



Industry

Broadcast

Daily Use

- Project management
- Team meetings
- Remote site communications
- Client/partner interaction
- Demonstrations or presentations

Solution

- Polycom® HDX® room telepresence solutions
- Polycom RMX® 2000 conference platform
- Polycom Converged Management Application™ (CMA™) server and client

Results and Benefits

- Regular, face-to-face meetings between writers, producers, directors, and actors located on two coasts
- Can operate with any video conferencing endpoint, and achieve HD video connections over limited bandwidth
- Extraordinary quality of Polycom HD video and audio minimizes time lost to miscommunication
- Episode reviews via Polycom save producers hours of commute

With Polycom, Producers of Hit CBS Drama The Good Wife Triumph Over Two Coasts and Breakneck Schedule

The Good Wife, the hit CBS television drama about the responsible wife of a decidedly irresponsible (and incarcerated) politician husband, doesn't come by its success easily.

For starters, the show is set in Chicago but shot in Brooklyn, N.Y. And the production itself spans two coasts, with episodes written in Los Angeles, then directed and filmed in Brooklyn. Then it's back to L.A. for editing and post-production.

Finally, it's all accomplished on a schedule that can only be described as tight. In the breakneck world of TV production, it's not uncommon for completed episodes to be sent to the network the day before they are scheduled to air.

"In an environment where every minute counts, producers value anything that streamlines production," says Executive Producer Brooke Kennedy. For The Good Wife, that edge is delivered by a Polycom video communications infrastructure that enables writers, producers, directors, and editors to collaborate face to face, no matter where they're based.

The show films a new episode every eight days, a pace that puts enormous pressures on the show's core staff while leaving little room for error. "There are a lot of new members of the team for each episode and many don't know each other," says Kennedy. "Video allows us to get to know each other much faster, and to stay very focused on the tasks at hand."

Relying on Polycom at Every Step

Polycom telepresence and video communications infrastructure solutions play a part in every step of creating the show, for which star Julianna Margulies has earned Golden Globe and Screen Actors Guild awards. Each episode begins with a script. A pair of Polycom® HDX® 7000 room telepresence systems, installed in the show's L.A. writing offices, allows screenwriters to collaborate whenever they need to with producers, directors and actors.

"The writing tells us everything," says Kennedy. "But one of the top challenges in production is to stay true to the writers' vision. This becomes even more difficult when we are shooting across the country."

In Brooklyn, an HDX 6000 room telepresence connects producers, episode directors, and actors with the writers on the West Coast. "For every member of the team, nothing is more important than staying in touch with the writers," she says.

After each episode is planned and filmed, the content is sent to L.A. for editing. The Good Wife uses three Avid® editing suites to produce its shows. The three suites are equipped with Polycom® HDX® 8000 room telepresence systems. The systems take content directly from the Avid platform for transmission over the public Internet.

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Brooke Kennedy, Executive Producer, The Good Wife

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The video communications infrastructure also incorporates a Polycom RMX® 2000 conference platform and the Polycom Converged Management Application™ (CMA™) distributed video solution. Some production staff members also use Polycom CMA Desktop software, which transforms any notebook or desktop PC equipped with a camera into a video conferencing station. The result: The show's video communications infrastructure extends throughout the production process.

“Even though we all have Macs and could use something like iChat® technology, Polycom gives us the flexibility to encompass all areas of our production,” says Kennedy. “We talk about the script, then we talk about the shoot, and then we look at cuts together. We become whole when using the Polycom systems.”

Achieving HD Collaboration over Public Internet

When it came to reviewing edited content, however, the crew faced a common problem. With team members located in multiple studios, soundstages, editing facilities and offices, the show's video conferencing infrastructure involved a patchwork of public Internet connections operating at a wide range of bandwidths. Without a costly network upgrade—an impossibility due to the number of companies involved—producers and directors wouldn't be able to review edited content in high definition (HD).

Kennedy says that notion was a non-starter. “Since we ourselves are selling an audio/visual product, it is crucial we have the best audio and video products to help us bring that vision to life.”

Fortunately, the latest Polycom HDX room telepresence solutions support H.264 High Profile technology. A standards-based video compression technology and a breakthrough technology in video conferencing products, H.264 High Profile technology reduces the bandwidth requirements for HD telepresence and standard-definition video conferencing by as much as 50 percent. Combined with Polycom Lost Packet Recovery™ technology, which improves video quality during network packet loss and network congestion, the systems deliver a consistent HD experience over the best-effort networks.

With High Profile technology on Polycom systems, The Good Wife crew can receive full frame rate HD video and full HD audio at very low bit rates. “Because of the quality enabled by Polycom, we can sit down with each other and watch a 48-minute clip easily,” explains Kennedy.

The open standards-based Polycom system architecture also gives Kennedy's team the ability to collaborate with post houses and other third-party facilities, even if those companies have another provider's video conferencing systems in place. Polycom's multivendor approach, typified by the Polycom Open Collaboration Network strategy, provides flexibility and protects investments.

Saving Time—and Reading Between the Lines

The time savings can be significant. For instance, audio mixing takes place in Burbank, California, while previews generally occur across town. Using Polycom systems, remotely located producers can watch the episodes without having to drive in L.A. traffic. That alone saves hours of driving in a single day. And because each eight-day span brings another episode to write, shoot, and edit, those time savings mount quickly.

Clear communication also spares crew members from losing precious time to misunderstandings. Here, too, Polycom delivers with smooth, natural motion and sharp, clear images.

“In our production meetings, so much is said in someone's facial expression,” says Kennedy. “With Polycom, we don't miss a thing.”

The Good Wife airs on CBS on Tuesdays at 10:00 – 11:00 PM Eastern and Pacific time and is produced by CBS Television Studios.

About Polycom

Polycom is the global leader in standards-based unified communications (UC) solutions for telepresence, video, and voice powered by the Polycom® RealPresence™ Platform. The RealPresence Platform interoperates with the broadest range of business, mobile, and social applications and devices. More than 400,000 organizations trust Polycom solutions to collaborate and meet face-to-face from any location for more productive and effective engagement with colleagues, partners, customers, and prospects. Polycom, together with its broad partner ecosystem, provides customers with the best TCO, scalability, and security—on-premises, hosted, or cloud delivered.

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