

# ASHLAND



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— Mary Pat Lambert, Senior Trainer

## Ashland supports diverse business needs and nets high return on investment.



### INDUSTRY

Chemical

### WEBEX APPLICATIONS

Enterprise Edition

### SUMMARY

Ashland deployed WebEx company-wide. As WebEx caught on, the number of registered hosts doubled over the course of the pilot, and the company measured ROI of over 1,500% in the first 90 days.

### ABOUT ASHLAND

Line of Business

Diversified

### Headquarters

Covington, KY

### Number of Employees

22,500

### WebEx Customer Since 2002

Ashland Inc. (NYSE:ASH) is a Fortune 500 transportation construction, chemical and petroleum company providing products, services, and customer solutions throughout the world. The company has more than 250 locations across the U.S. and an additional 80 locations internationally, with over 22,500 employees.

### The Challenge

Under direction of the CIO Governing Council, the IT organization at Ashland sampled various electronic collaboration technologies. While collecting formal business requirements throughout Ashland Specialty Chemicals, it became clear that there was strong interest in using Internet meetings to save costs. IT wanted to ‘strike while the iron was hot’ and follow up quickly with a pilot to keep the project progressing and build on user interest. It appeared that very high returns were possible.

A broad range of uses emerged as IT worked with different parts of the organization, resulting in a complex set of requirements. Flexibility would be important because of the wide-ranging types of interactions that actually happen across business meetings at Ashland. Compatibility with external parties raised both technical and operational requirements.

A key concern was delivering a good user experience; “When you’re trying to run a web-based meeting and it fails, you look bad,” recounted Joe Warren, Senior Systems Engineer. Because it touched

business meetings, Ashland needed a reliable and stable solution. An internal solution would require resources for the unique infrastructure, expertise and staffing for this new type of conferencing. As the CEO espoused the strategy to focus on core competencies, the company wanted to avoid leveraging internal resources and staff if they did not relate directly to the businesses of Ashland.

Ashland needed a cost-effective online meeting solution that could pilot quickly, meet diverse needs, and scale with demand—all without taxing internal resources.

### The Solution

After evaluating several vendors and narrowing the analysis to a few companies, Ashland selected WebEx Enterprise Edition service. Key considerations for choosing WebEx included:

- Provide ease of use for both internal and external participants.
- Maintain a strong security profile.
- Work within very limited internal resource requirements.
- Maintain a flexible range of functionality.

Users in Sales looked forward to consulting easily with customers and partners. Users with training needs felt the breakout sessions and other features of Training Center would achieve the best results. The ability to easily change roles in meetings and share any type of content addressed



the wide-ranging needs of business interactions desired by Ashland users. Beyond technical leadership, WebEx was determined the most cost-effective alternative, with Ashland incurring cost only as usage grew with demand. Because WebEx is delivered as a service from a global communications network, Ashland was able to launch the pilot within a few days.

### The Benefits

For the pilot, the company chose a diverse initial user group from four separate businesses within Ashland—Distribution, Specialty Chemicals, Valvoline, and Ashland Paving and Construction. An important outcome was unexpected ways people used online meetings. In some cases the expected use did not catch on, while other uses that had not been anticipated emerged quickly. In fact, as the number of registered hosts doubled over the course of the pilot, it became clear that the types of uses would continue to grow in diversity as online meetings spread across job functions and business units. The flexibility offered by WebEx Enterprise Edition enabled different groups of users to adopt online meetings as their actual needs dictated. At 90 days, the IT team surveyed hosts and found a 1,500% return on investment (ROI) from saving travel costs and time. With the obvious success of the pilot, the formal rollout of WebEx began immediately.

For the first wave of the rollout, the company delivered user training to approximately 500 people in 90-minute sessions. According to Joe Warren, “People were pretty excited. I don’t know of anything else we had going that had a 1,500% ROI.” IT limited resources to a fraction of one FTE and focused on promoting awareness. IT arranged a handful of site

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— Tom Reeder, Manager of Corporate Administrative Systems

visits to major locations to get the attention of business users by staging events, creating a theme song, and parading around an Uncle Sam mascot.

By selecting a managed service, Ashland’s IT organization avoided all of the deployment and rollout costs associated with new technology. As monthly attendance at WebEx meetings reached into the thousands, only minimal resources were required since there was no need to maintain infrastructure, support and train end-users, or manage upgrades and follow-on installations in remote locations. According to Tom Reeder, Manager of Corporate Administrative Systems, “For our users, reliability and stability are critical for conducting their business meetings online. It has to be easy, it has to work, and it always has to be there on a moment’s notice. That takes a lot of care and feeding. As a service provider, WebEx does a terrific job.”

