

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

State of Virginia Drives Efficiency, Improves Justice and Safety through Video Collaboration

State of Virginia

- 325 courts and 125 magistrate offices served
- Over 600+ video endpoints managed
- 36,000 hours of video collaboration per year
- 185,000 video calls per year
- 400–600 video calls made per day

The State of Virginia harnesses video collaboration to cut costs, improve efficiency and increase safety in the administration of justice. What can we learn from their success logging more than 185,000 video calls a year in a complex judicial system that spans 325 courts and 125 magistrate offices statewide? Ask the Department of Judicial Information Technology of the State of Virginia. Better yet, ask Bob Kelley, their Video Application Engineer. Polycom spoke with Bob Kelley, and Sharon Cocchliola, eMag/Video Team Manager, to learn from their journey.

Q: Tell us about your department's responsibilities.

A: Under the Office of the Executive Secretary, (OES) the Department of Judicial Information Technology is responsible for providing support to all levels of court and the magistrate system in Virginia. The OES provides all HR, Fiscal, Administrative, Legal, Procedural and IT support. This involves 325 courts and 125 magistrate offices statewide, along with the Virginia Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court of Virginia.

Our team specifically provides the video support for the Magistrate offices, all courts and any agency needing to interact with them. We manage and support more than 600 video end points along with the Polycom infrastructure that allows us to communicate seamlessly with all parties. We're using a breadth of video endpoints, including the Polycom® RealPresence® Group Series which offers different-sized compatible units depending on our needs and budget.

Q: You were a pioneer in using video collaboration in the justice system. How did that journey begin?

A: We started back in 1998 with a grant that let us put in eight video units in magistrate offices. For your non-judicial viewers, a magistrate is a judicial officer who holds probable cause hearings along with bail hearings and many times is the first contact a citizen has with the court system. At the time, we had many magistrates working part time across the state and they would be on call for 24–48 hours. They would have to drive into the magistrate office at all hours of the day and night. By installing video, we were able to centralize that process and provide them with a set 8–10 hour shift schedule. The magistrate uses an application developed by OES which issues and tracks arrest warrants and other processes issued by the magistrate. The system allows the magistrate to create the process at one location and then print it in a different location where the officer may have someone under arrest. The arrest warrant is printed with the magistrates signature on it and the officer can then serve the warrant on the person under arrest. It saved everyone involved considerable time and stress—including the law enforcement officers who used to have to stay abreast of a written list of which magistrates were on call.



Q: Today you manage 600 video endpoints. Tell us how video scaled for Virginia.

A: People loved it! They loved the efficiency. It wasn't too long before we received a grant to install 60 units for the Juvenile & Domestic Relations courts and juvenile detention homes which saved on travel time. Video saves us on personnel costs for transportation as well as gas and maintenance costs on vehicles. The cost of transporting an inmate across the state can reach into thousands of dollars for a single court appearance. Public safety is another benefit we get from video conferencing. Not having to move an inmate from a secured facility for a 10 minute hearing is always safer for the general public. At every step, we've seen the efficiency and cost savings grow and that has been a huge factor in scaling.

counties away. This lets our law enforcement officers get back on the road quicker. Also, by statute, a criminal trial cannot be heard by video; but many of the preceding court hearings and remote witness testimony can and this saves on transportation and improves efficiency.

Q: Does video have an impact on the environment?

A: Yes, it does. Our court system covers 95 counties across 42,775 square miles. We're minimizing our carbon footprint by reducing the number of vehicles we have on the road for inmate transport and less travel by officers to magistrate offices and court appearances.

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Managed by Polycom® RealPresence® Resource Manager. Statistics provided by Polycom® RealAccess™ Analytics Service

Q: How many video calls do you handle?

A: We normally see 400–600 calls per day. Over the last year we had 185,107 video calls which translates into 36,000 hours of video collaboration. Our bridge usage has also doubled in the last year.

Q: Tell us how video optimizes judicial services.

A: Many areas in Virginia have moved to a regional jail system and many regional jails have more than one video unit, so they can handle multiple cases in different locations, at one time. Officers no longer need to stand in line to wait for an available magistrate—now they dial into a call center and are connected with the next available magistrate who may be located several

Q: How does video improve security for citizens and law enforcement officers?

A: The time and money saved by using video translates into increased public safety when we do not have to transport inmates. This is accomplished by not having to remove an inmate from a secured facility and by not tying up law enforcement for that transfer—which means the officers are out on the road protecting the public.

Also, disruptive inmates can be removed from the courtroom if necessary and the proceedings can continue via video which creates a safer environment for everyone involved.

Q: Do you have a specific individual who is a champion for video?

A: Our Chief Justice of the Supreme Court is a huge video supporter. He regularly videos in for meetings and uses video to connect with others in the judicial community around the world. Recently, he was on a committee that provides leadership scholarships to high school students. There were 33 students across the state who were supposed to appear in person for interviews, but it snowed that morning and so the Chief Justice had us provide a video option for students. We rolled in our 75" monitor with a VTC on the top and one student videoed in through her iPad—which impressed the committee. Yes, the Chief Justice has been a true champion of video for us.

Q: What's next for video for Virginia?

A: We're always looking toward the future. Towards maximizing the equipment we have and seeing where we will need to expand next. We hope to be expanding bridges for redundancy and capacity. We stay on top of what's out there and what Polycom is developing. It's a continual process that never ends. When we started back in 1998 we never would have imagined we'd have 600 video endpoints to manage! It truly snowballed on us and we anticipate it will continue to do so. But we trust that with Polycom, we'll be ready.

About Polycom

Polycom helps organizations unleash the power of human collaboration. More than 400,000 companies and institutions worldwide defy distance with video, voice and content solutions from Polycom. Polycom and its global partner ecosystem provide flexible collaboration solutions for any environment that deliver the best user experience and unmatched investment protection.

Polycom, Inc.
1.800.POLYCOM
www.polycom.com

Polycom Asia Pacific Pte Ltd
+65 6389 9200
www.polycom.com.sg

Polycom EMEA
+44 (0)1753 723282
www.polycom.co.uk

