



Online IT Training Company Deploys Web Conferencing Service, Saves Time and Money

Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Professional services—
Information technology

Customer Profile

Intelliem provides customized solutions that help companies improve their IT environments and that train workers to use software productively. Intelliem is a Web-based company and has five employees.

Business Situation

Intelliem needed a cost-effective Web conferencing service to replace meetings, training sessions, and presentations that required travel to on-site locations.

Solution

Intelliem deployed Microsoft® Office Live Meeting to provide employees and customers with rich multimedia conferencing and collaboration, voice over IP, and live video.

Benefits

- Increases productivity by 20 percent
- Saves U.S.\$50,000 annually in travel costs
- Enhances communications
- Expands business opportunities
- Provides recording and archiving

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Dan Holme, Director of Services, Intelliem

Intelliem, an Internet-based company that provides technical consulting and enterprise-specific training, needed a new Web conferencing solution to meet growing customer demand for online delivery of services. In addition, online communications and collaboration is essential to the company’s five employees, who live across North America. The company had been using diverse Web conferencing software, including WebEx, Sametime, and ON24, but it wanted a new solution that had advanced tools and was cost-effective. Intelliem began using Microsoft® Office Live Meeting (2005) in July 2005 and deployed Office Live Meeting (2007) in August 2007. Now the company provides customers with live chat using voice over IP, live video, application sharing, and handout distribution. The solution is helping Intelliem save at least U.S.\$50,000 annually in travel costs and helps improve productivity by 20 percent.



Situation

Intelliem, a company that resides entirely on the Internet, delivers technical consulting and customized business training to companies throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe. Founded in 2002, the company helps its customers meet their business goals by taking advantage of their employee and technology resources. Most recently, the company began developing its own software solution to help customers improve their help-desk efficiency. Intelliem has five employees who work from home offices in Hawaii, Colorado, Wisconsin, Massachusetts, and Calgary, Canada, and uses independent contractors as they are needed. The company's customers have included AT&T, NBC Universal, and Shell Oil.

Intelliem employees rely on Web conferencing for interoffice collaboration and software development. "We are a small company that is geographically dispersed, and we obviously don't have the option of walking into a conference room for a meeting, unless we want to spend thousands of dollars on travel," says Dan Holme, Director of Services at Intelliem, who works from his office in Hawaii. "For us to be able to interact or collaborate in any meaningful way, Web conferencing is really our only option."

The company also uses Web conferencing solutions for customer interactions, which include making sales presentations, delivering consulting sessions, and conducting training workshops. Intelliem offers its services either onsite or online. Holme says that often customers don't want to incur travel expenses to fly Intelliem consultants to a company site and are reluctant to have their employees fly from multiple locations to a central site. "They've all wanted to take advantage of Web conferencing technology to reduce travel and training costs," says Holme. "Because they don't want us to travel to their sites, we've

seen their needs for online consultant meetings and employee workshops increase significantly."

The company has used many software solutions to meet its Web conferencing needs, including PlaceWare, Lotus Sametime, ON24, Interwise Connect, and WebEx. "I'm always watching for developments in Web conferencing technology because of the specifically strong need for online communications that we've had," Holme says.

According to Holme, Intelliem needed a Web conferencing service that would be cost-effective and have a robust application-sharing tool. Additionally, the solution needed to provide rich multimedia features, voice over IP (VoIP), and high-fidelity recording and archiving features. The solution also needed to be hosted externally and needed to be easy to deploy and use.

Solution

Holme compared Intelliem's online business and training requirements with the conferencing and collaboration tools in Microsoft® Office Live Meeting (2005) and decided to deploy the Web conferencing solution in July 2005. In August 2007, Intelliem upgraded to the most recent release of Office Live Meeting (2007).

Because the externally hosted Office Live Meeting requires only a computer and an Internet connection, its deployment to employees and customers is easy, Holme says. Within a week of deploying the new version, the company had held pilot meetings and made plans to deliver improved online training sessions to customers.

Holme says Intelliem users have been pleased with Office Live Meeting functionalities, which include embedded animation, video, and audio files that help presenters deliver richer content. Two-way

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VoIP gives Intelliem participants the ability to easily interact, and high-fidelity recording capabilities make it possible for sessions to be archived for easy playback using Windows Media® Player.

“With the new rich multimedia features and application-sharing tools, I really can’t imagine that Office Live Meeting could be any better in simulating an actual meeting experience than it is now,” says Holme.

Benefits

Office Live Meeting helps Intelliem save time and money. The Web conferencing service improves communications between geographically dispersed Intelliem employees and enhances training sessions for both employees and customers, none of whom now have to travel. Intelliem plans to use Office Live Meeting to create new business opportunities for the company and to build a library of archived training sessions.

Improves Productivity

Office Live Meeting improves productivity at Intelliem because the company’s employees can replace traveling to customer locations with creating media-rich online collaboration and conferencing experiences during sales presentations, customer consultations, and training sessions.

“Our customer base is all over the country,” explains Holme. “If we were to fly to customer locations just three times a month, we calculate we would lose 20 percent of a salesperson’s time. We couldn’t do business without Microsoft Office Live Meeting. Now, we have the time to reach out to customers and to maintain our business relationships.”

