staff needed time out of the office to attend face-to-face meetings and training, forcing a trade-off between delivering customer service revenue and learning new skills. This was acceptable until an alternative became available—when the business decided it needed a virtual presence on customer sites. The search was on for a platform that enabled the organization to cut unnecessary travel time and maintain the quality of training and service both to internal staff and external customers.

The Solution

In April 2001, Visma Unique signed a contract for WebEx Training Center. The company uses WebEx as a communications service, both for internal training, and to teach clients and potential clients about the different aspects of the company’s software. Visma Unique conducts a variety of session types based on feedback from staff, including video webcasts, individual tutorials, and conferences.

Typically, one or two Visma Unique training staff conducts customer training sessions with up to eight student attendees. Using WebEx Training Center, Visma Unique now offers up to 12 training sessions a week to provide training instantly to their customers when they need it. Unlike traditional classroom-based training, trainers either take control of a student’s desktop to illustrate a point, or pass control to the students for “hands on” learning. The WebEx polling feature provides an excellent mechanism to solicit class feedback and assess the effectiveness of the training as it happens.



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— Harald A. Hanssen, Service Manager, Visma Unique

As far as increasing return on intellectual capital, the benefits of WebEx are clear—by increasing the impact, scope, and frequency of training sessions and demonstrations, customers can be kept constantly aware of product developments and sales initiatives. Visma Unique service manager, Harald A. Hanssen recalls one occasion when his company was called on short notice to perform a one day training session at Sør-Varanger, a town in remote, northeast Norway. “Instead of travelling, our trainer conducted the session via WebEx. We saved around NK15,000, (£130) in travel costs, and our trainer was spared seven hours of travel and an overnight hotel stay. Without WebEx, this might have taken 3 days of this person's time.” People unfamiliar with Norwegian geography might not initially appreciate the advantage of not having to travel to, say, the West Coast every time to conduct a training session, but the time, cost and stress savings are considerable.

Internally too, the amount of interactive one-to-many, or one-to-one training has grown significantly. These would have been missed opportunities prior to WebEx, due to time and cost restraints. WebEx web-based learning capabilities have stimulated a strong internal training initiative for new recruits to Visma Unique. Currently, employees benefit from at least four WebEx training sessions a month. This training program was developed by WebEx Training Center Consultative services, which bridges the gap between face-to-face training and live, online training sessions.

Hanssen says that the stability and security of the WebEx MediaTone Network were among the prime reasons the product was selected. “A system like this needs to be stable because we depend on it to be available all the time,” he comments. “It is also the fastest product in its class. We especially like the response time,” he says.

WebEx Grows the Business

It's not just for saving money on existing business that WebEx has scored. Hanssen comments, “Normally post-sale training takes time; the process involves travelling to the customer, installing the product, explaining it to them in detail, and then following-up. We had a case a few weeks ago from a business that needed professional consultancy to optimize their software. A face-to-face training session would have involved one day travelling and one day training – that's two days out of the office. With WebEx, both the training, and installation can take place remotely in one or two hour long sessions.”

Visma Unique's software is also sold to local government, which uses a standardized form of the Visma Unique software across neighbouring counties. By using WebEx, the company provides installation and post-sales training for up to six counties at the same time, enormously increasing the reach of the business, and allowing greater time and funds to seek new sales opportunities.

The Benefits

Hanssen concedes that his organization is only beginning to tap into the potential of WebEx. “I was approached by a software company that offered a remote support system,” he says. “The idea was to log onto someone's desktop and solve their problem remotely rather than spend a whole day travelling to them and it appealed a lot. But when I looked into it, I found we were already doing this with WebEx!”

It's also certain is that Visma Unique would not have gained as many new customers this year without expanding its staff if not for its extensive use of WebEx.

The Future

Hanssen retains an open mind about further exploring additional uses for WebEx. He remains positive about the product at the moment: “We are very satisfied customers,” he says.

For the moment 80 of the 150 personnel are registered and licensed users of WebEx, so the scope for expansion exists.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Visma Unique leverages the specialized functionality of WebEx Training Center to solicit class feedback and assess training effectiveness in real time.
- With WebEx Training Center, the company now conducts both internal and external training, employing a variety of session types, including video webcasts, individual tutorials, and conferences.
- By decreasing travel time and expenses related to training, the company has found more opportunities to increase web-based learning for its employees.