

Customer Service Is Key

Wichita KS-based Emprise Bank's AV brings its experts, customers together.

By George Sherman

"We need to make sure we can put the right people in our organization in front of our customers, no matter where our people and our customers may happen to be," stated Mike Wampler, Senior Vice President of Technology for Emprise Bank in Wichita KS. Like many businesses fortunate enough to be growing, Emprise faces a problem: As it adds locations, it gets more difficult to keep its experts in various banking and financial fields in touch with all of its customers.

That's especially troubling to Emprise. According to Wampler, as a community bank, Emprise tries to take a different approach than its big bank competitors. "Though we're large enough, with more than a billion dollars in assets, to provide the services that our customers need, we like to think we can offer a little bit more customized and customer-friendly approach than some of the big guys, and that we can move a little quicker and respond a little faster to some of our customers' needs."

Building An HD VTC Network

With the help of Conference Technologies, Inc. (CTI), Emprise Bank has begun building a network of high-definition videoconferencing systems, which eventually will link



The large conference room with videoconferencing system is multifunctional, yet is not overwhelmed by its extensive AV capabilities.

most, if not all, of its 41 locations across the state of Kansas. "We think this is the way we can do that while saving our people from having to be on the road for up to three hours one way for each appointment."

When the network is fully operational, a one-hour appointment will take just one hour. There will be no need for a Wichita associate to drive to Lawrence or a Hays associate to drive to Eureka to meet with a customer. He or she can do so instantly without leaving the office.

To make the videoconference experience as close to face-to-face meetings as possible, Conference Technologies suggested that Emprise install high-definition LifeSize Room systems. At 720p, the video quality is a little better than what you'd get from a DVD, and the audio is quite

good, as well. CTI set up the systems so bank personnel could share computer files and documents, as well as DVD and VHS video.

To make the new system viable, Emprise undertook a major upgrade to its IP network. The LifeSize Room systems require just 1MB upload and 1MB download to produce 720p video, but these are multipoint units, capable of handling up to six sites at a time. If Emprise wanted to handle all six at full resolution, it would require 6MB up and 6MB down for each unit. With 41 locations, obviously the bank requires a network that will handle a significant amount of traffic.

Two Major Changes

The changes to the Emprise network took two forms. First, the bank



George Sherman, Project Manager with Conference Technologies, Inc. (CTI), handles AV system design, planning and installation management for the Wichita and Kansas City branches of CTI, which is headquartered in St. Louis. With more than 12 years of technical experience in the audio, video and lighting industries, he is certified with Crestron, AMX, ClearOne, Biamp, Polycom and Extron, and is a member of InfoComm, AIA and NSCA.



The headquarters of Emprise Bank in Wichita KS.

The executive conference room features an AMX NI-700 processor that, when the system is turned on, automatically triggers motors that lift a Sharp LC-42D64U 42-inch LCD display and two Extron tilt-up interface boxes from a marble-topped credenza and marble-topped table. In addition, this room includes a Nexia TC tele-

increased its network bandwidth, working with a new vendor to provide fiberoptic cabling in several locations. Next, the bank separated the video and a new voice-over-IP phone system from its data traffic. Wampler said, "We didn't have to, but we felt it was in our best interest to shape our traffic so we could dedicate bandwidth to these applications....When it's not in use for video, that entire throughput is available for our data applications. We just guarantee that there will always be that availability, should we need it."

This is not to say that Emprise has already rolled videoconferencing into all of its branches. For now, it is in use mainly within the Wichita headquarters, with plans to add systems to its larger and most distant locations first.

The first of the new videoconferencing systems was part of a major expansion and remodeling of the headquarters building, which Conference Technologies completed last year. Emprise brought CTI in to design and install new AV systems in four new conference rooms and three remodeled training rooms.

Two of the rooms include HD videoconferencing: a large conference room with seating for 25, and a larger training room with seating for 60. In the conference room, CTI installed a LifeSize Room Videoconferencing Kit with codec and HD camera, plus an EIKI LC-XB42 4000 lumen projector, a 5'x7' Da-Lite screen, a Biamp Nexia TC teleconfer-



The large training room, set up for a smaller videoconference. There are two cameras in this room: one on the front wall to capture training participants, and one on the back wall to capture the instructor.

encing processor, a Crown CTS4200A amplifier, eight Astatic 201R table button mics and eight Atlas FAPT42C ceiling speakers. Also included are a Zenith VCR/DVD combination player, Extron tilt-up laptop inputs and an installed PC with Interlink wireless keyboard and mouse.

Almost identical components were installed in the training room, but this time there are two LifeSize HD cameras, a LifeSize phone for microphone pickup, six Crown PZM10 ceiling speakers and a Denon DVD player. Each room has AMX controls, including an NI-3100 processor and 8.4-inch Modero WiFi touchpanel with a wall-mounted docking station.

Additional Rooms

Other rooms that received installed systems include a mid-sized conference room that seats 18 people, a smaller conference room with seating for eight, an executive conference room, plus two more training rooms, one of which is a computer lab used to teach staff software applications.

conferencing processor, four Astatic button table mics, 8.4-inch Modero touchpanel with tabletop docking station, built-in computer with wireless keyboard and mouse, and DVD/VCR sources.

The mid-sized conference room is outfitted the same as the large conference room, but with only the Nexia audio conferencing system (rather than video), and one of the smaller conference rooms includes audio conferencing, as well.

Because the bank wanted the AV systems unseen as much as possible, CTI built nearly all of the second floor system components into two equipment racks in a single utility room. That worked out nicely. Of course, components that presenters have to access (DVD players, computer inputs and microphones) were built into the cabinetry or millwork in each room.

'Nice Bonus'

One nice bonus is that the videoconferencing systems allow the bank to

combine the conferencing-equipped rooms for overflow audiences. At times, the bank has meetings that include up to 70 or 80 associates. To make that work, they can combine the largest conference room and training room electronically.

According to Wampler, in building the new systems, he was not very



One of the smaller conference rooms, with an audio conferencing setup, wireless keyboard and wall-mounted LCD monitor.

concerned about the technology itself. "My biggest worry was choosing the right vendor. We did deeply evaluate the technologies down to a top-three level for each of the pieces. But, truly, the main concern was finding the right partner to help us decide what would work for us the best."

Wampler said the bank found CTI through a process of soliciting referrals from others who had built AV systems in Wichita. "This was not a vendor we had worked with in the past, but we certainly liked its work and liked what the references had to say," he stated. After more than a year of working together, he said he's pleased with the relationship with CTI. "We knew that it had to be someone who wouldn't just leave after the sale. It had to be someone who would work with us, understand how we wanted things programmed and be available for us to fine tune these systems in an ongoing manner. It has been a really good partnership." ■

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