



## iSOFT Shares its Vision for Unified Communications

### Company Background

In 2004 iSOFT employed approximately 400 staff and had operations in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore. Five years later it has just over 4,600 staff and boasts offices in 18 countries.

Acquisitions and organic growth have led to iSOFT becoming the largest health information technology company listed on the Australian Securities Exchange. iSOFT is among the world's biggest providers of advanced application solutions in modern healthcare economies. Its software is used by more than 13,000 provider organisations in more than 40 countries.

The group operates through a global network of iSOFT subsidiaries and is supported by an extensive partner network.



## Growth and the Issue of Communication

Perhaps the first time that iSOFT began to fully consider the issue of growth and inter-office communications was in 2005 when it acquired a software development company in Bangalore, India. The move created a need for close and frequent communication between Australia and India, resulting in a dramatic increase in executive and staff travel. Management decided there had to be a more efficient way of communicating between the two continents and the hunt for a video conferencing solution began.

The aims for the solution were simple: to reduce the time lost in travel; to reduce travel costs; and introduce greater immediacy to inter-office communications.

### The Solution

After consulting with Unified Communications solution integrator, iVision, the company chose to implement a TANDBERG solution. Following this decision, iVision project managed the implementation of 32 TANDBERG end-point systems, 55 mobile users, and Content Server technologies. Initially, TANDBERG equipment had been installed in iSOFT offices across Australia, China, Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore. In 2007 there was another merger which opened the door to operations in Europe and which resulted in the company taking on more than 2,000 additional staff. It also introduced another development team in India.

iVision continued to develop and support iSOFT's video conferencing infrastructure, building on the company's communications infrastructure as it expanded across the world and has provided the audio visual and video conferencing integration for their state of the art conference rooms in iSOFT's Sydney headquarters location.

Martin Wilkinson, iSOFT CIO explains, "We chose iVision because they had the most experience in visual communications and audio visual integration. Our requirements, especially for our executive conference rooms were quite complex and we needed an integrator that could work to our high expectations. iVision not only met those expectations but partnered with us to provide us with a solution that met our objectives as an organisation.

Clear, unambiguous communication between iSOFT's development groups, product and healthcare professionals, sales executives and business managers became more critical than ever.

## From Video Conferencing to Unified Communications

Wilkinson notes, "Since then we've evolved with video conferencing to today having approximately 90 end points on the iSOFT network. This includes a state-of-the-art TANDBERG C90 device and a big three screen environment in our showcase office in Sydney. We use Microsoft Office Communicator 2007 on the desktop as our presence engine to drive activities such as collaboration and chat, and we use Microsoft SharePoint services for document collaboration."

A Voice over IP solution for telephony adds to the TANDBERG and Microsoft technologies. "The three work harmoniously together so we can launch telephone calls from the desktop or so that people at home can join the office network and make free calls to each other via a virtual private network. We've also established intercontinental trunks to conduct free of charge calls and video across the world," Wilkinson says.

To complement it all iVision also designed and installed an integrated audio visual environment within iSOFT's corporate headquarters, creating a technology showcase for the company and its capabilities. "iVision equipped our meeting rooms with integrated telephony, video conferencing and microphones. We don't have telephones on desks in meeting rooms any more. We have touch controllers to manage every aspect of the room including telephony, the AV, blinds and lighting."

## Many and varied uses

The impact of video conferencing and unified communications (UC) has been felt throughout iSOFT's business. One of the most important benefits is the clarity it has brought to communication across cultural boundaries. While telephone conferences tend to be dominated by a small number of participants, video conferences typically encourage greater participation and interaction by all attendees. Contextual and cross-language difficulties are also more likely to be picked up and resolved during the conference. The result is more productive meetings.

Video conferencing has also become a standard practice at the organisation's Sydney training facility with specialist tutors joining classes remotely rather than having to be flown into the country for a few days training.

iSOFT executives have become used to the concept of a virtual boardroom, beaming – rather than flying in – to some meetings. The technology was even used to facilitate the chief operating officer's address to the annual general meeting earlier this year.

Mobile video conferencing on PCs is enabling executives to take part in video conferences and to talk to international staff from their homes. "It gives a better work/life balance. The day may still be extremely long sometimes, but at least we can do it from home," Wilkinson smiles.

He believes that unified communications is revolutionising the business. "Video conferencing utilisation rates are high and increasing, and we've noticed a significant reduction in travel expenses across the group. The use of a presence engine means that staff can see whether the person they are trying to contact is available, reducing wasted time. It becomes easier to set a meeting. You can quickly chat to people to get an immediate answer. Using video conferencing the level of interaction is quite high."

Wilkinson estimates that 80 to 90% of each working day, you'll find staff members using the video conferencing suites to contact international counterparts.



## What next?

In geographic terms, Wilkinson’s (and iVision’s) next challenge is to extend the video conferencing technology into central Europe. Wilkinson is confident this will begin to occur in the second half of the current financial year.

From a communications standpoint however, Wilkinson is eager to investigate extending the use of video conferencing to external parties. The company recently enabled Internet connectivity to its video network, making it theoretically possible for iSOFT to invite customers from anywhere in the world to join in a video conference in a secure and trusted environment.

Wilkinson sees the concept as a value-add to the help desk and a means of delivering more personalised service to the iSOFT customer base. “We are looking seriously at providing our customers with direct access to a support consultant so they can interact by video, and see and talk to someone. We don’t believe in anonymous support. We still have some trialing and piloting to do, but if all goes well, that’s the future for us – providing a one-to-one connectivity to our customer base.”

## Key Services

Of the 5-key service areas that iVision provides, the following were provided:

- Consultation
- Implementation and Integration
- Usage and Adoption

With every customer, iVision’s approach is always with service first, technology second.

