

## State-Run Nonprofit Embraces Eco-Friendly Online Meetings

NCSL cuts thousands in travel expenses, saves hundreds of hours, and shrinks carbon footprint with web collaboration.

### Executive Summary

**Customer Name:**

National College for School Leadership

**Industry:**

Education

**Location:**

Nottingham, England

**Number of Employees:**

260

**Challenge:**

- Collaboration between colleagues was dependent on phone, email, or travel
- 54 percent of employees used cars for work purposes at least once per week
- School leaders throughout United Kingdom unable to access departmental programs remotely

**Solution:**

- Reliable, easy-to-use web collaboration software offers interactive alternative to travel
- Online meetings can accommodate groups of all sizes from all locations
- NCSL embracing web meetings for wide range of internal and external uses

**Results:**

- NCSL held 378 meetings over one three-month period, saving £54,000 in travel expenses
- Improved productivity over that same period, saving equivalent of 408 person-days
- By eliminating 378 meetings, NCSL saved 57 tons of carbon dioxide emissions

### Challenge

Established in 2000, the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) is a government-funded, nondepartmental public body, providing career-long learning, development opportunities, and professional and practical support for England's existing and aspiring school leaders.

NCSL's 260 staff members are based in a number of offices, with many working from home. Prior to using a web-conferencing solution, collaboration between colleagues often required phone calls, email, or travel. Under those circumstances, completing projects proved time consuming and costly, both financially and environmentally. A staff survey in 2007 revealed that 54 percent of employees used cars for work purposes at least once a week, and NCSL was eager to reduce that figure.

"It's not only inefficient for our staff to spend too many working hours on travel, but it's costly and damaging to the environment as well," says Matt James, e-learning specialist and project manager at NCSL. "We realized that we could take advantage of online technology to minimize travel, enabling our staff to collaborate effectively from remote locations."

NCSL was also eager to find a tool that would aid in its work with school leaders. The organization runs training programs, conferences, and seminars for school leaders throughout the United Kingdom, but in-person meetings can be a challenge for many attendees. "Travelling to our conference center isn't a practical option for everyone," says James. "We wanted to find an IT solution that would enable us to extend our reach and make it as easy as possible for all school leaders to make the most of what we offer."

### Solution

In 2006, NCSL evaluated a number of alternatives, finally choosing collaborative software from Cisco WebEx™. Ease of use was a key factor in NCSL's decision, because WebEx® delivers rich interactivity without the need for lengthy installation or customization. James also appreciated that Cisco® WebEx offered the ability to share and edit any document, presentation, or application in real time over a secure, reliable network. The flexibility of the solution was appealing as well, because WebEx can accommodate everything from small group meetings to very large group presentations, all within a single intuitive interface.

A six-month pilot of WebEx Enterprise Edition™ followed. "Initially, we wanted to find a solution that would deliver internal benefits quickly, with the potential to help in our direct work with school leaders," says James. "WebEx was so easy to use that we were able to use it both internally and externally in no time. It really exceeded our expectations."

At the end of six months, the pilot was such a success that NCSL secured WebEx licenses without hesitation. Since then, staff members have continued to embrace collaborative technology for a variety of purposes. "Adoption was very organic across the organization," says James. "We found that once staff had attended one or two WebEx meetings, it really became second nature for them to apply this technology elsewhere." For example, the Human Resources team uses online meetings as a secure and confidential way to manage the staff appraisal process, while a senior director takes advantage of remote connectivity to prepare presentations when not in the office. The e-learning team, meanwhile, holds weekly professional development sessions to share findings and provide peer support. "The technology is so easy to learn and so flexible that the possibilities seem endless at this point," says James.

**"We're spending fewer travel dollars and getting more done, all while reducing our impact on the environment. The benefits could not be clearer."**

**— Matt James, e-learning specialist and project manager, NCSL**

## Results

WebEx proved to be immediately successful among home-based staff, replacing many face-to-face visits and conference calls. Collaborating online has enabled these employees not only to reduce their travel, but also increase their productivity. "We've found that people are more efficient when they have online meetings at their disposal," says James. "The same work gets done sooner when using WebEx."

With WebEx, NCSL has realized significant time savings and cost savings while reducing its carbon footprint. For example, between April and June 2008, NCSL held 378 meetings, which saved £54,000 in travel expenses and 408 days in time, as well as 57 tons of carbon dioxide emissions (the equivalent of a trip from London to Singapore for 36 people). "We're spending fewer travel dollars and getting more done, all while reducing our impact on the environment," says James. "The benefits could not be clearer."

In addition to these benefits, Cisco WebEx has also helped broaden NCSL's reach to the school leadership community, enabling NCSL to broadcast events online. "Our conferences are often fully booked weeks in advance, and many schools can't afford to send their staff," says James. "Now we can host sessions remotely, and people can attend online or watch recorded sessions at their own convenience, without having to take extended time away from their jobs."

### Next Steps

NCSL's success with WebEx has left staff members eager to expand their use of collaborative technology. "Going forward, our key focus is on providing more programs for school leaders," says James. "The online seminars have been hugely successful. We don't foresee changing course anytime soon."

### For More Information

To find out more about Cisco WebEx, go to <http://www.cisco.com/web/products/webex/index.html>.

### Product List

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