



e/pop Web & Video Conferencing Brings Campus Personnel and Students Together at Hawaii Pacific University

You probably won't find a better environment for the rapid adoption and creative application of emerging technologies than in universities and post K-12 learning institutions. The very nature of education itself instills the curiosity of learning about, for example, prior generations, as well as the utilization of new technologies. Of course, for today's university students, technology is part of his or her daily routine. Most carry mobile phones with cameras and video, MP3 players and instant message their friends and family regularly. Adopting new gadgets and technology into their lifestyles is second nature.

Real-time software communication technology, which gained its popularity from its beginnings in consumer and Enterprise Instant Messaging, can also benefit university operations and education programs. Saving time, money and decreasing communications delays while increasing the productivity of meetings are just some of the benefits that Hawaii Pacific University (HPU) has experienced since deploying e/pop Web Conferencing almost 7 months ago.

HPU is located in downtown Honolulu, with another campus on the windward side of Oahu in the city of Kaneohe. More than 5,500 students from every state in the U.S. and from more than 100 countries attend classes on either campus, with approximately 3,000 more attending HPU on one of eight military satellite campuses on Oahu.

The university's Chief Information Officer, Justin Itoh, manages an IT department with 38 full-time employees. Approximately 70 students majoring in Computer Sciences learn hands-on under Itoh's guidance, providing technical support and routine hardware and software maintenance tasks for the school.

HPU first started using remote control from WebEx for technical support purposes in order to help students with web site issues and launching the Distance Learning Program online.

Application Story Hawaii Pacific University

Problem:

- Hawaii Pacific University sought a cost-effective on-premise remote control and web & video conferencing solution

Solution:

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

Business & IT Benefits:

- e/pop enables HPU personnel from 10 campuses to meet in real-time
- The IT department utilizes e/pop's remote control feature to speed trouble ticket resolution
- HPU's Human Resource department uses e/pop for to interview potential employees that reside on other islands or the mainland in real-time.

“We found that it was much faster to remotely guide the student through the necessary steps to fix whatever issue they had,” said Itoh. “We were getting through trouble tickets more quickly and this confirmed that remote control was a necessary tool for the IT department.”

But the cost of WebEx was an issue for HPU, especially since other departments within the university were seeking more collaborative web conferencing capabilities beyond remote control. There was no question, expanding the usage of WebEx into more collaborative-type web conferencing functionality was cost prohibitive for HPU.

“Being an island state, it made more sense for us to purchase, install and manage our own web conferencing software, and we liked that e/pop Web Conferencing was extremely easy to install and use,” said Itoh. “Simplicity of use was critical and of course e/pop was very affordable. We are saving about one-half of what we spent on WebEx for remote control plus we own the e/pop application, which means we can offer it to other departments as needed.”

Beyond its initial use as a remote control support system for the IT department, e/pop Web Conferencing is now being used in the military campus program, to facilitate weekly meetings between teachers, admission staff and other personnel. The use of multiparty video enables the military campus personnel to move one step beyond weekly telephone conference calls. The interaction of multiparty video, or the ability for everyone to see all conference attendees simultaneously, provides a level of human interaction that cannot compare with a one-dimensional phone call.

“Feature to feature I’d say that e/pop Web Conferencing really stands out because of its video capabilities,” adds Itoh. “It doesn’t just provide one-to-many video, which I found is pretty common to most web conferencing software applications. Everyone can actually see facial expressions while the meeting occurs, and that’s only second to being there in person.”

One department in particular has found that video can be critical. The human resources department at HPU has begun to use e/pop as a means to interview job applicants that are located on other islands, or across three time zones. Video is invaluable because it enables the interviewer to read the applicant’s facial expressions while conducting the job interview.

The management of the e/pop application has not been an issue for Itoh or HPU. He has trained personnel from other departments to use e/pop and conferences are set up and hosted by these individuals. Installing e/pop from within a firewall-protected network, on Windows 2003 servers, was very simple, according to Itoh. HPU’s military campuses connect to the main campus via a VPN connection.

HPU has had no problem finding applications for e/pop; in fact the university is in the initial stages of integrating e/pop into “classrooms” in the Distance Learning Program. While students are not actually on campus, with e/pop they will be able to interact in a group setting just as they would in a campus classroom. With e/pop, small groups can communicate in real-time to collaborate on school projects and class work.

“The use of e/pop will add another dimension to distance learning,” said Itoh. “Bringing students together virtually will definitely help them feel more connected to the class and to each other. Once we finish the testing I’m optimistic that this will be an ideal way to decrease the ‘distance’ in the Distance Learning Program.”

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