



Excellence in Enterprise Video Awards

Profiles in Success: Sprint Connects with Employees Around the World with Video



Sprint



Produced by:

InterActive
Media Strategies

Nominated by:





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ABOUT SPRINT NEXTEL

Sprint Nextel offers a comprehensive range of wireless and wireline communications services bringing the freedom of mobility to consumers, businesses and government users. Sprint Nextel is widely recognized for developing, engineering and deploying innovative technologies, including two wireless networks serving more than 49 million customers at the end of the first quarter of 2009; industry-leading mobile data services; instant national and international walkie-talkie capabilities; and a global Tier 1 Internet backbone. For more information, visit www.sprint.com.

NOMINATION FOR THE EXCELLENCE IN ENTERPRISE VIDEO AWARD

Sprint has been nominated for the Excellence in Enterprise Video award by Qumu, Inc., for its innovative and successful webcasting program that reaches tens of thousands of employees around the country hundreds of times a year.

Interactive Media Strategies recently conducted an interview with Sally Nellor, Sprint's Operation Manager for the Creative Media Services Group that's charged with webcasts and other video-based employee communications initiatives.

THE CHALLENGES

When first contemplating the deployment of online video in the 1990's, Sprint faced numerous challenges and had a number of key business goals to achieve as part of the company's corporate communications initiative. One key goal is to continually provide its employee base with information about the company's initiatives and current operations. In particular was the need to keep employees well informed during the period of the merger between Sprint and Nextel that was initially announced in 2004 and was finalized the next year. Even after the merger was complete, the combined company wanted to be sure that all employees, regardless of location, network access or desktop configuration, could keep up to date on company operations and announcements.

The evolution in Sprint's adoption of Webcasting reads like a roadmap for historical adoption patterns for online video in the enterprise. Sprint has been doing webcasting and providing multimedia presentations such as audio events with PowerPoint slides for more than a decade.

The way the company has put the technology to work (and the solutions deployed to enable employee use of online video) has changed over time. It continually strives to stay on top of current technologies and to offer employees the ability to participate in company meetings and announcements from offices, meeting rooms or remotely.

To continue to provide audio and video presentations and webcasts to all employees, including new employees coming on board with the merger in 2005, the company needed a robust, flexible and scalable solution. Furthermore, the combined companies had different networks, platforms, and solutions in place for providing multimedia content to employees, and a flexible solution was needed that could bring together the various components into a seamless solution.

IMPORTANT EVALUATION CRITERIA

When examining available technologies and solutions for their particular needs and objectives, Sally Nellor reports they considered a number of important criteria in the evaluation process.

These included:

- **Consistent Experience and Ease of Use** — The company wanted to ensure that all employees, regardless of location, work environment or type of available access, would have the same opportunity to experience the content being provided by the Corporate Communications department. Employees should be able to access the multimedia content with a minimal amount of effort or need to configure their system to view the content. It should be as seamless and straightforward as humanly possible.
- **Scalability and Expandability** — It was essential that the system deployed could handle large-scale events that could range as high as 25,000 simultaneous users. The system is likely to experience 15,000 to 20,000 concurrent users, and has been tested successfully using a simulated load of 40,000 concurrent users. The ability to be able to handle new content types and integrate other software or hardware components was also very important.
- **Ease of Use for Content Creators and Publishers** — as important to the process as ease of use for employees, it was also desired to have a system that would be easy for content creators to use when creating, publishing and distributing content out to end users, with minimal headaches, training difficulties or technical snafus.
- **High Quality Audio and Video** — The company's goal was to be able to provide a consistent experience with high-quality content to be viewed by end users. One of the core missions of the Corporate Communications department is to provide consistent, informative and interesting content to employees in a manner they find simple and enjoyable. There are "a few bells and whistles" according to Nellor that make the viewing experience a bit more



Exhibit 1 — Quarterly Employee Meeting

Source: Sprint, 2009



engaging such as allowing users to set up “Favorites” and offer personal ratings of content.

- **Detailed Tracking and Reporting** — To help gauge the effectiveness of their webcasting initiatives and to ensure a process of continually evaluating and improving content being provided, the team wanted a robust set of tools for tracking and reporting on viewership. It was important to be able to analyze far more than just the number of views, but to understand who was watching what content, for how long, and how often, and to be able to analyze important metrics such as time of day, day of week, repeat visits, etc. to help evaluate success. If, for example, most people joining in to watch a webcast of the CEO stay to watch the whole event, then the event was successful from the standpoint of engaging the viewers and keeping their attention for the duration. Mid-event polls and post-event surveys to gauge participants’ level of interest and satisfaction have also helped to ensure success.

