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—Leslie Colbert, Director of Training and Communication

Continental Airlines goes green by optimizing remote workforce with WebEx.



INDUSTRY

Transportation

WEBEX APPLICATIONS

WebEx Training Center and Meeting Center

SUMMARY

The sales and reservations department at Continental Airlines needed a scalable solution to provide ongoing collaboration, training, and support for a growing remote employee base. Implementing WebEx Meeting Center enhanced the telecommuting program and reduced the company's carbon footprint. WebEx is now a key communication link for 1095 home-based sales agents who no longer drive to a brick-and-mortar reservation center, helping the company save nine million pounds of emissions annually.

ABOUT CONTINENTAL AIRLINES

- **Line of Business**
Air travel
- **Headquarters**
Houston, TX
- **Number of Employees**
40,000
- **Target Market**
Consumer
- **WebEx Customer Since 2007**

Founded in 1934, Continental Airlines is one of the world's leading airline carriers. Today, the company flies approximately 69 million passengers annually to 283 destinations worldwide. Fortune Magazine has named Continental the World's Most Admired Airline for the past four years. As a result of the company's Eco-Skies working-green initiative, Fortune also named the airline as one of the Top 10 Most Admired Companies in the Community/Environment category for 2007.

The Challenge

In 2006, the sales and reservations department at Continental Airlines decided to offer its employees the option of working from home. “Our sales representatives had been asking us to give them the flexibility to telecommute. That happened to coincide with our company's commitment to promoting environmental responsibility,” says Leslie Colbert, Director of Training and Communications for the department. Initially, the department tried the work-at-home model with 30 agents, expanding to 1000 agents within one year to meet demand. In order to keep remote employees connected with the brick-and-mortar contact centers and Continental's corporate culture, the department used conference calls to conduct team meetings, coaching, and evaluations. For training, however, remote employees still needed to drive to their local contact centers, which proved inefficient from a cost and time perspective. “We knew we needed a scalable solution that would enable us to provide our growing number of off-site employees with more effective trainings and evaluations,” says Colbert. “And we wanted to achieve that while maintaining a cohesive corporate culture.”

The Solution

Continental evaluated several web collaboration tools, but chose WebEx because it was the most user-friendly and easy to implement. According to Colbert, “The WebEx rollout was easy. We worked with our WebEx consultant to make sure all of our trainers and supervisors completed WebEx University training. Our sales agents just loved WebEx from the start.”

Today, the department uses WebEx Meeting Center to keep in constant communication with its remote employees. Supervisors conduct team meetings and information briefings with four or five employees at a time, keeping them informed of activities at corporate headquarters and of any policy and process changes that occur. One-on-one online coaching sessions ensure that employees can use all of the software applications to do their jobs effectively. “Using WebEx, supervisors share their desktops to show agents how to use a specific feature on our reservation program,” explains Colbert. “WebEx gives all of our agents direct and frequent contact with management.”

The adoption of WebEx resulted in greater intra-departmental collaboration. The marketing department now uses WebEx to gather important feedback from sales agents. “By conducting a WebEx session, our marketing staff can quickly and easily find out what the agents think about specific promotions or discuss the web site support issues customers are calling about,” says Colbert. The information technology department also uses WebEx to provide enhanced technical support to agents worldwide.

We've eliminated more than 10 million miles of car travel, saving nine million pounds of emissions per year. As a critical collaboration, training, and support tool for Continental's 1095 home-based sales agents, WebEx ensures the success of this program.

—Roy Conn, Air Compliance Manager



"When our Tel Aviv contact center experienced booking problems, our support staff was able to access the system, identify the issue on-screen, and fix the problem remotely," she says.

The Benefits

WebEx significantly improved the quality of the sales and recruiting department's telecommuting program, increasing employee satisfaction and maintaining a strong corporate culture. Before WebEx, the Denver contact center closed, requiring sales agents to relocate to other states that had brick-and-mortar offices. As soon as it started using WebEx, it was able to send its sales agents back to Denver to work remotely. "Thanks to WebEx, our remote employees can stay at home and receive all of the information and support they need to perform their jobs well," says Colbert. "Frequent interaction ensures they feel completely connected to our corporate culture, and that helps increase employee retention."

WebEx plays a key role in supporting Continental's Eco-Skies initiative, the company's award-winning sustainability program. According to the EPA, automobiles produce approximately 61 percent of transportation-related

emissions. "As a result of transitioning 1095 sales agents to work at home, we've eliminated more than 10 million miles of car travel, saving 500,000 gallons of fuel and nine million pounds of emissions per year," explains Roy Conn, Air Compliance Manager for Continental. He adds, "As a critical collaboration, training, and support tool for Continental's home-based sales agents, WebEx ensures the success of this program—which has won us the EPA award for Best Workplace for Commuters in several states."

By contributing to the success of Continental's telecommuting and green program, WebEx has helped the company reinforce its competitive edge and leadership position. "WebEx helped us create an incredible remote worker program which aids us in our recruiting practices. Our telecommuting program is now a huge draw for potential hires," says Colbert. The company also works closely with regional air-quality groups that are part of the EPA. According to Conn, "Creating a strong telecommuting program with WebEx shows that we are proactive about reducing carbon emissions. As a green leader in the airline industry, that's an important responsibility for us."

The Future

The sales and reservations department looks forward to developing its telecommuting program further with WebEx. It is currently implementing WebEx Training Center to deliver new-hire training online and will soon begin using Meeting Center to review customer calls and perform evaluations with agents.

WebEx will also continue to play a role in Continental's green program. As more regions throughout the US pass initiatives that require reductions in employee commuting, Continental is well-prepared for compliance. Conn says, "We have a strong sense of social responsibility on a local level and to the world we fly into. We are committed to helping sustain the communities we live in. And WebEx is a great sustainability partner."

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HIGHLIGHTS

- WebEx improved the quality of the sales and reservations department telecommuting program, increasing employee satisfaction and maintaining the corporate culture.
- WebEx plays a key role in Continental's award-winning sustainability program, supporting 1095 home-based agents and saving nine million pounds of emissions yearly.
- By contributing to the success of Continental's telecommuting and green program, WebEx has helped the company reinforce its competitive edge and leadership position.