



## CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

### **Aethra Videophone Helps Small Businesses and Development Centers Communicate**

*Small Business Development Centers in Illinois, U.S., are able to provide more effective business consulting services, thanks to videoconferencing technology.*

Illinois has a comprehensive network of Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) made up of 65 NGO's (non-governmental organizations) funded by the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity for the State of Illinois. These SBDCs are located in colleges and universities throughout the State and provide free business consulting to companies. Services include one-on-one business counselling and management assistance, plus help with business plans, assessment of marketing information, business financing programs, financial analysis/planning, and access to business education and training opportunities.

In order to enable an ever-increasing number of businesses to take advantage of their services, video communication solutions have been integrated into the SBDC communication network. Aethra videophones have already been installed in 12 of the network's centers, while installation of a further 22 is currently underway. The videophones are used in collaboration sessions between the various SBDCs and staff at the help-desk for general information or in specialized consultation centers for expert advice in specific areas of business.

One of the specialized consultation centers is The Digital Workforce Education Society (DWES). The Society is responsible for selecting and installing the videophones on behalf of the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the State's department that for the past 4-years has been the driving force behind the deployment of videophones in this project.

In 2003, the DWES decided to implement an Aethra videophone (offering both IP and ISDN connectivity). The decision came as developments in video communication technology meant that the SBDC network needed to connect over both IP and ISDN networks to provide cost-effective video links. After evaluating the range of products available, the DWES selected the Aethra videophone because it allows access to existing legacy ISDN videoconference installations as well as IP based videoconference installations, increasing both convenience and productivity.

The commitment of both the DWES and the State of Illinois to video communication technology does not end here, as future plans to provide the state's 300 chambers of commerce with a videoconferencing package (DSL connection and Aethra videophone) are underway. When implemented, this package will enable chambers of commerce to connect directly to Small Business Development Centers for free face-to-face business consultations.

The DWES is an International non-profit society, headquartered in Chicago, with International Chapters located in Mexico, Switzerland and Thailand. The mission of the Digital Workforce Education Society is to provide the digital infrastructure, training and curriculum development designed for distance education and the training of a global digital workforce.

As part of its distance education program, the DWES has installed an Aethra Vega Star system at the John Marshal Law School in Chicago. This professional set-top solution is used for the delivery of distance education classes with a number of remote universities around the world.

Digital Workforce Education Society	Aethra SpA
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