“Telstra has changed the way Telstra Country Wide is working by introducing smartphones and also the use of high definition video conferencing, so they connect with each other and also with their customers with less travel. What we have seen is $1 million saving each year in travel costs and also an estimated 1100 tonnes reduction in carbon emissions.”

Bill Bien, Executive Director, Marketing Communications and Strategy, Telstra Enterprise and Government

Telstra is Australia’s leading telecommunication and information services company, providing a full range of integrated solutions over next generation fixed and mobile networks.

Telstra has an ongoing commitment to improve productivity within both its own organisation and that of its customers. Environmental responsibility is also a key focus. Telstra realised that video conferencing would promote both of these aims while delivering cost-efficiencies across a distributed enterprise. Accordingly, Telstra enlisted the aid of Polycom to deploy its world-leading video conferencing solutions. This decision has delivered a rapid return on investment through increased productive output, reduced costs, enhanced work/life flexibility and environmental sustainability.
Situation
Telstra is one of Australia’s largest companies, with operations covering a vast area of the continent, stretching to New Zealand, Asia and beyond. Managing these far-flung activities requires a high level of communication and collaboration, not just within the organisation but also with suppliers, partners and customers.

Telstra staff, in particular its executives and sales teams, need to travel long distances to conduct business. Costly, inefficient and not aligned with Telstra’s commitment to sustainability, avoidable travel hampered the company’s ability to improve business performance and profitability in an increasingly complex environment. Bill Bien, Executive Director, Marketing Communications and Strategy, Telstra Enterprise and Government (TE&G), explains:

“Business is becoming more complex. There are more issues to think about, more dispersed teams... businesses are looking for a way to make it simpler by connecting with customers, connecting with each other, and that’s where solutions like video conferencing come in.”

Telstra turned to Polycom, a provider of world-leading telephony and video conferencing solutions, to assist.

Solution
Polycom collaborated closely with Telstra to deploy the most effective and cost-efficient video conferencing solutions to meet their needs. As Bill Bien explains:

“Video conferencing relies on the fact that we have the right units at the right places. We have 210 Polycom video conferencing units, of which 170 are high definition units. It has changed the way we work by allowing our people to connect with each other across the country much more effectively.”

The strength of high definition video conferencing is that it facilitates true-to-life meetings that allow participants to experience the same nuances of human interactions as in live meetings. It is no surprise that the concept of ‘Modern Meetings’ is being embraced by organisations. As Bill Bien explains:

“High Definition video conferencing... makes meetings more effective. And this is an important part of the Modern Meeting concept. As a result, executives can have as many meetings as they did in the past, but they’re much richer, shorter, sharper. So you get the productivity you need, but you’re still home at a good hour.”

The Telstra Next IP™ network is a key factor in the success of the solution, as Joseph Sigrist, Senior Vice President and General Manager, Video Solutions Group, Polycom, confirms:

“Polycom will continue to provide innovative new products and solutions to Telstra for their customers and will continue to leverage innovation to the Telstra Next IP™ network to allow Telstra customers to have the highest quality video and audio solutions.”

Benefits
One of the most important benefits of video conferencing is the power to do more work in less time. Take the example of the Marketing Communications and Strategy team in TE&G. Conducting quarterly team meetings via Polycom high definition video conferencing has significantly improved productivity for the work group. It has also improved individual productivity, including his own, says Bill Bien:
“We use high definition video conferencing regularly for our normal meetings. We’ve also replaced all offsites with onsite-offsites, where basically the 110 people in my organisation now meet by video conferencing. By doing that we have saved $100,000 per annum in travel costs, and these are very effective meetings.”

Bill Bien, Executive Director, Marketing Communications and Strategy, Telstra Enterprise and Government

TE&G also conducts numerous Executive Briefings that cover a range of current topics and allow Telstra customers to discuss trends with their peers. In the first half of 2009/10, Telstra hosted over 1700 meetings in the Executive Briefing Centre in Melbourne alone, of which over 40% were video conferences. In fact, Bill Bien confirms that the Modern Meeting has become part of Telstra’s culture, testimony to its usefulness and convenience.

