

# 10 Ways Utilities Companies are Using Video Conferencing to Increase Access to Real-Time Information and Improve Transfer of Knowledge.

From dealing with global supply chain issues to grappling with shortages of skilled workers, utilities companies face a host of managerial challenges today and in the near future. But after conducting lengthy interviews with five IT managers in the utility sector, it has been discovered that video conferencing can help solve these challenges and more including:

- 1. Retention of highly-skilled workers.** Retaining highly technical employees is always challenging. One major utility company in New Mexico has retained technical specialists who wanted to leave the area by letting them use video conferencing to interact with field operations remotely. "Say a maintenance guy goes to a pump that isn't working," explains an IT director. "Using this special camera, the maintenance guy sends pictures in real-time to a tech that specializes in that pump to help resolve the problem — it doesn't matter where the specialist is physically located." As a result, productivity increases along with employee satisfaction.
- 2. Standardizing work processes.** The global nature of the utilities business demands that work processes in refineries be standardized to streamline operations and create an international workforce that can operate efficiently at any location. Video conferencing helps streamline the training process while permitting reduction of redundant staff in multiple locations.
- 3. Leveraging technical expertise across disparate locations.** One utility uses mobile units so refinery maintenance staffs can transmit what they are seeing at a problem site to tech support in another location, facilitating diagnosis and solution from anywhere in the world. As a result, fewer technical experts are required on staff, and travel costs are reduced.
- 4. Increased knowledge transfer from retiring workers.** By hosting live video conferences with the existing field staff, new trainees get "on-the-job" training without the expense and hassle of travel. As the workforce ages, one utility sees video conferencing as "a way to facilitate the transfer of specialized job skills and the knowledge of legacy systems of our pre-retirement-age employees to younger workers," explains one IT director.
- 5. Keeping staff up-to-date on frequently-changing policies.** Policy dictates that if a drop of oil is spilled, it must be cleaned up in exactly the same manner regardless of where the incident occurs. In this ever-changing world, regulations for such processes alter frequently, as do the organization's procedures for handling them. One South Dakota energy company relies on video conferencing to train affected employees at every location in exactly the same way, which assures company-wide compliance without the additional time and expense of sending trainers to each location.



*"By using video conferencing... real time data are processed by experts and displayed graphically in seismic models. This enables us to advise the drilling crew exactly where to drill, and gives the technicians on shore the ability to support several rigs."*

6. **Improving overall productivity.** The IT director at a New Mexico utility noted that video conferencing has helped increase overall productivity because normally staff members traveled frequently between multiple locations for very short meetings. “Everyone was tired of being a road warrior,” he said. Video conferencing allows staff to remain at their desks or in the field instead of wasting time traveling from meeting to meeting.

7. **Responding to more constituents.** Senior managers at a South Dakota utility use video conferencing to present to external government and grass roots organizations. Video conferencing helps the utility respond to far more requests than it could previously, which in turn is helping them develop better relationships with constituents in its service area.

8. **Developing closer relationship with employees.** At one utility, town hall meetings allow workers to ask questions of senior officers through face-to-face video conferencing. The IT director notes that employees feel more valuable, closer to senior executives, and more satisfied with the company overall than when they received information second- or third-hand.

9. **Create “same as being there” experience.** A northern California utility values the human interaction of employees and believes that integrated video conferencing systems can create meeting experiences that are identical to having people in the same room. The result of ongoing virtual collaboration creates stronger teams of people all sharing a stake in the outcome while enjoying the benefit of working from a “home” location.

10. **Increasing participation in more conferences.** A national association for the natural gas industry in Washington, DC, frequently receives requests for subject-area experts to speak at conferences all over the world. “Having key staff out of the office for days at a time strains the association,” says the IT director. Video conferencing allows the organization to accept more often, without having the productivity loss.

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To learn more about how your utilities organization could leverage real-time information and transfer existing knowledge through video conferencing, or to set up a personal demo, visit [www.tandberg.com/learn](http://www.tandberg.com/learn) or call TANDBERG now at 877-213-1979.



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