

Architecture Firm Designs Global Collaboration Strategy

Customer Case Study



KPF interacts with remote teams and clients personally, pervasively, and cost-effectively using Cisco video solutions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates (KPF)

Industry: Architecture

Location: New York, NY

Number of Employees: 530

Challenge:

- Deploy comprehensive collaboration strategy to transform global business model
- Execute complex design projects across geographically dispersed teams
- Engage in real-time working sessions globally while reducing travel costs

Solution:

- Cisco TelePresence enables face-to-face video collaboration between offices
- Cisco WebEx technology provides data and video sharing anywhere with Internet connection
- Cisco Unified Communications enhance productivity with flexible access to voice messaging

Results:

- Collaboration solutions eliminate time and distance barriers, increasing global productivity
- Pervasive video makes every team and client interaction feel local, more personal
- Unified communications enable employee mobility and reduce overall phone costs

Challenge

From New Songdo City in Incheon, Korea, Abu Dhabi International Airport to the Shanghai World Financial Center, Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates (KPF) has designed some of the most recognized buildings and well-traveled spaces in the world. With six global offices and a staff representing 43 countries, the award-winning firm provides architecture, interior, programming, and master planning services for clients in both private and public sectors.

The success of the firm's projects is the direct result of its longstanding work ethic that is focused on collaboration and dialogue. "Real-time working sessions between our multinational teams are imperative during all phases of a project," says James R. Brogan, AIA, Director, Firmwide Technology at KPF. "But that of course, requires our project leaders to travel extensively. We needed a more cost-effective way to collaborate with geographically dispersed teams."

In addition to reducing travel costs, KPF also wanted the ability to coordinate complex design projects in a rapid, more synchronous fashion. "We compete in a very fast-paced global environment, so we needed a collaboration strategy that could help us keep up," says Brogan. "That's why we turned to Cisco."

Solution

Today, KPF's entire global infrastructure is outfitted with Cisco collaboration technologies to facilitate more efficient and cost-effective communication between its international offices, as well as with remote clients. Cisco WebEx® technology and Cisco TelePresence® systems play vital roles in the firm's design process. "Depending on the nature of our meeting, we need different tools and features during our sessions," says Brogan. "For instance, when we need to share data and desktop video, we typically use the WebEx interface, and when we need immersive video, we use telepresence. Cisco® solutions give us exactly what we need for any type of situation."



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James R. Brogan, AIA
Director, Firmwide Technology
KPF

Rich Video Collaboration through Site-Specific Telepresence

The KPF design process employs multiple 3D design models, photo-realistic renderings, and computer animations that present different views of the company's architectural designs. Rapid-prototyped physical models are also produced from 3D printers. This is when Cisco TelePresence technology is ideal, especially when running a session concurrently with WebEx, which the firm frequently does. “The telepresence cameras provide a strong visual impact, whether that's in showing our designs or building rapport with clients,” says Brogan.

Like WebEx technology, Cisco TelePresence also gives KPF the ability to record sessions through the TelePresence Content Server. The firm uses this feature to share educational seminars between remote offices. “Everyday our New York and London offices meet over telepresence,” says Brogan. “During these video conferences, we're sharing data and recording the session so that both our local and international staff can play back the sessions when needed.”

Anytime, Anywhere Data and Video Sharing

KPF realizes, however, that not all clients or employees always have access to Cisco TelePresence rooms. This is why WebEx technology is a critical piece in the company's collaboration architecture. “WebEx gives us the flexibility to launch a variety of applications and present anything from 3D models, BIM, and CAD files to PowerPoint presentations from anywhere a computer and Internet connection is available, even from our Apple iPads,” says Brogan.



The firm uses Cisco WebEx Meeting Center on a daily basis to conduct highly effective project and client meetings worldwide. “We consider WebEx our go-to collaboration solution when we need to instantly share data and video,” says Brogan. “The high-quality video and active speaker functions are especially nice for employees and clients who are familiar with TelePresence. It allows us to deliver a consistent user experience across all our collaboration sessions.”

Cohesive Desktop and Mobile Phone Integration

As for voice messaging, KPF relies heavily on Cisco Unified Communications. The entire KPF network runs on the same Cisco Unified Communications Manager system based in New York. “So when I go to our London, Hong Kong, or Shanghai offices, I can just login to my phone like I'm at my desk in New York,” says Brogan. “This extension mobility makes voicemail and calling so much easier and convenient, especially for those who travel frequently.” Cisco IP Communicator is also popular with travelers, allowing them to make calls from their office number, using their wireless-enabled laptop or mobile device.