Polycom’s solutions have had even more impact on Telstra Country Wide (TCW), a sales and local marketing group comprising 650 employees across Australia. Teams have vast geographic areas of responsibility. Previously, with a choice between round-trip drive times of six to eight hours or domestic flights for meetings, the result was high travel costs and lost productive time. As Bill Bien explains:

“Telstra has changed the way Telstra Country Wide is working by introducing smartphones and also the use of high definition video conferencing, so they connect with each other and also with their customers with less travel. What we have seen is $1 million saving each year in travel costs and also an estimated 1100 tonnes reduction in carbon emissions.”

The carbon emissions saving is not a surprising outcome for Joseph Sigrist:

“Polycom is very proud of the way we positively impact the environment. Our video communications technology, for instance, allows people to very effectively communicate with one another without having to jump in airplanes or even go in their car to drive across town.”

However, video conferencing is not just for large organisations. Telstra is trialling a range of tools designed to help smaller organisations measure their own productivity benefits. Results from a three-month trial using just one of the solutions, video-miles®, look promising. With a usage rate of around 20%, eight video conferencing end points could realise potential travel savings of around $200,000 per annum and over 300 tonnes of carbon emissions per annum.** And the higher the usage, the higher the potential savings.

Both Bill Bien and Joseph Sigrist see a very bright future for video conferencing: the benefits are simply too compelling to ignore. What’s more, the technology is constantly evolving.
“Polycom is very proud of the way we positively impact the environment. Our video communications technology, for instance, allows people to very effectively communicate with one another without having to jump in airplanes or even go in their car to drive across town.”

Joseph Sigrist, Senior Vice President and General Manager, Video Solutions Group, Polycom

As for the partnership between Telstra and Polycom, Bill Bien is unequivocal:

“Telstra and Polycom have laid a strong foundation for a great long-term relationship. I see this relationship growing and expanding to offer more video conferencing units to our customers, and bringing them better business experiences.”

Telstra in Enterprise and Government

Telstra is a leading provider of network-centric communication and managed services to large enterprise and government organisations in Australia and around the globe. Telstra serves more than 200 of the world’s top 500 companies through its international operations that facilitate access to over 240 countries and territories.

Telstra offers superior value for money through its range of award-winning world-class products and services that are underpinned by the next generation Telstra Next IP™ network and Next G™ network – fully owned and managed based on the stringent quality standards of Australia’s largest network manager. Telstra’s solutions are developed and tested in close co-operation with partners such as Cisco, Microsoft, Ericsson and Alcatel and designed and deployed for customers by one of Australia’s largest and most qualified Network Services organisation. Telstra’s service to enterprise and government customers is internationally recognised for its high quality, including full International Customer Service Standard (ICCSS) certification, backed by Telstra’s Customer Service Commitments and delivered by one of Australia’s largest and most qualified field and technical workforce with a culture of continuous improvement.

Telstra is a financially strong and reliable partner for large enterprise and government organisations who cannot afford downtime and use ICT solutions to improve productivity and drive growth in a sustainable way.

Solution Details

- Polycom® HDX 9000™ Series
  Power, performance and flexibility for highly integrated video conferencing environments:
  - True HD video up to 1080p30 or 720p60 resolution with the ability to connect multiple HD video sources
  - Polycom’s VC2 vision realised through Polycom CMA™ solution
  - 22 kHz audio in StereoSurround™
  - Share HD content
  - Easily integrated video system.

- Polycom® HDX 8000™ Series
  For organisations, enterprises:
  - Polycom UltimateHD™ technology
  - Advanced, flexible architecture for multiple applications and environments
  - Data sharing
  - Internal MCU supports up to four participants
  - Polycom CMA™ solution option.

- Polycom® HDX 7000™, 6000™ & 4000™ Series
  VC systems for smaller groups of people.

Enablers

Telstra Next IP™ network
Telstra Next G™ network