



Polycom User Group

Providing Live and On-Demand Video of Conference Events and Speakers

Organization

Polycom User Group

Industry

Video Conferencing and Event Promotion

VBrick Products

- VBrick Windows® Media Encoding Appliance
- VBrick Rich Media Studio Appliance
- VBrick Online Streaming Services (VBoss)

Applications

- Streaming live video of conference sessions to members worldwide via the Internet
- Recording conference sessions to provide on-demand viewing to members via the Internet

The annual PUG Conference, hosted by the Polycom User Group (PUG), with VBrick as a sponsor, updates attendees on the most recent developments in video conferencing technology and demonstrates innovative ways in which the technology is applied.

It was no surprise that due to the struggling economy attendance was lower than normal. The usual crowd of IT experts, media support staff, end users and C-level executives were perhaps more circumspect about the cost of travel to Anaheim, California, where the show was held.

Case in point, helping to minimize travel costs is exactly the sort of thing that video conferencing and streaming media technology excels at, and the PUG Conference was a perfect illustration.

THE CHALLENGE: Deliver live and on-demand Internet Video of the PUG Conference to members unable to attend in person

You don't have to be a video conferencing or streaming media expert to understand that video technology provides a high return on investment for businesses that operate on a global scale. In addition to reducing the time and cost associated with travel, communicating via video can also help reduce a business's environmental footprint.

So, it makes sense that a conference focused on video conferencing should offer live access to the event online. As a conference sponsor, VBrick has provided live streaming and archive services of select presentations for the past two years, allowing members of PUG to participate remotely. In addition to broadcasting a feature session live over the Internet, VBrick helped PUG stream and archive six educational sessions.

"We knew well before the event that the economy was going to impact attendance," said Craig Ernst, PUG Secretary and one of the A/V coordinators for the conference. "So we made the request to offer more sessions live and archived from VBrick."

THE SOLUTION: A VBrick Windows® Media Encoding Appliance, VBrick Rich Media Studio Appliance and VBrick Online Streaming Services (VBoss)

Through its sponsorship, VBrick provided one of its compact encoding appliances for video-only productions, VBoss streaming services and a Rich Media Studio (RMS) appliance, which combines video with presentation materials. The encoder and the RMS recorded live streams to a built-in hard-drive that produced easily transferable files that could be accessed online after the event. Ernst also specifically requested the RMS software suite for its ability to embed live video of speakers into their slide-show presentations.

"As a Board Member responsible for coordinating several aspects of the conference, it's sometimes hard to be an end-user participant because I'm focused on my volunteer duties. I end up missing the conference's educational segments," said Ernst, who added he would later view the on-demand video of events.

Before PUG even opened its doors for the Conference, VBrick staff set up the VBrick encoding appliance and RMS onsite by simply plugging into the video output of the production equipment. Within minutes, they had configured the appliances to stream

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to VBoss servers, and provided PUG with syndication code that enabled organizers to embed a VBoss video player on the conference website. PUG then emailed members a link to the site, where they could log on at no cost.

“The ability to quickly add the VBrick hardware into our AV systems at the conference was important due to tight time constraints,” said Ernst. “We were able to set up two different locations in a short amount of time, and on-time, because of how easy these systems are to use.”

THE BENEFITS: Increased engagement of remote conference attendees and an improved online experience

Online participation was up. VBoss registered a total of 338 screen hits on the conference’s web portal over the course of its two-day run, signifying that online traffic increased over 40 percent from the previous year.

About a quarter of the conference events were streamed live online, including a feature session in which the Manhattan School of Music demonstrated how it uses high-definition video conferencing technology for remote education. In addition to learning about the school’s innovative application, online participants also witnessed firsthand how well Polycom and VBrick technology channeled a high quality, live experience to multiple end users over the Internet.

Part of that was due to VBrick’s RMS appliance, which hadn’t been applied at earlier PUG Conferences. Ernst specifically requested it because it allowed him to convert multiple data inputs into one stream. Plus, the studio capabilities of the product enabled him to highlight specific areas of interest during the production. For example, while the speaker was talking, the image could devote a full screen on him or her, or instead it could highlight information from the speaker’s presentation.

In previous years, the visual of an online slide presentation might have been accompanied only by a presenter’s voiceover. Or it might have been video of the presenter alone, which did not easily capture their presentation. VBrick’s RMS appliance takes the experience a step further by combining presenter video, session audio and content streams into a single file, simplifying the tasks of archiving, editing and pushing the package onto the Internet.

By channeling feeds from an onsite camera and the presenter’s laptop, RMS allows online viewers to see high-quality slide content and, in a picture-in-picture style window, view corresponding video of the presenter. This configuration is one of many preset templates the RMS is capable of delivering.

“To me [an audio-only presentation] is totally useless. If I’m trying to listen to an educational session, I don’t want to be wondering where the presenter is on the slide. I want to see and follow their physical cues, expression and body language so I can follow along easily,” said Ernst. “What I get as an end deliverable online should be exactly what I would see if I were sitting at the conference.”

About VBrick Systems, Inc.

VBrick is the leader in Enterprise IP Video solutions, with over 6,000 corporate, education and government customers and 60,000 installations worldwide. VBrick solutions work over standard IP networks and the Internet to deliver rich media communications that connect people everywhere -- from employees and customers, to partners and shareholders. VBrick’s comprehensive product suite and end-to-end solutions are used in a wide range of live and on-demand applications including meeting and event broadcasts, distance learning, digital signage, TV distribution, video surveillance, and Web-based marketing campaigns. Headquartered in Wallingford, CT, VBrick’s products and services are available through industry-leading value-added resellers. For more information, visit www.vbrick.com