



CASE STUDY:

UNIVERSITY OF CAMERINO AND AETHRA® DISTANCE LEARNING

Customer interviewed: Piceno University Consortium

Video communication System Used: Vega®

The use of videoconferencing for distance learning eliminates problems of physical distance between lecturers and students, saves time and money, and produces excellent academic results.

The University of Camerino is one of the oldest and best-known universities in Italy. Cinzia Felici, IT Manager for Distance Learning at the University has been in charge of distance learning courses there for 3 years. She affirms that the students with the best exam results are those who attend lectures using videoconferencing. One of the reasons for this is that the tutor at the remote site directs the camera on the salient points of the lecture, allowing the students to focus their attention on the most important elements right from the beginning. In this way, not only do the students save time because they do not need to travel to another city to attend lectures, but they also use their time more effectively during lectures. Another plus point is that the lecturers' teaching methodologies are not affected and can remain unchanged: this is taken care of by the tutor filming the lecture so it is important that the tutor knows the subject area well and has been trained on how to use videoconferencing systems. This does not involve a lot of time or money as the tutors have found the videoconferencing systems easy-to-use.

There are also clear economic advantages to be gained by using videoconferencing for distance learning applications: according to Ms Felici's calculations, the costs of the systems were already covered in the first two years. But the economic point of view is not the only advantage which has led to a more extensive use of videoconferencing: the greater sense of participation, the possibility to focus and learn more effectively during lectures and better concentration are also decisive factors.

Consequently, the number of students registering for videoconference lectures has increased steadily since the project started: during the last academic year Vega 384 connections were used 8 hours a day with 22 lecture theatres both locally and remotely for over a thousand students. "All the remote students feel as if they are sitting in the front row, they feel involved in the lecture and can take notes easily," says Ms Felici, echoing what the students have told her.

Furthermore, Vega offers the possibility to use the document camera, electronic whiteboard and to share files using an external PC. Due to these features not only the number but also the type of courses offered using distance learning has gradually increased: last year videoconferencing was used for 15 degree courses and the aim is to further increase this number using another twenty-five Vega 2.

Finally, the videoconferencing connections are so simple and easy-to-use that the University of Camerino has decided to use Aethra systems for other projects such as meetings with companies who take university students on work placements and for some laboratories and local health authorities involved in the University's biology courses.

Vega 384 Technical Notes

- Set-top system
- Interface for ISDN and dedicated networks
- Compliant with the international standard H.320
- Echo cancellation and full duplex
- Camera with 4 preset positions, zoom and pan&tilt
- Dimensions: width: 37cm; height: 10.5 cm; depth: 32 cm

Innovative design, high-quality simultaneous transmission of the participants' voice and image, total portability and easy installation: these are the main features of the set-top Vega. Videoconference sessions can be set up without a dedicated structure by simply using a standard TV set or a videoprojector. As Vega is compliant with the international standard H.320 it is possible to use an ISDN network or a dedicated circuit for audio, video and data transmission, connecting an external PC to the serial port.

Vega 2 Technical Notes

- Set-top system
- Interface for ISDN and IP
- Compliant with the international standards H.320/323
- Echo cancellation and full duplex
- Automatic noise suppression
- Automatic Voice Tracking feature
- Camera with 9 preset positions, zoom, autofocus and pan&tilt
- Dimensions: width: 46cm; height: 23 cm; depth: 22 cm

Vega 2 is a compact and portable system for small/medium videoconference rooms. The camera with 9 preset positions, zoom, autofocus and high-speed pan&tilt can be managed locally or remotely by the infrared control. When connected to an external PC, Vega 2 is a compact and portable system for small/medium videoconference rooms.

The camera with 9 preset positions, zoom, autofocus and high-speed pan&tilt can be managed locally or remotely by the infrared control. When connected to an external PC, participants can use multimedia applications for file transfer and document sharing functions. The fully graphic user interface has been designed to ensure easy, intuitive use even for less expert users. The new voice tracking feature allows automatic identification and framing of the speaker.

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