



CANADA'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP LEARNING CENTRE (ELC) SHARES KNOWLEDGE ACROSS ALBERTA'S SMALL BUSINESS COMMUNITY USING TANDBERG VISUAL COMMUNICATION



Edmonton-based Business Link reaches across the Canadian province of Alberta to provide face-to-face training and access to experts for small businesses — thanks to video-conferencing and a network of 30+ regional service partners.

CHALLENGE

Any smaller organization tasked with knowledge transmission, that serves widely distributed populations and that must partner and create alliances with similarly aligned organizations can appreciate the challenges of the The Business Link and Entrepreneurship Learning Centre (ELC) in Alberta, Canada. They needed a way to scale services provided — a way that effectively balanced quality demands with limited budgets as well.

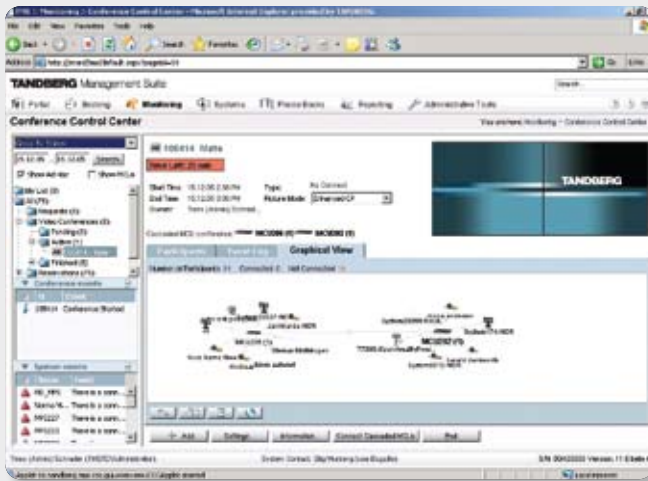
A unique, not-for-profit entity owned by Canada's federal and Alberta's provincial governments, The Business Link Business Service Centre is a specialized service group within the 13 member Canada Business Service Centre Network, tasked with serving as an information focal point for businesses across the province. The Business Link in turn guides the Entrepreneurship Learning Centre (ELC), and the mission of these organizations is to gather and disseminate information to support the growth, evolution and prosperity of small business. They do this by tapping sector expertise within the business community — bankers, lawyers, business coaches — to provide content through brown bag training sessions, seminars, and conferences.

The Business Link's challenge was to expand the value of their services to rural areas of Alberta. Until now, the geographic scope of their reach has been limited, and only the business people within range of the centre in Edmonton were able to benefit from the training. The Business Link needed a way to extend their services in a cost effective and efficient way.

Visual communication promised to be the answer. The search began for a high quality, easy-to-operate videoconferencing system that would operate well over the public Internet.

Alberta's Business Link Business Service Centre — Profile

- Located in Edmonton, Alberta's capital city
- Serves a population of 3.3 million — 1 million each in Edmonton and Calgary, and the rest spread throughout the 400+ communities of the province
- Maintains a web site — approx. 1 million visits yearly
- Maintains a 1-800 number — 18,000 telephone transactions yearly
- 13,000 centre visits annually
- Celebrated 10th Anniversary in 2006



SOLUTION

The Business Link's IT team noted that TANDBERG provided the highest quality video and audio, seemed the easiest to use, and offered the most advanced functionality — especially important since The Business Link planned to run their videoconferencing over the public Internet.

Over the past few years, The Business Link has worked with its regional partners across the province to implement a fully functioning IP video network that consists of nearly 30 independent endpoints, two multipoint bridges, and a TANDBERG streaming solution (TANDBERG Content Server), all managed seamlessly by the TANDBERG Management Suite (TMS). This provincial network, which operates under the banner of the ELC — offers exceptional utility-like reliability within a dedicated network.

“The TANDBERG Management System (TMS) helped us start tracking usage and provide better support to our growing number of endpoints easily, right from a central location,” explains Roger Cole, General Manager. “Overall, our TANDBERG solution works very well, enabling our other centres to participate in video sessions at the touch of a button.”

In order to maximize their return on investment, The Business Link developed an internal adoption plant that includes:

- Ensuring that all participating centres have a dedicated high speed Internet connection (a necessity for using the public Internet as their connectivity medium)
- Creating a “customer first” prioritization and other usage protocols
- Implementation of a video system training for their presenters

The ELC's visual communications network is used for a variety of functions, including:

- Brown Bag Presentations (lunch & learns)
- Small Business Seminars
- Staff training
- Special offerings
- Business centre meetings
- Partner organization meetings
- One-on-one guest advisor services
- Regional meetings for Community Futures



RESULTS

Through their visual communication network The Business Link and ELC are now able to extend their knowledge and expertise to small businesses throughout Alberta. And now, many of their regional partners are contributing valuable content as well. Clients all the way across Alberta are now able to participate in the numerous 'lunch-and-learn' brown bag seminars and training sessions. "Where before we could have ten to 20 participants," says Cole, "we now average anywhere between 60 to 80 people across a dozen or more sites throughout Alberta. In fact, our highest usage hit 130 participants, across 900 miles of territory. To date, we have served more than 11,000 clients through our TANDBERG-video facilitated meetings or training sessions."

Building Consortiums — Face-to-Face with a Broader Audience

Because Alberta is a vast province, often it's hard to meet the key players in the communities. The ELC's visual communication network is now the conduit for developing these relationships and has helped to quickly and effectively build business consortiums. "When we meet someone first via videoconferencing, and then in person, we establish a more personal relationship more quickly," notes Stephanie Sarjas, Learning Services Coordinator. "Visual communications have helped us create more productive, effective relationships faster, and across greater distances than before, helping us to more quickly act as a team." These relationships have helped expand the kinds of clients and partners with which The Business Link and its ELC network members now work. Eventually, The Business Link anticipates these relationships will result in expanded product and service offerings to an even wider client base.

An Answer for Knowledge-based Organizations

The ELC solution is a model for smaller organizations tasked with knowledge transmission who serve widely distributed populations and who must partner and create alliances with similarly aligned organizations.

"There's a misconception out there: you don't have to be big and particularly well funded to use these types of solutions," notes Cole. "We found that the TANDBERG solution has reduced our operating costs, enhanced the frequency and ease of access to the information we provide, expanded both our client base and our collaborative partnerships, and done it all at reasonable cost, using the public Internet. Our TANDBERG solution has helped us greatly expand delivery of the quality services we provide."

"Our TANDBERG solution has helped us greatly expand delivery of the quality services we provide, ultimately to the benefit of the clients we serve."

ROGER COLE, GENERAL MANAGER
THE BUSINESS LINK/ELC

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

Email us at tandberg@tandberg.com.