METRICS FOR SUCCESS

Sprint has seen a substantial increase in the number of live audio and video webcasts over the years. In 2008, the company did 355 live events, compared to 311 produced in 2007, a 14% increase year-over-year. The company has seen a steady increase since 2002, when they presented 84 events for the year. “We are continually trending upward in the number of interesting events and subjects we are making available to employees,” reports Nellor. Some of the types of events and presentations the company has offered recently are:

- **New Product Launches** — when a new phone or a plan is announced to the public a webcast is often produced to communicate to or train front-line retail and customer care employees.
- **Topical Events**, such as Health Forums or outside speakers coming to talk about subjects such as smoking cessation, healthy eating and other topics of interest to employees.
- **Human Resource webcasts**, which are intended to outline programs such as new benefits plans or other subjects related to insurance programs or company benefits plans.
- **“All Hands Meetings”** where entire departments are conducting meetings or making presentations to all the staff members, such as in IT or Finance.
- **“All Employee Meetings”** hosted by Sprint’s senior executives to give employees the opportunity to hear about new products, company strategy and other relevant news from their leaders. Employees are able to ask questions via text and post reviews on the meeting. *See Exhibit 1.*

In order to achieve broad scale adoption of enterprise video, Sprint employs a solution marrying the best attributes of a range of technology vendors.

SOLUTION DEPLOYED

The company deployed a solution that integrates a wide variety of

components, technologies, software and hardware, including their long-deployed Cisco ACNS system, many Polycom video conferencing systems and various encoding hardware. The over-arching management system that helps to pull all the pieces and parts together is a Video Control Center solution from Qumu that provides central control for the range of video applications, content and resources for the production and delivery of video webcasts for the company.

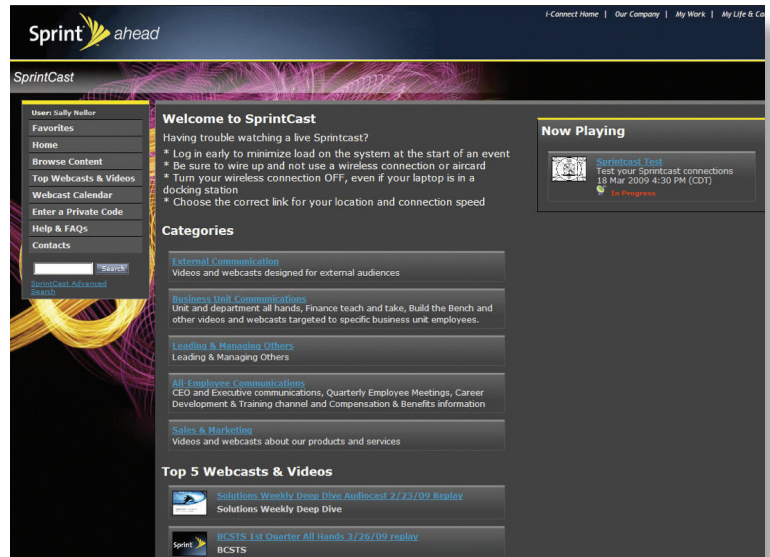


Exhibit 2 — View of SprintCast Viewer Portal Interface
Source: Sprint, 2009

According to Sprint’s Nellor, “We needed a solution that allowed for the flexibility to handle a wide range of technologies working all seamlessly together. Our video content management system is like the umbrella that manages it all, with a great looking viewer portal in front of everything that makes it easy for employees to access the content.”

Webcast and video content is available through SprintCast, where it is organized into Categories and Channels according to subject matter. Visitors can navigate, browse or use SprintCast’s search feature to find content listings. The site also includes a webcast calendar showing upcoming events and a help and FAQ page with information to troubleshoot technical issues or contact the team for information about specific content or events. *See screenshot in Exhibit 2.*

BENEFITS ACHIEVED

The company reports a number of key benefits and strategic results from its webcasting initiatives.

- **Lower Costs** — In prior years, Sprint has provided certain video content by means of expensive satellite transmission. Much of this delivery type has been eliminated by the use of IP networks used for distributing video content to employees in offices around the country and in the home office. Other cost savings have been achieved by offering easy to use self-help tools for employees to



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troubleshoot potential problems, which in prior years would likely have resulted in time consuming help desk inquiries. The company also reduced costs by having the ability to meet with employees in real time with webcasting, saving hundreds of thousands of dollars in associated travel costs.

