At A Glance

Major Manufacturer
- Athletic equipment producer
- Highly competitive market
- International production
- Rapid development needs

Challenge
- Establish international videoconferencing network
- High quality, low latency necessary
- Reduce dependence on travel
- Cut time to market for new product development

Solution
- Implemented global videoconference network
- Established HD video for research and development
- Installed video rooms in America, Asia-Pac and Europe

Success
- Save over 30 trips to Asia annually
- Cut to-market time by 6 to 8 months
- Videoconferencing now used in 30 sites globally
- On time completion with full customer requirements met successfully

Product List
HD Video Conferencing
- PolyCom HDX8000 Room Telepresence
- PolyCom HDX9000 Room Telepresence
- Wolfvision Document Camera System
- Masergy Real Time MPLS Networking
Challenge

As a brand name producer of popular athletic gear, this customer was faced with a challenge common to many manufacturers in the age of globalization: the need to contain the costs and time expenses involved in travel to and from their production partners and overseas facilities in China, the United Kingdom and Australia. By the mid-2000's, executives routinely would be away from home and office for a week or more each month, shepherding the research and development of new concepts, designs and final production models to rapid market distribution.

This dependence on overseas travel took a significant toll on their organization. Their staff members were exhausted and overextended, required to be away from their families for a significant portion of the year, while working in hotel rooms rather than their own offices. Product prototypes would regularly be shipped from China to the company's US headquarters to be reviewed and then sent back - a slow process that added months to their development cycles and go-to-market times. The financial costs of constant travel were also becoming prohibitive.

Clearly a technology solution was necessary, but past efforts at replacing face-to-face overseas travel with a remote conferencing system had proven unsuccessful. Visual communication was an absolute necessity, as often development discussions focused on precision details such as exact thread colors, unique plastic and fabric inclusion choices, and specific design decisions - making a conventional voice-only conferencing application nearly useless for this company. An effective videoconferencing solution would require not only highly vivid and highly accurate color displays, but also the network support necessary to eliminate the jagged pixelations, audio timing latencies and transmission failures common to video conferencing systems of the time.

This customer needed the ability to effectively discuss a three-dimensional product in conference between United States executive rooms and counterparts on assembly lines in Asia, without having to rely on overseas travel and long shipping times. When they contacted Carousel Industries in 2004, they were ready to solve the problem once and for all.

Video Conferencing Empowers Major Manufacturer To Drastically Cut Time To Market

In a global economy the pressure to perform carries an exacting toll for the modern manufacturer of consumer products. The demand to deliver high quality products at competitive prices, quickly, while establishing and maintaining a market leadership position is not for the faint of heart. As a major brand name manufacturer of athletic products, this Carousel customer found that the time, energy and money being spent on their global travel was leading to prolonged product development cycles, manufacturing inefficiencies and exhausted staff members.

In 2004, the company contracted with Carousel Industries' videoconferencing division to design and implement a new solution: a transnational video network that would empower the manufacturer to perform most of their international meetings virtually rather than in person. A leader in a highly competitive industry based on rapid development and attention to detail, they needed a system that would provide real time, high definition video internationally with a quality level on par with actually being in the same room.
Solution

This customer had attempted to solve this problem before, with a variety of conferencing solutions that each proved unable to meet the high demands of their quality-driven manufacturing processes. While video conferencing technologies had been readily available on the market for years, bandwidth and display limitations prevented these systems from really solving this customer’s main problem - creating a virtual development communication platform that would empower them to replace international travel for in-person meetings. Past video technologies had proven frustrating, ineffective and difficult to use due to bandwidth and display quality limitations.

The emergence of high definition video presented an opportunity for this company to finally achieve their ideal of an international virtual meeting room. In a demonstration to the customer’s executive board, the Carousel team built a test system that employed PolyCom HDX high definition room telepresence with WolfVision high resolution product cameras to create a video link with a remote office in Guangzhou, China. Masergy, Inc. provided underlying network support via an MPLS-based quality of service telecommunications backbone.

In this demonstration, the installation team called the customer’s US headquarters from China, asking the company’s production manager in China to hold up one of their flagship products to the camera. When executives in the United States were able to correctly identify specific colors and features by their own exacting internal reference numbers, they knew that they finally had a reliable proof of concept and their video solution was within reach. Based on the technical specifications present in that demonstration meeting, the Carousel team went on to build a network of 12 video conference sites around the world over the next 90 days. Global development locations in America, mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Australia and the United Kingdom were installed and placed on the new network.

Since this initial installation, the network has been upgraded to newer versions of PolyCom products that support high profile video compression, a feature that dramatically reduces the risk of latency, pixelation and audio loss in real time transmission. Today this network extends to over thirty locations, now including Mexico, Canada and European sites.

Among other advantages, this will enable the company to deliver video conferencing directly to PC desktops and extend their telepresence strengths to more sites with greater functionality.
Success

This customer’s video conferencing project was a crucial success, proven in the exacting terms that they presented to the Carousel team upon initial requirement assessments. The company today has eliminated an average of 30 trips annually from the United States to Asia, saving enormous costs and resources formerly spent on travel. Video conferencing has proven itself as a popular tool for development, and has led to significant productivity gains throughout the company. By eliminating unnecessary overseas travel and long shipping times, the company’s go-to-market times have been cut on average by six to eight months - enough to significantly change their place in their industry, and create a powerful competitive edge in the demanding athletic equipment marketplace.

With an extensive network of international partners and experience in the challenges of implementing global telecommunications networks, our team was able to avert the difficulties often common to projects of this nature. By acquiring technology locally, navigating regional regulatory and tax issues, and carefully planning the logistics of each phase in this project, our team has become an invaluable ally in this company’s future technology development efforts.

Today, Carousel Industries is working with this customer to integrate their Avaya telecommunications platform with their video conference system, to produce a true unified communications platform. Among other advantages, this will enable the company to deliver video conferencing directly to PC desktops and extend their telepresence strengths to more sites with greater functionality.