



LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AGRICULTURAL CENTER



TANDBERG Video Communications Helps LSU AgCenter Meet Audience Demand for High Quality

The LSU AgCenter Turns to VSGi for TANDBERG video communications solutions to deliver research-based education to the homes and offices of the state's citizens.

CHALLENGE

The Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, known as the LSU AgCenter, is one of 11 institutions within the Louisiana State University System. Its primary functions are to operate the Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station, which conducts agricultural-based research, and the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, which extends the knowledge derived from research to the people of the state.

Michael T. Carl, Director for Support, Infrastructure & Distance Education at the LSU AgCenter, says video communications plays a major role in helping the AgCenter achieve its main mission: "to provide research-based information from faculty and scientific staff to the citizens of Louisiana and beyond."

Headquartered in Baton Rouge with 14 branch locations statewide, the LSU AgCenter was among the many entities that suffered at the hands of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. As Carl recalls, "Several of our offices were affected — a couple were totally lost and personnel were displaced to temporary locations."

"We borrowed some satellite equipment from Texas A & M and Indiana so we could provide our sites with connectivity for data and voice to get the essentials on line," he continues.

"Like many organizations and state agencies that lost connectivity then, we realized that we needed to be prepared to provide our own connectivity in the case of any such future incidents."



SOLUTION

Having used video conferencing for the 5 years preceding 2005's disastrous hurricane season, the LSUAgCenter turned to VSGi — TANDBERG Platinum Partner and provider of video communications products — for the answer to its continuity of operations needs. VSGi recommended the TANDBERG Mobile Commander and its corresponding Tactical MXP, which is a self-contained mobile communications system — or as Carl refers to it, “essentially a codec in a briefcase.”

“Our need and desire to not be totally vulnerable to outages is met by having this equipment available for emergency needs,” remarks Carl. “In the meantime, we use it for educational purposes.”

In conjunction with the TANDBERG Fieldview — a wireless, handheld video device — the TANDBERG Mobile Commander allows the LSUAgCenter to broadcast live feeds from locations such as hay fields and rice fields.

“We have Fieldview riding on tractors or trucks through the fields,” explains Carl, and those vehicles will stop in the field where a speaker can talk about current research. We make tours available during the day, and each tour will have five or six stops. So we provide our audience — students as well as producers and providers of different agricultural services — with the latest technologies and research in their areas of interest. By delivering these tours over the Web, we allow people to participate from the comfort of their homes or offices rather than going to a hot field in the middle of the day.”

“TANDBERG technology is allowing us to do this,” he adds. “We don't have wireless connectivity in the rice fields; we use the up and down satellite link of the Mobile Commander and the wireless capability on the trailer to connect with Fieldview, which has its own onboard wireless capability. So we are streaming from Fieldview to the Mobile Commander to the Worldwide Web.”

RESULTS

In addition to the Mobile Commander and Fieldview components, says Carl, the LSU AgCenter takes advantage of other TANDBERG equipment — including the TANDBERG Management Suite (TMS); TANDBERG Gatekeeper; TANDBERG Media Processing System (MPS) 800; and the TANDBERG Video Communication Server (VCS) — “to deliver both college-level credit courses from our campus here in Baton Rouge to 20 sites across the state as well as in-service training for AgCenter personnel in areas such as accounting, human resources management and so on. We also use it to reach out to AgCenter clientele — who are not tuition-paying students but the citizens of Louisiana — ranging in age from youngsters in the 4-H program through participants in post-secondary and adult education programs, such as health, nutrition and housing and emergency preparedness.”

Carl says the most significant benefits of video communications are “reduced travel costs, the reduction in lost productivity and the ability to reach out to our clientele where they are.”



“Prior to TANDBERG,” remarks Carl, “some of our AgCenter personnel housed here in Baton Rouge had to travel to other parts of the state — to Parish Offices, Research Stations and Community Centers — to make presentations. They no longer have to do that. Now they can achieve their objectives through TANDBERG equipment without the investment in time, travel expenses and lost productivity incurred while traveling.”

“We have a number of compressed video rooms here on campus so our personnel can reach out to any part of the state without having to leave campus,” he continues. “They are doing that more and more, and in fact, audiences are expecting it more and more. They don’t want to have to go to a live meeting on site — they want to participate through video.”

“The AgCenter is also providing archived presentations, so people who can’t participate live can view the presentations on demand,” Carl adds.

Asked about the quality of support from TANDBERG Carl responds, “We have had very little need for support through the years, as the equipment has proven to be very reliable. In fact, even though we have a new TANDBERG MPS 800 Bridge, we elected to keep the two older Multi-point Control Units on standby; even though the product has reached its end of life, it is still performing very satisfactorily and helping us when we need it for overflow.”

Carl says the most significant benefits of video communications are “reduced travel costs, the reduction in lost productivity and the ability to reach out to our clientele where they are. Regarding TANDBERG, our experience has been the equipment is reliable, durable and robust — and they keep up with changes in the market. We have a number of their high-definition codecs in production and we are very pleased with the quality that is added.”

“Audiences are more sophisticated in their expectations; they are seeing more HD television and movies, and they are expecting that in the educational environmental as well,” he asserts. “We are pleased that TANDBERG has enabled us to provide that kind of quality.”

“It’s been a good relationship,” Carl says, “and I look forward to continuing to work with TANDBERG.”



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

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