As WebEx usage grew, so did the benefits. Beyond the basic savings of time and expense from minimizing travel, there were significant productivity benefits. Sales organizations saw increased effectiveness from more frequent product training and access to experts, including training from a partner for its product line. The Valvoline business enhanced its channel performance with WebEx by supporting in-store PCs at Valvoline Instant Oil Change® franchises. The central Help Desk saved

time and eliminated user frustration by using WebEx when other desktop support options were not available.

The following examples illustrate the scale of benefits that Ashland achieves using WebEx:

### Internal Consulting Accelerates Business Process Improvement with WebEx

—Ashland uses ‘Process Centering’ teams for projects to cut costs, improve customer satisfaction, and drive improvements across the company. These teams employ both face-to-face and videoconference brainstorming sessions with flipcharts to map ideas. These sessions are typically followed by several iterations of project documents and further face-to-face meetings. While important, this process proved time-consuming for management and other expert resources. Carol Christobek, Internal Facilitator, realized in her first meeting that WebEx would enhance these exercises. “WebEx collapses these projects by getting better participation and a finished, agreed outcome in the first meeting. We can jump from a presentation to an application, easily change roles and replace expensive videoconferencing. I have a project with a bottom line impact for Ashland in the millions of dollars, and with WebEx we brought it to fruition three months earlier. With WebEx, Process Centering is saving tens of thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours in travel time for important execu-



tives in the company, but the financial impact of accelerating these important projects is much larger. Yesterday I had a non-WebEx meeting where they emailed attachments. It was so frustrating; people were confused. For us WebEx is like breathing at this point.”

**Training Overhauls its Delivery with WebEx**—The central corporate training department at Ashland traditionally used instructor-led training. Travel and time commitments were high both for trainers and trainees, and it was challenging to reach everyone, particularly at the smaller locations. Since it was impractical to visit all locations frequently, training would be backlogged until they could justify setting up a full-day or 2-day session. According to Senior Trainer Mary Pat Lambert, “WebEx has let us move to a just-in-time (JIT) model for training. With WebEx Training Center we estimate we save hundreds of thousands of dollars and thousands of hours—just from avoiding travel. But the productivity benefits are probably even larger. Cycle times are much faster; we get people productive now on new systems in hours instead of weeks. We reach a broader audience, we can be more targeted and more timely, and retention is higher. The features in Training Center, like the breakout rooms, are very good for reinforcement and have a much higher impact. At this point we have moved about 30% of our training to WebEx.”

**IT Accelerates Time-to-Production with WebEx**—Ashland’s IT organization develops and deploys applications to support the company’s business. Before WebEx, projects often involved travel and recurring face-to-face meetings to under-

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stand requirements and review prototypes. Rollouts included time-consuming roadshows, and there were always issues finding a group of able and willing trainers to visit remote Ashland locations. According to Scott Mitmesser, Senior Systems Engineer, “We had to deliver an Incident Management System for health and safety. WebEx was used for prototyping with the business people and throughout design and development. Time-to-production was much faster. When the rollout came it was a cinch, completed in five weeks instead of three months. We avoided more than 50 trips and saved months. Users get productive much more quickly, and they like using WebEx.”

This level of success in the first year was the result of IT’s strategy to make online communications available as flexibly and broadly as possible. According to Tom Reeder, “We could not have anticipated all the ways to use WebEx. They keep expanding, and individual users also start to do more things as they become comfortable with doing meetings online. We were able to seize on user interest quickly with the pilot and then jump straight to production. WebEx has scaled without issues across an incredible range of uses without adding resources and staff.”

### Return on Investment

Meetings at Ashland range in size from 2 participants to more than 100. Nearly 30% of meetings are with external parties. Since WebEx is a service provider and Enterprise Edition addresses the range of needs at Ashland with multiple services, Ashland has lowered costs company-wide. Ashland periodically surveys users to evaluate the ROI of its technology investments. The initial pilot demonstrated an ROI of 1,500% from savings on travel costs and time. Several months following the rollout, a second survey indicated an ROI of more than 3,000%, again just from savings in travel costs and time—not including the impact of faster project completion. According to Joe Warren, “People are really enthusiastic about WebEx and they like to use it. It really fits the way meetings happen here at Ashland. The more they use WebEx, the more value we create for the company.”

### The Future

Ashland expects the uses of WebEx Enterprise Edition to continue to grow as users from different parts of the company find more ways to enhance their business interactions with online communications. The IT organization is targeting high travel cost centers for their awareness efforts. The company also expects WebEx to be used increasingly in external interactions, particularly in Sales.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Ashland now uses WebEx to accelerate internal business process improvements, saving several months and tens of thousands of dollars just for a single project.
- With WebEx, the company is accelerating internal training cycles, better targeting training programs, and seeing higher retention, as employees become productive on new systems in hours, rather than weeks.
- Ashland IT uses WebEx to accelerate application development and rollout, saving months of time and thousands of dollars.