Oil and Gas Contractor Improves Global Operations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: Saipem
Industry: Engineering, Construction and Drilling
Location: Italy
Number of Employees: 50,000

Challenge
· Reduce operational costs
· Improve time to market
· Stimulate staff loyalty

Solution
· Cisco collaboration architecture

Results
· Reduced company travel expenses
· Increased employee satisfaction
· Lowered IT helpdesk costs

Cisco Collaboration technologies in Saipem

Challenge

Saipem, a subsidiary of the Italian industrial giant Eni, operates in the engineering and construction and drilling businesses, with a strong bias towards oil and gas-related activities in remote areas and deep waters. With a reputation for taking on some of the industry's toughest challenges, it has operations around the world, including some of the most inhospitable locations on the planet. Of a total workforce of around 50,000, only about 5000 are located in Italy.

The rest are spread across some 200 sites, including locations in regions such as West and North Africa, the former Soviet Union, the Middle East, and Central and Southeast Asia. Elisa Albertini, collaboration and videoconferencing solution leader at Saipem, says: "As the search for new oil and gas reserves extends ever further, this dispersion is growing, making keeping in touch difficult, particularly in places with poor infrastructure."

Employees, however, must be able to communicate with reliability and clarity. First and foremost, communication is necessary to safeguard health and safety. On a day-to-day basis, staff may need to access training courses or consult with doctors over long distances. In emergency situations, the ability to communicate quickly and effectively can be a major factor in ensuring workers' safety. Similar considerations apply to the company's commercial operations. Good communication can make the difference between speedy progress on projects or delays that cost large sums to Saipem and its customers, which include Eni and other large oil and gas companies.

Solution

Historically, Saipem had used a mix-and-match of basic telecom technologies such as mobile, landline, fax, and email, delivered through local providers over whatever infrastructure was available. However, the company began implementing an advanced communications infrastructure based on Cisco® technology, in line with the Eni standard.

> "We promote WebEx for contacting friends and family because workers often spend a long time away from home. WebEx is simple and encourages sharing. It means they can share video and photos."

Elisa Albertini
Collaboration and Videoconferencing Solution Leader, Saipem

Today, Saipem relies on a resilient wide area network based on Cisco Catalyst® switches and Cisco Integrated Services Routers with in-built security. The network is further secured with Cisco ASA 5585-X Series Adaptive Security Appliances, Cisco ASA 5500-X Series Next-Generation Firewalls, and a Cisco Secure Access Control System.

In locations where wireless networking is needed, Saipem has deployed Cisco Aironet® 1550, 1600, 2600, and 3600 Series Access Points, Cisco 5500 Series Wireless Controllers, and Cisco Virtual Wireless Controllers. Cisco Prime Infrastructure, Cisco Mobility Services Engines, and Cisco Advanced Location Services allow these wireless networks to deliver optimum communications.

This wired and wireless infrastructure supports a range of collaboration technologies, implemented by Cisco partners BT and Dimension Data. The center of the collaboration architecture is a network of 50 Cisco Unified Communications Manager clusters around the world.

These clusters deliver unified voice, text, and video communications via Cisco Unified IP Phone handsets. Saipem has also deployed a range of videoconferencing technologies, including almost 300 Cisco TelePresence® Series endpoints. Around 120 of these endpoints are in Italy, and at least one is in each location worldwide.

Further collaboration capabilities are offered via Cisco WebEx® web conferencing integrated with Active Directory and offered as standard to each employee, plus IP communicator®, providing a Windows PC-based softphone. The collaboration systems are hosted on a data center infrastructure comprising Cisco Nexus® switching and Cisco Unified Computing System™ C-Series rack servers. Within Italy, the collaboration architecture is delivered as a managed service by BT. In the rest of the world, Saipem manages the infrastructure in collaboration with local service providers suggested by Cisco.

Results

The company enjoys a number of benefits from its Cisco collaboration architecture. Perhaps the most obvious one is that many meetings can now be held via video, instead of in person. This capability greatly reduces the cost and time involved in travel. Overall, the introduction of Cisco collaboration technology has helped Saipem increase productivity while travel costs have fallen.

Each Saipem location has at least one Cisco TelePresence unit and these are the prime channel for collaboration in the business. "Our subject-matter experts are spread around the organization, and having collaboration technology means they can get involved in meetings without having to move around," says Albertini. "Videoconferencing is important because we can use it to share visual materials such as maps and diagrams with our customers."

Cisco WebEx, which Saipem adopted in 2008, is widely used across the organization for communication between sites and to share project updates with customers. One of the great benefits of WebEx is that it is delivered from the cloud. This factor means that anyone, including customers, can access it without having to install software or switch devices.

> "Our subject-matter experts are spread around the organization and having collaboration technology means they can get involved in meetings without having to move around. Video conferencing is important because we can use it to share visual materials such as maps and diagrams with our customers."

Elisa Albertini
Collaboration and Videoconferencing
Solution Leader, Saipem

"With WebEx, customers can keep in touch with us without any infrastructure limitations," says Albertini. "There's no need for VPNs or software installations, just a browser. We can contact people anywhere, with any user device." As a result, in addition to improving health, safety, and operations, WebEx is widely used by most business functions. In the Human Resources Department, for example, recruiters use it to carry out remote interviews with job applicants. And in IT, helpdesk agents use it to deal with PC problems, taking remote control of desktops if needed.

In particular, the use of WebEx by the IT helpdesk has greatly reduced downtime associated with computer failures, since many faults are now resolved in minutes.

Finally, communication is an important factor in staff wellbeing. Saipem relies on highly qualified and experienced engineers, who often spend long periods on location away from home. The company urges its employees to use WebEx to stay in touch with loved ones. Says Albertini: "We promote WebEx for contacting friends and family because workers often spend a long time away from home. WebEx is simple and encourages sharing. It means they can share video and photos."

Next Steps

Having relied on videoconferencing for years, Saipem is now preparing to upgrade its video infrastructure with a fully integrated service based on Cisco TelePresence Server.

For More Information

To learn more about the Cisco architectures and solutions featured in this case study, please go to: www.cisco.com/go/collaboration.

PRODUCT LIST
Collaboration
· Cisco Unified Communications Manager Business Edition
· Cisco TelePresence
· Cisco WebEx
· Cisco IP Communicator
· Cisco Unified IP Phones