Intelliem also takes advantage of Office Live Meeting functionalities that give Holme and his software developer the ability to collaborate online. The developer works from Calgary, and an in-person meeting would

mean one person would have a 10-hour flight each way, says Holme. “Office Live Meeting allows us to focus on complex software development issues instead of worrying about the logistics of in-person meetings. Our business depends on this Web conferencing solution.”

Additionally, says Holme, as an externally hosted service, Office Live Meeting improves his ability to be productive. “As someone in a small company, the last thing that I have time to be doing is maintaining an infrastructure, so from a time and resource perspective, a hosted service makes huge sense to us,” he says.

Saves Travel Costs

Office Live Meeting provides cost savings to Intelliem and to its customers. “By providing online training using Microsoft Office Live Meeting, we save about \$50,000 annually by not having to fly to on-site locations,” says Holme.

Additionally, customers are more willing to provide training for their employees if the training does not involve travel expenses, says Holme. “Our customers recognize the need for their employees to learn, but they have made it real clear that travel costs are now a problem.”

The customer, who would be flying 10 or 20 people to a central site for training, is saving at least 50 percent in training costs, he says. “Office Live Meeting provides a savings for the customer that can mean the difference between Intelliem being asked to provide a training session or the customer not being able to afford the training,” says Holme.

Enhances Communications

The rich multimedia capabilities of Office Live Meeting—which include embedded animation, audio, and video files; two-way VoIP; and application sharing—improve

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communications for Intelliem employees and its customers. “Like a lot of organizations, we have fallen back on e-mail just because it is the easiest,” says Holme. “But with e-mail, you lose the ability to read people’s voices, and you certainly lose the ability to see them to enrich real-time interactions.”

Office Live Meeting will help Intelliem employees communicate more effectively and provide opportunities for motivating team members, Holme says. “I see a big difference between getting the message out in an e-mail and actually communicating in a rich audio-enhanced and video-enhanced forum,” he says.

Holme says Office Live Meeting tools, which include shared notes, a whiteboard, webcam video, and VoIP, will enhance his staff’s collaboration and communication. “Given the fact that on-site meetings aren’t an option for us, Microsoft Office Live Meeting is as rich, as interactive, and as productive as it can be,” Holme says.

Office Live Meeting functionalities also will provide an interactive training environment for Intelliem employees, as the company plans to release its own customized help-desk software, and Intelliem sales staff will need to be trained for presentations to customers. “Being able to show team members how the software is used and to be able to let them take control and manage it gives them a hands-on experience that is an important aspect in learning how to demonstrate it,” Holme explains.

The application-sharing feature also is important when conducting customer training. “Office Live Meeting provides us with a high-quality application-sharing tool, which allows us to talk to students about complex topics in real time, show how an application works, explain what can go wrong, and discuss how to resolve problems.”

Other Office Live Meeting tools such as a question-and-answer manager encourage interactivity and help foster learning. “When students can ask questions, and we respond in real time, it provides interactivity that is very important when you are doing distance learning,” says Holme.

Expands Business Opportunities

Office Live Meeting gives Intelliem a competitive edge, says Holme. “We are a small company, and because we don’t have the money to fly all over the country, it is sometimes difficult to get the attention of a busy high-level executive. Office Live Meeting gives us an easy and rich Web conferencing experience that gets us to places we otherwise would not get.”

For example, Holme says, he recently met an executive of a large media company who appeared interested in the Intelliem help-desk software, so an Office Live Meeting session was scheduled for the customer and his colleagues to talk with Intelliem representatives. Even though the representatives hadn’t used Office Live Meeting before, they installed it quickly before the meeting and were able to use it easily.

Holme, who was at the meeting, says he used the whiteboard to diagram the role of the software and employed the application-sharing feature to demonstrate how it works. “By the time we were done, they said, ‘You have a tool we need,’ and we are moving forward to the next phase. Without being able to have an easy online meeting, which didn’t require a serious time commitment on their part, we would not be at the point of closing a deal with them.”

Since deploying Office Live Meeting, Intelliem now has new opportunities to expand its business by offering online workshops that are revenue-generating events open to

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anyone with a computer and an Internet connection, says Holme.

In the past, Intelliem tailored its classes to meet the training needs of employees from specific companies. Now the company can offer classes to participants who are anywhere in the world, he says. "Most of our business is with IT professionals. It can be tough to find 50 people in a single city who, on the same day, have the need and the ability to get together to learn about technical topics pertaining to Windows Vista® or Windows Server® 2008 [operating systems]. But it's not tough to find an audience when a class is open to the whole world."

Provides Recording and Archiving

Holme says that Office Live Meeting will give the company the ability to record and archive online trainings for participants to revisit. A library of archived trainings will be important for those who participate in a training session and later want to review what they learned.

"The concepts that we deal with in our trainings are very advanced, so our customers will not remember all of it," explains Holme. "But they will remember that they heard a solution in the training class. It will be a great resource for them to be able to use Windows Media Player and find the place in the meeting that talked about what they want to know."

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