

American City Business Journals Case Study

## Video links 41 metro markets to deliver news

A publisher of business journals for 41 metropolitan markets uses video communications to collaborate on market trends and news stories, promotions, training and business operations. Managers travel less and accomplish more while sharing resources and improving company-wide communication.

*“We’re a national company and video conferencing has helped to improve communication between all of our branch locations, in 41 different markets,” says Ray Shaw, chairman of American City Business Journals. “It speeds communication, cuts down on travel and helps us operate more efficiently.”*

American City Business Journals, Inc., is the largest national publishing company of its kind, publishing business journals in 41 U.S. metropolitan markets and with 48 offices that span the nation from Boston to Hawaii. While each market has its distinct differences, local business trends are often shared between markets throughout the country. To help improve communication and collaboration between the offices, American City Business Journals is leveraging videoconferencing technology from Polycom with great success. American City is a single-focused company with each office operating independently to serve its particular market. The role of each employee is replicated nationwide presenting creative opportunities for the exchange of information, resources and ideas that can be used across markets. With so many locations and so many people needing to collaborate, video communications has become an import business tool for the company. Beat reporters use video communications to collaborate on story ideas, swap information and resources and discuss trends in one market that might affect another. Advertising managers and circulation directors share successful marketing and promotions ideas that may be leveraged in other markets. Group publishers, who are responsible for several geographically dispersed markets, are now able to bring their teams together more often and more cost-effectively using video communications.

Group publisher, Rob Fisher oversees six business journals in Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Charlotte, Greensboro, Raleigh, and St. Louis. He uses video communications to get market updates and to meet with the publishers in his group.

“Video communications has been an effective way for me to keep in touch with my teams located in six markets,” says Fisher. “I’m now traveling much less and am able to accomplish a lot more. It helps my group collaborate and communicate by having everyone virtually in the same room.”

Prior to using video conferencing, American City’s legal staff made separate presentations in each of the 41 business journal offices to update reporters on first amendment issues.

“The first amendment updates required an enormous amount of time and coordination,” says Ray Shaw, Chairman of American City Business Journals. “We recently began holding these meetings over video and were able to update all of our journal offices with a single presentation. We saved a considerable amount of time and expense and we were able to get the information out to everyone immediately.”

In addition to cost savings, American Cities discovered that video communications provides more opportunities for training. They recently introduced a new human resources system and trained all of their business managers using Polycom ViewStations.

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American City’s special project manager, Janet Wilkins was responsible for selecting its video communications system. To develop the expertise she needed to make the right decision, she took a methodical, step-by-step approach to her research.

“I started by searching the web and scanning business publications for articles related to video-conferencing,” says Wilkins. “As I did my research, Polycom kept popping up again and again. We wanted a system that was state-of-the-art, user friendly and affordably priced. Polycom met all of these criteria. Video Systems of the Carolinas became our reseller and we’ve been very happy with the system and the service.”

Wilkins started by testing six markets to make sure that employees would actually use the system regularly and that video communications would help the company save on travel. In less than six months, the company was convinced and then deployed systems in the remaining markets. American City is currently using 48 ViewStations for everything from collaboration and information sharing to interviewing career candidates, training, budget reviews, management meetings and business development.