Although all KPF employees have a Cisco Unified IP Phone on their desktop, the executive management team uses the Cisco Unified IP Phone 9971 to extend video collaboration even further. “The Cisco 9971 Unified IP Phones not only have a clean, user-friendly interface to facilitate video, they've also got this very sleek design,” says Brogan. “The advanced touch screen and ease of use further enhance our productivity.”



A large portion of the KPF staff uses Apple iPhones and iPads, as well as RIM BlackBerry phones, from which they access Cisco applications such as the WebEx Meeting Center app or Cisco Mobile for iPhones and iPads. Employees have particularly taken a liking to Cisco Mobile 8.1, which extends the capabilities of their Unified IP Phone to their smartphone. This application allows them to call, receive, and retrieve messages through the Internet, as opposed to the mobile service provider. “The 3G network doesn’t always provide a stable connection,” says Brogan. “But you can get a good Wi-Fi connection everywhere. Some of our employees aren’t even using their handsets anymore. They just have their work calls forwarded to their cell phones.”

Comprehensive Collaboration Strategy

Rather than deploying multiple disparate solutions, KPF chose Cisco, because it offers an integrated and interoperable network infrastructure. DiData, a Cisco Gold Certified Partner, provided global systems integration in all KPF offices for the firm. “From collaboration all the way down to networking, having everything interconnected through the Cisco brand makes it easier for both end users and IT staff,” says Brogan. “Our Cisco collaboration architecture is truly integral to how we operate on a day-to-day basis. We now have the ability to use the best collaboration tool available for each person-to-person or team working session.”

Results

Cisco collaboration solutions have significantly increased KPF’s global productivity, helping the firm expedite projects through real-time communication from any end point. “Travel is no longer a bottleneck in carrying out our projects,” says Brogan. “Execution moves more quickly, allowing our teams to optimize their time.” And in a fast-paced industry, higher productivity translates into a clear competitive advantage. “Whether it’s through Cisco TelePresence or WebEx meetings, our clients know that we can maintain frequent contact with them, without time or distance being a barrier.”

Video communication, in particular, is what allows KPF to engage in more meaningful interactions with remote clients and employees. “Having the ability to interface through pervasive video, whether that be on a desktop, laptop, tablet, mobile, or desktop video phone, really enhances our dialogue and creates more personal relationships with people we can’t meet with in person on a regular basis.”

In addition to enabling employee mobility, Cisco Unified Communications help keep the firm’s phone charges to a minimum. “Since all of our calls are going through our internal network, we can avoid the mobile service provider rates and international roaming charges,” says Brogan. “With toll bypass, we can make a local call even when we’re 4000 miles away.”

The bottom line, however, is that with video everywhere, KPF can now act as a local company, despite being spread across continents. “Cisco collaboration solutions have completely transformed the way we operate as a global company,” says Brogan. “Travel is now a much more strategic consideration, thanks to these tools.”

Next Steps

With all the pieces of its collaboration infrastructure now firmly in place, KPF’s next objective is to focus on tighter integration with its Microsoft environment. “We’re hoping to boost productivity even further with a tightly knit network of phones,

cameras, and messaging,” says Brogan. “I suspect that Cisco UC Integration for Microsoft Lync will be key in bringing that all together.”

For More Information

- To find out more about Cisco collaboration, visit:
<http://www.cisco.com/go/collaboration>.
- To read other success stories, visit:
http://www.cisco.com/en/US/solutions/ns1007/collaboration_business_case.html.
- To join conversations and share best practices about collaboration, visit:
<http://www.cisco.com/go/joinconversation>.

Product List

Collaboration Solutions

Conferencing

- Cisco WebEx Meeting Center

TelePresence

- Cisco TelePresence C60
- Cisco TelePresence Content Server

Voice and Unified Communications

- Cisco Unified Communications Manager
- Cisco Unity® Connection
- Cisco Unified Survivable Remote Site Telephony
- Cisco Unified IP Phones 9971, 7965, 7941, 7921, 7911
- Cisco IP Communicator
- Cisco Mobile 8.1

Routing and Switching

- Cisco 4400 Series Wireless LAN Controller
- Cisco Catalyst® 4506 and 3750 Switches



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