

Professional Services

Guiding Global Broadcasting Company from Disparate Legacy Systems to Next-Gen Video Infrastructure



Despite an extensive investment in video communications solutions, one of the world's largest Global Broadcasting Companies has been constrained by the limitations of legacy-based, non-standardized technologies. To address this, Yorktel Professional Services conducted a complete assessment of the client's video communications environment, which included a review of their global network, underlying communications infrastructure, collaboration spaces and AV support models. The engagement team leveraged this learning into a set of recommendations for the client to deliver a consistent, user-friendly experience across a variety of video communications use cases.

THE CUSTOMER

One of the world's largest Global Broadcasting Companies reaches nearly three billion cumulative subscribers in more than 220 countries and territories. For 30 years, Global Broadcasting Company has been dedicated to satisfying curiosity and entertaining viewers with high-quality content through its global television brands. In addition, Global Broadcasting Company is a leading provider of educational products and services to schools, including an award-winning series of K-12 digital textbooks, as well as a digital leader with a diversified online portfolio.

The engagement team applied their comprehensive consulting process to gain a deep understanding of the Global Broadcasting Company's challenges, and delivered a vision based on an assessment of the current environment.

CORE CHALLENGES

During the initial discovery phase, several fundamental challenges were identified, both in terms of the user experience and infrastructure to enable collaboration. As the assessment delved further into the client's network and support models, the challenges became more granular, especially the interworking among a multitude of video communications vendors. Taking all this into account, the engagement team distilled the assessment into five core challenges for Global Broadcasting Company.

1. Complexity for end users

The entire process around video conferencing was found to be complex, and is a major inhibitor for mainstream adoption. Given the sunk costs for the client's communications infrastructure, this was hurting their ROI on collaboration technology. Key issues included:

- Scheduling process — involved many manual steps, multiple forms and advance testing to ensure endpoints were compatible — cannot do ad hoc collaboration this way
- Not having enough rooms to host video sessions, so end users needed to work around room availability rather than the business need at hand
- Requirement to work across three separate, non-integrated applications to create meeting requests, namely MSFT Exchange, Cisco TMS and Meeting Planner.

2. Lync integration issues

Lync-to-Lync sessions were not problematic, but not being able to communicate with other video platforms, it is not a complete solution. With Cisco being the core network platform, this posed interoperability challenges for collaboration, such as call control, content sharing and bridging. Furthermore, Cisco CUCM does not fully integrate with Avaya's Aura voice platform, creating a silo environment that adds complexity. Additionally, both Cisco and Lync have limited to no support for WebRTC, which will be a key driver for supporting mobile, browser-based and on-demand video sessions.

3. Disparate, legacy equipment

The engagement team's assessment indicated that 57% of Global Broadcasting Company's video endpoints were legacy-based. Not only did this pose a serious end-of-life replacement scenario, but the equipment added another layer of complexity to using video. Aside from having multiple hardware vendors with non-standardized configurations, there was a mix of dedicated conferencing rooms and mobile — cart-based — options. With mobile carts, employees didn't know what equipment they'd be using until they had access to one. Furthermore, with so much legacy equipment, end users encountered proprietary interfaces for each vendor, and lacked options for on-demand, self-service conferencing.

While Global Broadcasting Company's environment poses many challenges, they are not unique. Global enterprises often have substantial sunk costs in legacy platforms that do not interoperate well with other vendors, nor can they deliver the experience end-users expect today. These needs speak to WebRTC and mobility, both of which are key elements of the engagement team's vision for the Global Broadcasting Company.



4. Inconsistent user experience

The above limitations meant there was no consistency for the user experience, further constraining video's ability to make collaboration more effective. With so much legacy hardware in a mixed vendor environment, the varying endpoint interfaces and conference room setups made video a non-standardized application. Instead of being a seamless session, video conferencing experiences were unpredictable and often required manual intervention to maintain video quality, especially for content sharing. Compounding this, the assessment indicated that Global Broadcasting Company's network was not optimized to prioritize video traffic, with the result being highly variable quality for end users.

5. Limited AV support

Given all the challenges around scheduling meetings using non-integrated applications, the role of AV support went beyond routine technical troubleshooting. This type of support is labor-intensive, and its manual nature made it difficult to manage for knowledge sharing, which could be used to develop best practices for improving these inefficient processes. A related challenge is that Global Broadcasting Company's support teams were only focused on local issues. Not only did this result in support islands with varying levels of expertise, but there was no global AV coordination to address conferencing needs across broad geographies.

