

Virtual collaboration strategy

Global agricultural firm cuts travel costs by \$5.5 million in just five months with virtual collaboration strategy from Advito

Enabling employees to choose whether to stay or to go for internal meetings boosts savings, employee satisfaction and CSR goals.



30 days

Within 30 days, the company had saved enough on travel to realize a full return on their investment with Advito for a higher-level virtual collaboration strategy.



\$5.5M

Five months into implementation of the company's virtual collaboration strategy, the global agriculture and commodities company saved an estimated \$5.5 million in travel costs.



The challenge

A global agriculture and commodities company wanted to align its corporate travel practices with the company's broader business goals. The aim was threefold: cut costs; improve employees' work-life balance and job satisfaction; and reduce the company's impact on the environment.

The company's travel team was interested in taking virtual collaboration to a new level. Employees already used video conferencing and Skype for Business, but the company wanted more. They wanted an almost-like-being-there immersive experience for employees meeting virtually. Travel leaders believed having technology available in the local market could make getting together virtually just as compelling, effective and productive as some face-to-face internal meetings. What they needed was buy-in from executives and employees.

They turned to the Total Collaboration Management experts at Advito to help them build a strong business case for expanding virtual collaboration company-wide. They also sought Advito's help in creating and executing a strategic plan for engaging employees in a cultural shift that would make virtual collaboration a top-of-mind option for internal meetings.

Our approach

Advito's first step was to assess the company's current meeting practices. How, when and why were employees traveling to meetings? What the Advito team discovered surprised even the company's own leaders. More than 70% of travel was for internal meetings—employees getting together with one another, rather than meeting with clients or prospects that could generate new business and revenue. Clearly, this highlighted opportunities to save money; reduce employees' on-the-road time; and increase the company's corporate social responsibility by reducing air travel emissions.

Next, Advito built a business case from the initial assessment supporting the company's goal of taking virtual collaboration to the next level. The Advito team created data-backed materials that explained the benefits for employees. Advito created a strategy that aided the company's bottom line, validating and gathering buy-in from the executive sponsor.

The company decided to implement Advito's strategy. Continuing support, the Advito team created an adoption campaign for the eight newly installed Polycom telepresence suites. The campaign explained how—and when—employees should use virtual collaboration. It included key messages on ways the new telepresence suites would simplify and improve collaboration. These messages proved that employees would enjoy “almost-there” experiences and be better able to balance work and personal-life demands.

The results

With Advito's Total Collaboration Management team performing as travel program analysts and cultural change agents, the company's move to the next level of virtual collaboration technology was smooth, swift and successful. The company immediately reduced travel costs, achieving a return on its Advito investment in just 30 days after launch.

Within five months of launching the virtual collaboration strategy, the company:

- **Reduced travel costs by an estimated \$5.5 million**
- **Avoided over 900 internal trips**
- **Boosted productivity by redirecting over 15,000 hours of employee travel time**
- **Cut carbon emissions equivalent to the annual energy use of 112 American homes**

The telepresence suites were in use nearly 30% of business hours during that five-month period. In fact, the rooms were so high in demand that the company immediately began to plan for additional suites. Employees who used the suites rated the experience 4.4 out of 5 stars, on average.

Company leaders understand that virtual collaboration can't replace the human touch, especially for client-facing meetings. But executives now believe in the power of collaborative technology to contain costs, help employees achieve better work-life balance and boost CSR goals.



Stay or go?

Advito Total Collaboration Management experts helped a global agriculture and commodities company educate employees on how to choose the right meeting type for internal collaboration. Among the key questions employees now ask:

- How often do I travel to this destination? Could I reduce the frequency of my trips?
- How many people from the company are traveling? Could fewer of us travel?
- What will this meeting achieve in person that cannot be achieved through other means?
- Who am I meeting? Could we meet more easily virtually without harming our relationship?
- What are the financial, environmental and productivity costs of traveling to a meeting? Are the expenditures, emissions and time required justifiable?