- **More Connected Employees** — By providing a wide range of content to virtually the entire workforce, Sprint has established a strong connection with employees. The company provides timely and important information to tens of thousands of employees via live webcasts that can be viewed right from their desktops. With interactive tools, employees can participate in webcasts, ask questions, and post feedback.
- **Broader Reach and More Efficient Training** — New product launches mean increased training needs for Sprint's front-line sales and customer care teams. The firm's product group is using webcasts to demonstrate new products and train employees on important features and sales needs. After a recent new product webcast, the Creative Media Services Group received reports that end user participation in product demo events had over quadrupled since the team began offering them over SprintCast.

EEVA "LESSONS FROM THE FRONT LINES"

Involve Key Stakeholders in Defining Objectives

The Sprint team clearly understood that to be successful at continuing to support live streaming media and move beyond basic webcasts to provide a more robust viewing experience for users, they needed a new technology solution. They engaged a range of stakeholders to gain their thoughts and insights to help define a set of features and business requirements for the new program. They then used that information to create a business case and obtain the necessary budget approval.

Reach Out to All Employees Including Outside Personnel

At Sprint, there are many employees who are not deskbound or even office bound, who may be out in the field or who may not work in front of a computer connected to the network or the Internet. These personnel are as equally vital and important to the company as all its other employees and the company takes efforts to reach out to these employees to enable them to view content in convenient and accessible ways. The company has created a viewer portal that all employees can access to view content, regardless of what location they may be accessing it from.

Consider Needs of All Users

Sprint makes every effort to ensure employees with special needs are accommodated. One recent event was an all hands webcast for the Sprint Relay Services team. The Relay Services team supports deaf and hard of hearing customers through the use of telephone relay services. Many employees within the group are themselves hearing impaired. In the past, these employees used a text captioning tool to participate in all hands meetings. The company was able to provide a more interactive event using SprintCast. They hired a sign language

interpreter and fed live video of the interpreter using webcast technology. The feedback from employees was overwhelmingly positive and is a clear reflection that effective communications efforts for all employees should be an important element of any organization's communications program.

Educate and Inform Users

The company provides self-help tools for employees through the viewer portal with tips and troubleshooting tactics. The company has implemented a program called S.W.A.T., to guide employees through potential trouble spots. "S" stands for Select the correct link for the type of location the content is being accessed from, such as an employee's office, a dial-up location or a remote office. "W" stands for Wire, meaning that if a hard-wire connection is available to the employee, they should connect to the network in that fashion to help ensure a good connection for a webcast. "A" stands for audio, reminding employees to ensure they have a sound card, their speakers are turned on or their headphones are plugged in. "T" stands for Ticket, the troubleshooting choice of last resort if all else fails and the employee needs to turn to the help desk to resolve a problem. The vast majority of troubleshooting issues are now handled quickly and easily through the self-help tools provided to guide employees through typical problems.

Keep Things Simple

Not every all-company meeting, video presentation or webcast has to have lots of bells and whistles associated with it to be effective. Companies should strive to keep things simple in terms of the content being provided, both to minimize potential problems when tens of thousands of simultaneous users are involved, and to make it easy for employees to watch or listen to the content being presented. "It's all about the message, not the means of delivering it," according to Nellor.

Consider Audio-Only Events Too

There are times when audio-only events may be the most appropriate, such as when cost savings are the highest priority. In many cases, audio webcasts can prove far more cost effective than using audio conferencing bridges where people dial-in to a meeting or conference from their office phones. Sprint has conducted cost-benefit analyses and has determined that a good rule of thumb for their organization is when the number of attendees reaches 250 people, it is almost always more cost effective for them to conduct the meeting or conference via a live webcast rather than as an audio conference.

Leverage Existing Infrastructure and Hardware

Sprint has been leveraging not only its world-class telecommunications infrastructure (it's a telco afterall) but also its existing base of video conferencing units that are found in many conference rooms throughout the company, such as Polycom systems. Practically any video conferencing unit can be tied into the company's video content management system to be used as a video capture device, simply by knowing its IP address. This provides great flexibility in how and where new video content can be created and distributed to others in the company, whether it's one or two other people in a meeting or to the entire workforce.