OUR ASSESSMENT

The engagement team applied their comprehensive consulting process to gain a deep understanding of Global Broadcasting Company's challenges, and delivered a vision based on an assessment of the current environment. The process began by compiling feedback across various stakeholder groups about four distinct use cases for conferencing:

- Lync-to-Lync
- Virtual Meeting Room (VMR) collaboration
- Managed dial-out conferencing
- Hybrid dial-out/in conferencing



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YORKTEL CASE STUDY: ENTERTAINMENT

Business requirements were documented to define a common set of collaboration scenarios and a complimentary support model. Collectively, these define the vision for Global Broadcasting Company, which can be summarized as follows:

- Deliver real-time video communications to support collaboration and content sharing that's easy to use with a consistent end user experience.
- Full integration across all communications platforms; namely voice, video, UC, management solutions and third party collaboration applications.
- Provide on-demand and self-service collaboration capabilities that can be supported across all endpoints, browsers and network environments.
- Support mobile applications for video conferencing and collaboration.
- A support model that can quickly scale to meet the breadth and depth of the collaboration scenarios outlined above for interactions with on-premises and Global Broadcasting Company's external supply chain.

To provide a roadmap for this vision, the engagement team's assessment yielded an extensive set of recommendations with short-term, mid-term and long-term objectives. The essence of each is outlined below.

SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

- For Global Broadcasting Company's video communication infrastructure, integrate the Acano platform with Cisco CUCM. While Cisco provides SIP support for video endpoints and trunking between voice and video platforms, Acano solves key interoperability challenges between video and UC platforms. Acano also provides better content sharing and Microsoft Lync integration capability, especially for the Outlook plug-in to enable on-demand video.
- For the conference rooms, begin the standardization process by adopting a uniform mix of video displays for varying room sizes. Major locations to deploy one of each type of AV room setting – small and medium size. To provide a consistent user experience in a room-based setting, the use of mobile video carts is to stop.
- For service and support, move to an integrated scheduling system based on Outlook/Exchange and drop Meeting Planner. Streamline the AV support process by eliminating paper-based forms used for meeting management and moving away from using multiple calendars within the same team.



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MID-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

- For infrastructure, deploy WebRTC on the Acano platform to support on-demand conferencing. Develop a pilot plug-in on the Acano platform for Outlook, which would enable Lync to schedule and host WebRTC video sessions.
- For conference rooms, continue the transition to a standardized environment, and the development of a consistent user interface, especially built around Cisco touch screens. To keep the experience easy to use, provide more end user training and quick start guides.
- For service and support, enhance the room-based conferencing model with a managed service element to provide global, 24/7 access to on-demand video, along with help desk, scheduling, and proactive room system monitoring.

LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

- For the communications infrastructure, enhance the deployment of managed video services so employees can have ready access to on-demand conferencing.
- Complete the Lync integration of SIP trunking with the Acano platform to enable seamless use of both voice and video services from any browser or screen environment.

CONCLUSION

While Global Broadcasting Company's environment poses many challenges, they are not unique. Global enterprises often have substantial sunk costs in legacy platforms that do not interoperate well with other vendors, nor can they deliver the experience end-users expect today. Increasingly, these businesses are relying more on browser-based applications that support on-demand video, especially for employees who work more from remote sites than their desks. These needs speak to WebRTC and mobility, both of which are key elements of the engagement team's vision for the company.

Furthermore, in environments that are standardizing around Lync, it is very difficult to achieve these objectives with voice and video platforms from vendors that do not fully interoperate with Microsoft. In this regard, the vision put forward by the engagement team is very much a bridge-the-gap solution rather than the rip-and-replace approach advocated by telecom vendors for VoIP. With Lync being the anchor for collaboration, the Acano platform allows Global Broadcasting Company to fully realize the vision now while maintaining the Cisco infrastructure, albeit in a gradually receding role.

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By employing best practices for video and an ITIL-based service design methodology, Yorktel delivers communications strategies that support the usage models that users demand, while integrating seamlessly with IT practices. Included in the Yorktel Professional Services portfolio:

- **Business Assessments:** Deep analysis of business requirements, end user workflows and operational practices to develop business cases, ROI projection models and use cases
- **Technical Assessments:** Review of unified communications infrastructure, networks and collaboration spaces
- **Architecture, Planning and Implementation:** Recommendations on technology and vendor selection, architecture design, execution and implementation strategies and overall UC Roadmap
- **Adoption and Training:** Assess the adoption of collaboration tools and develop training programs and material to educate end users and administrators on productivity tools.

