VSGi Customer Profile
GLOBAL SOLUTIONS

Gunster, Yoakley & Stewart. P.A.

Attorneys at Law

With video communications equipment installed by VSGi, Gunster Yoakley is achieving significant cost savings due to reduced travel and increased productivity.

Challenge

Gunster, Yoakley & Stewart, P.A., established in 1925, offers a broad range of legal services to its client base of businesses, institutions, local governments, and prominent individuals. Headquartered in West Palm Beach, Florida, the firm also has offices throughout Southern Florida in Fort Lauderdale, Miami, Palm Beach, Stuart, and Vero Beach. In mid-2006, Gunster Yoakley made the strategic decision to expand its reach and opened two offices in Northern Florida in Jacksonville and Tallahassee.

With the firm's 130 attorneys so geographically dispersed, says Kjell Tonnessen, Gunster Yoakley's Supervisor of Billing and Business Analyst, "We were looking for ways to have the attorneys communicate more effectively with each other. It wasn't making sense to fly everybody in, to do the driving – you're not going to fly all the shareholders in for a 30-minute meeting. As a result, we were waiting to schedule meetings and sometimes things weren't getting done because we couldn't get everybody together."

"We thought videoconferencing would fill that gap," he continues. "We tried a few cheaper, less effective options such as web conferencing that just didn't fit the bill. So as the lead on the project, I began researching videoconferencing companies and I found VSGi."

Solution

A nationally recognized premier integrator of video, voice, web, data collaboration, and communications solutions, Visual Systems Group, Inc. (VSGi) helped Tonnessen explore the various options.

"I was nervous about getting involved with a larger company because normally you think it would be more expensive, so originally I tried to find a local solution provider," recalls Tonnessen. "I found a few companies in Florida but none of them provided the service that VSGi did. And I usually hate working with salespeople, but the VSGi representative was excellent. When I told him I was not ready to purchase, he did not pressure me in any way. He was constantly in contact with me over an 8-month period, educating me on the different products and making himself available to answer my questions."

Polycom HDX with VSGi Dual-Monitor Cart

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At the end of those 8 months, Tonnessen invited the VSGi representative to demonstrate two different solutions. Gunster Yoakley's CFO and a partner serving as Managing Shareholder also attended.

"We were immediately impressed with the technology," Tonnessen remarks. "And at first, we got a quote to put equipment in one conference room within each of our offices. But in talking with another firm in Detroit, we found that purchasing carted units would be more cost-effective because we can move videoconferencing from room to room and it's more flexible."

VSGi installed Polycom® Media Carts with dual 42-inch monitors, which enable viewing of video and content on separate screens. VSGi also pre-programmed the firm's directory into each unit to make videoconferencing as simple as placing a phone call.

"A lot of these people are not technical," explains Tonnessen. "VSGi set it up so that the equipment works like a cell phone. There's no need for technical support to assist in making a call, so we don't have to have staff sitting over their shoulders helping them. They just schedule the room and press a button to make the call."

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Results

In the one month since VSGi installed the videoconferencing equipment at Gunster Yoakley, "It's been booked solid," says Tonnessen. "The attorneys are constantly using it to get in touch with each other."

"We're also using it for interviews," he adds. "All of the firm's administration is in our West Palm office, and the satellite offices have attorneys and secretaries. So before, to interview potential hires, Human Resources would wait until they had several candidates for a position and do a day of interviews. What they were finding was that they were missing out on some candidates because a week might go by before they would have the interview and they had already found jobs somewhere else."

"Recently, we began interviewing candidates over video and it has gone incredibly well," Tonnessen observes. "We even interviewed a candidate in St. Louis -- he went into a FedEx Kinko's and we set up a video call. I thought that was pretty cool. It really expands our pool of candidates."

"The attorneys have been using it non-stop," he continues. "It's really been remarkable. I anticipate that by the end of next year, we'll be purchasing more equipment because it's been so well received. People are fighting over it."

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"The bottom line is this equipment is easily going to pay for itself," Tonnessen declares. "We have different practice areas such as litigation, real estate, trusts and estates, and corporate tax. When the practice leaders need to meet with the Executive Directors and shareholders, they're from all the different offices and it's hard to coordinate everyone together. Recently they had a meeting over video and I would estimate that we saved $10,000 to $15,000 in that one day alone by saving billable hours, travel costs, and hotel costs. Getting everybody here for one day is very expensive. So the cost savings of video is something I can see immediately."

So far, Gunster Yoakley has used video for inter-office calling and interviews, but Tonnessen says "I assume connecting with clients and other firms will be a benefit in the future."

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Contact VSGi today to learn how our solutions can support your business processes.

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