

CASE STUDY:

AgResearch - Video Conferencing

AgResearch is New Zealand's largest Crown Research Institute (CRI) with acknowledged expertise in biological science, having a key role to play in boosting the productivity of our bio-dependent economy.

Owned by, and working for the benefit of, the people of New Zealand, AgResearch employs over 1,000 staff at four locations in Hamilton, Palmerston North, Christchurch and Mosgiel.

AgResearch's aim is to create wealth for New Zealand, value for customers and health and well-being for consumers through science-based discovery, product development and commercialisation.

The Need

AgResearch were already experienced users of video conferencing (VC) technology, utilising the system to conduct meetings and undertake collaborative based work. Because the system in place was outdated and limited by the lack of technology, AgResearch saw the need to bring their video conferencing into the 21st century.

By watching the market closely for over two years, the team at AgResearch had a firm understanding of the developments in VC and who the major providers were. They were confident about the technology they required and stipulated the results a new system must deliver.

A new VC solution needed to move them from standard to high definition and show a marked improvement in picture

and sound quality. In order to encourage interaction, it had to deliver the impression that the people were actually in the room together. Most of all it had to be user friendly, flexible and have a management system that would allow control and security.

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AgResearch wanted a solution that would grow with the organisation so they would not find themselves in the situation of needing to replace technology again. The new system needed to be upgradeable as standards changed and have a clear path to future capabilities.

The Solution

Visual communications specialist Anthony Carppe and the team at Canon devised one of the most advanced integrated video conferencing systems in New Zealand to meet AgResearch's specifications.

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AgResearch participated in VC discussion groups within the industry and noted that Tandberg™ stood out from the rest and was their product of choice. The contract was put out to market in a competitive tender.

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Canon New Zealand, a premium partner of Tandberg, offered a solution to AgResearch, along with a number of other vendors. Canon, however, won the business on a number of merits. Phillip Lindsay, Chief Information Officer at AgResearch says that Canon worked better with his team throughout the entire process and put together a proposal which exactly matched their requirements..

“Canon offered us flexibility with the proposal and was transparent with their costs.” said Lindsay. “There were competitors with lower pricing but it came down to the fact Canon has the experience in the market,” he says.

A new solution that required this amount of investment - not only financial but time and resources - could not be a one size fits all solution. It required planning, deployment and building a relationship.

“When we are formulating a solution for a business, we look at key areas like infrastructure and whether it will support the system and allow it to function exactly as it should. We look at how to deploy the solution with the least interruption to business and we train staff in the new technology which is often overlooked.” explains Carppe

The Result

AgResearch is now a leading example within state sector organisations with this state of the art Canon Tandberg video conferencing solution. It has proven to be a valuable tool to the organisation on many levels.

The number of staff using the technology for inter-office meetings, conference group discussions, board and executive meetings and real time project work is increasing rapidly.

“We simply book the meeting time and place and the software manages the entire call from start to finish. The technology has given AgResearch a more unified approach to communication and it is extremely user friendly,” says Lindsay.

AgResearch can now utilise its time and resources more effectively as the team of over 1,000 staff nationwide work without the limitations of location and have streamlined their work practises.

Dr Lindsay describes the input from Canon as imperative in the AgResearch team adopting the new technology. “Canon conducted high level training on site and offered planning around the room design, everything from tables to chairs and room layout this all creates the illusion of being in the same room.”

The combination of advancements in the management and communication servers, combined with high-end cameras and LCD screens have resulted in an adaptable,

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integrated system that will continue to meet the needs of AgResearch and its partners into the future.

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A substantial amount of staff travel has been replaced throughout the entire organisation as the Canon Tandberg system has alleviated the need for as many face-to-face meetings.

“This is a major step for AgResearch as it reduces our carbon footprint and the impact on the environment we work rigorously to preserve,” says Lindsay.

Mr Carppe says the relationship Canon has formed with AgResearch is the key to making this project such a success.

“We are very proud to showcase this solution as it demonstrates how video conferencing results in better work flow and productivity. AgResearch have certainly set the standard for other government departments to follow,” he says.

