



Application Story

Florida Rock

Florida Rock Meets the Demand of Training Employees in 20+ Locations Quickly and Efficiently with WiredRed's e/pop Web & Video Conferencing Software

Large and small companies alike experience growing pains at numerous stages in the business lifecycle. When large companies expand and diversify through the acquisition process, severe growing pains can emerge and hinder the company's daily business processes and may also affect the bottom line. In many situations, a technological solution can ease the assimilation and growth process which may help the company and its frontline personnel and management to focus on more pressing matters.

One of the nation's largest producers of construction aggregates, cement, ready mixed concrete and concrete block, Florida Rock (NYSE:FRK) found out that innovative, multiparty web conferencing software, e/pop Web Conferencing from WiredRed Software, would allow the IT Training Department to quickly assemble and hold training sessions with new employees and provide continuing education on software applications that are critical to Florida Rock's core business.

Florida Rock, while headquartered in Jacksonville, Florida, is geographically dispersed throughout the Southeastern and Mid-Atlantic states. With its systems constantly being improved and its continuing focus on perfecting and executing business processes, there was a true need to build and deploy a real-time conferencing solution, more specifically, a conferencing solution that enabled collaboration and allowed its staff to provide and receive effective education in a quick and timely manner. Florida Rock realized that travel and time away from the job could be minimized using virtual classrooms.

John Smith is an IT training specialist at Florida Rock. Smith provides training to the company's computer users on a variety of applications that vary from Microsoft Office and Oracle database applications to Florida Rock's own proprietary Concrete, Aggregate, Block and Building Material

Problem:

- Florida Rock sought a fast and efficient method to provide education and training to more than 1000 employees.

Solution:

- e/pop Web Conferencing, a full-featured, affordable, multiparty web and video conferencing software

Business & IT Benefits:

- e/pop decreases required travel for IT training staff and managers
- e/pop provides an interactive, productive environment for training and engineering staff meetings
- Virtual classrooms reduce time away from normal duties for new and updated application education

application (named Producerware). Producerware is mainly utilized in Florida Rock's Concrete, Rock and Building material business but it is also used for labor cost accounting and time reporting throughout all lines of business. Additional Producerware modules are in development for the Aggregate and Cement business segments and are slated for rollout in 2006.

When a company has 50 employees or less, and is centrally located, training can be accomplished fairly easily. But when a larger company, such as Florida Rock, has to train its employees on system improvements and new modules, just scheduling training sessions, with so many personal and job-related conflicts, can be daunting, if not almost impossible.

“The use of web conferencing pretty much eliminates the need for me to travel for short training sessions,” said Smith. “Why fly or drive for hours for a one-hour training session? e/pop Web Conferencing is much more efficient for on-the-fly training sessions on new application upgrades and to bring new employees up to speed on our Producerware application.”

Florida Rock first found out the benefits of real-time communications when the company purchased and deployed WiredRed's e/pop secure instant messaging software in 2004. The company first began to use web conferencing from AT&T Web Meeting, but the per-minute charges were quickly adding up. Florida Rock needed a less expensive alternative. Already sold on WiredRed's e/pop secure instant messaging, Florida Rock tested e/pop Web Conferencing and confirmed that the software met the company's criteria. Florida Rock found that e/pop Web Conferencing provides the same secure environment for multiparty collaboration – but also enables deeper and richer real-time interaction between the host and attendees with its application, desktop and browser sharing, remote control, VoIP, synchronous multiparty video, and integration with all Microsoft Office applications, including Outlook. In addition, e/pop Web Conferencing offers Secure Socket Layer (SSL3) and Transport Layer Security (TLS) as standard security features that, in most cases, can help thwart common security breaches such as eavesdropping and spoofing that could potentially expose confidential corporate information.

Florida Rock installed both the e/pop Web Conferencing and instant messaging software on Windows 2003 - IBM BladeCenter servers and Cisco network hardware protected by a Cisco PIX Firewall.

Smith prepares a softcopy, step-by-step handout and e-mails it to all hosts and participants prior to the session. He usually schedules his short training sessions using Microsoft Outlook. His attendee list can simply click on a link at the designated time to enter the virtual classroom for training. When participants enter a session, he uses text chat to welcome each attendee.

“We are continually upgrading applications and making enhancements to our computer systems and networks,” said Smith. “Because there isn't much time to conduct trainings when there might be very short notice on upgrade availability, we figured there had to be a better way to schedule quick training sessions using virtual classrooms in a timely manner. Plus, unnecessary business trips could be eliminated which would save the company money.”

Smith is not the only e/pop Web Conferencing host at Florida Rock. The Engineering Department and various managers throughout the company use it to conduct meetings. The engineers schedule and record weekly standing meetings via e/pop in a public meeting format so that the session can be viewed later by those who may have missed the actual meeting.

“Our business is very busy and fast paced,” he explained. “The concrete product we sell has to be batched and delivered very quickly. Trying to get personnel away from their regular duties can be difficult. The short e/pop conferences I hold are ideal for getting the correct information out to a group of people in a very short amount of time.”

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