

Industry

Higher Education

Daily Use

- Distance learning
- Guest lecturers

Solution

- Polycom Room Video Conferencing systems
- Polycom Multipoint Conference Bridges

Results and Benefits

- National exposure for Cornell, resulting in increased financial support from alumni

The Johnson School of Management at Cornell Relies on Polycom Video for International Expansion

Located in Ithaca, NY, Cornell University is the United States' largest and most comprehensive Ivy League university. The Johnson School of Management at Cornell is consistently ranked among the nation's top business schools. Competition for admission to the school is considerable since many applicants are interested in earning a degree highly valued by potential employers worldwide.

In 1999, The Johnson School began offering a classroom-based Executive M.B.A. program outside of New York City, with classes every other weekend. This Executive M.B.A. consistently ranks among the region's highest-rated programs, but school administrators were intent on reaching a larger pool of students by launching a program nationally. However, the school didn't want to disrupt the lives of faculty members through relocation or inhibit research opportunities by removing them from the university setting.

That's why a request from Queen's University in Ontario, Canada, to partner in an Executive M.B.A. program offered via video conferencing appeared to be the perfect solution. In 2004, The Johnson School joined with Queen's School of Business to launch the Cornell-Queen's Executive M.B.A. program. "The school wanted to make a footprint nationwide with its program and from both a human resources and cost perspective, video-enabled distance learning made the most sense," explains Stephen Demmings, Video Conferencing Manager with the Cornell-Queen's Executive M.B.A. program. The program allows students to pursue their degrees without quitting their jobs and faculty to teach from the Ithaca campus.

The Right Partner

Queen's School of Business, consistently ranked the top business school outside the U.S., has been offering its National Executive M.B.A. program in Canada via video since 1994 and was looking to expand with a partner university in the United States. The resulting partnership is the Cornell-Queen's Executive M.B.A., a 17-month program with sixty percent of the classes taught over video. Students visit the Cornell and Queen's campuses only three times over the course of 17 months, but they participate in a program with the same core curriculum and faculty as the traditional in-residence Executive M.B.A. program. At the end of the program, they graduate with M.B.A. degrees from both Cornell University and Queen's University.

The program's 42 Saturday classes are taught over video by both Cornell professors located in a video-equipped studio on the Ithaca campus and Queen's professors in a similar studio located in Kingston, Ontario. Students meet in video-enabled Boardroom Learning locations primarily Centers in Regus business centers around the country. Student "learning teams" of five to nine people connect in real time, using video, to the studios and the other boardroom locations.

"Video conferencing is at the core of our Learning Model. The program is designed around this technology."

Advanced distance-education peripherals are fully interoperable with Polycom video conferencing systems, making distance learning classes highly interactive and engaging. Polycom® People+Content™ collaboration technology allows instructors to be displayed on one screen and content on a second screen for a more natural classroom experience. SMART Board™ interactive whiteboard technology enables the highlighting of specific content on slides, and One Touch technology allows students to be polled on-demand. The One Touch system also lets students electronically “raise their hands.” By simply hitting a button, the student’s name appears on a screen in the studio and the instructor can take the question at the most appropriate time. In addition, the program incorporates content sharing among students and real-time chat.

A Successful Program

The Cornell-Queen’s Executive M.B.A. is currently offered to students in New York, Ohio, Washington state, Oregon, Georgia, Texas, New Hampshire, and Washington, D.C. “The number of students enrolled has increased each year since the beginning of the program,” says Demmings. “In the U.S. alone, enrollment has more than tripled from year one to the present day. Students like the fact that they can earn an Ivy League education but still keep living and working on the west coast, or wherever they reside,” reports Demmings. “And after the first couple of weeks, the students say that the [novelty of the] technology simply fades away.”

Unlike regionally-focused Executive M.B.A. programs, the very nature of the video-enabled Cornell-Queen’s Executive M.B.A. gives it a much broader focus. For example, students in Atlanta enrolled in an Executive M.B.A. program delivered in a traditional format would likely be surrounded by peers working in local area industries. The Cornell-Queen’s program joins that Atlanta group with people in different industries across the United States and Canada—public service employees living in D.C., professionals in the oil and gas industries in Texas and Calgary, financial experts from Wall Street in New York, and Microsoft and Boeing managers in Seattle. This breadth of networking provides a competitive differentiator for The Johnson School.

The boardroom learning style also separates the Cornell-Queen’s program from traditional Executive M.B.A. offerings. Demmings explains, “All of the student boardroom sites are muted while the instructor is teaching. During that time, secondary learning takes place. The teams are discussing and answering lower-level questions and when they do pose a question to the professor, it’s been refined and it’s a very high-level, polished question.”

The video-enabled M.B.A. program is also providing significant benefits to Cornell and The Johnson School, foremost among them a rapid return on investment. The tuition for the 17-month Cornell-Queen’s Executive M.B.A. is approximately \$100,000. In addition, the program has built-in flexibility that allows it to be modified to meet

changing market requirements. “We can quickly and easily move our boardroom to wherever there is interest in the program. All we have to do is remove the Polycom equipment from one Regus center and install it at another center where there is demand,” explains Demmings.

The Cornell-Queen’s Executive M.B.A. program expands Cornell’s reach and ability to attract students nationwide and elevates awareness of the school and its contributions by the extensive Cornell alumni network and employers alike.

A Reliable Solution

Demmings’s experience with the reliability of Polycom video solutions for nationwide implementation is also supported by the high level of training, sales, and support that Polycom offers. “When it came time to equip Cornell with video technology for the Cornell-Queen’s Executive M.B.A. program, I needed the most reliable two-monitor solution on the market, and that solution was Polycom’s,” he says.

The program uses Polycom’s room video conferencing solutions exclusively with Polycom People+Content technology and dual-screen capability, and relies on Polycom multipoint conference bridges for managing and scaling their myriad distance learning sessions.

Looking Forward

Demmings and his team are currently focused on domestic expansion, including possible sites in California, Massachusetts, and Florida. Also in the near term are plans to migrate to IP and begin deploying Polycom HDX large room video conferencing solutions. “The video quality offered by Polycom HDX systems is, of course, a driver, but another important aspect for us is the marketing value. When we’re able to say that we offer the Cornell-Queen’s Executive M.B.A. over HD video, it eliminates any concerns prospective students have about the quality of the video.” Within a few years, Demmings also sees broadening the M.B.A. program to include sites in India and the Middle East.

About Polycom

Polycom is the global leader in standards-based unified communications (UC) solutions for telepresence, video, and voice powered by the Polycom® RealPresence™ Platform. The RealPresence Platform interoperates with the broadest range of business, mobile, and social applications and devices. More than 400,000 organizations trust Polycom solutions to collaborate and meet face-to-face from any location for more productive and effective engagement with colleagues, partners, customers, and prospects. Polycom, together with its broad partner ecosystem, provides customers with the best TCO, scalability, and security—on-premises, hosted, or cloud delivered.

For more information, visit www.polycom.com, call 1-800-POLYCOM, or contact your Polycom sales representative.

Polycom Worldwide Headquarters
4750 Willow Road, Pleasanton, CA 94588
1.800.POLYCOM or +1.925.924.6000
www.polycom.com

