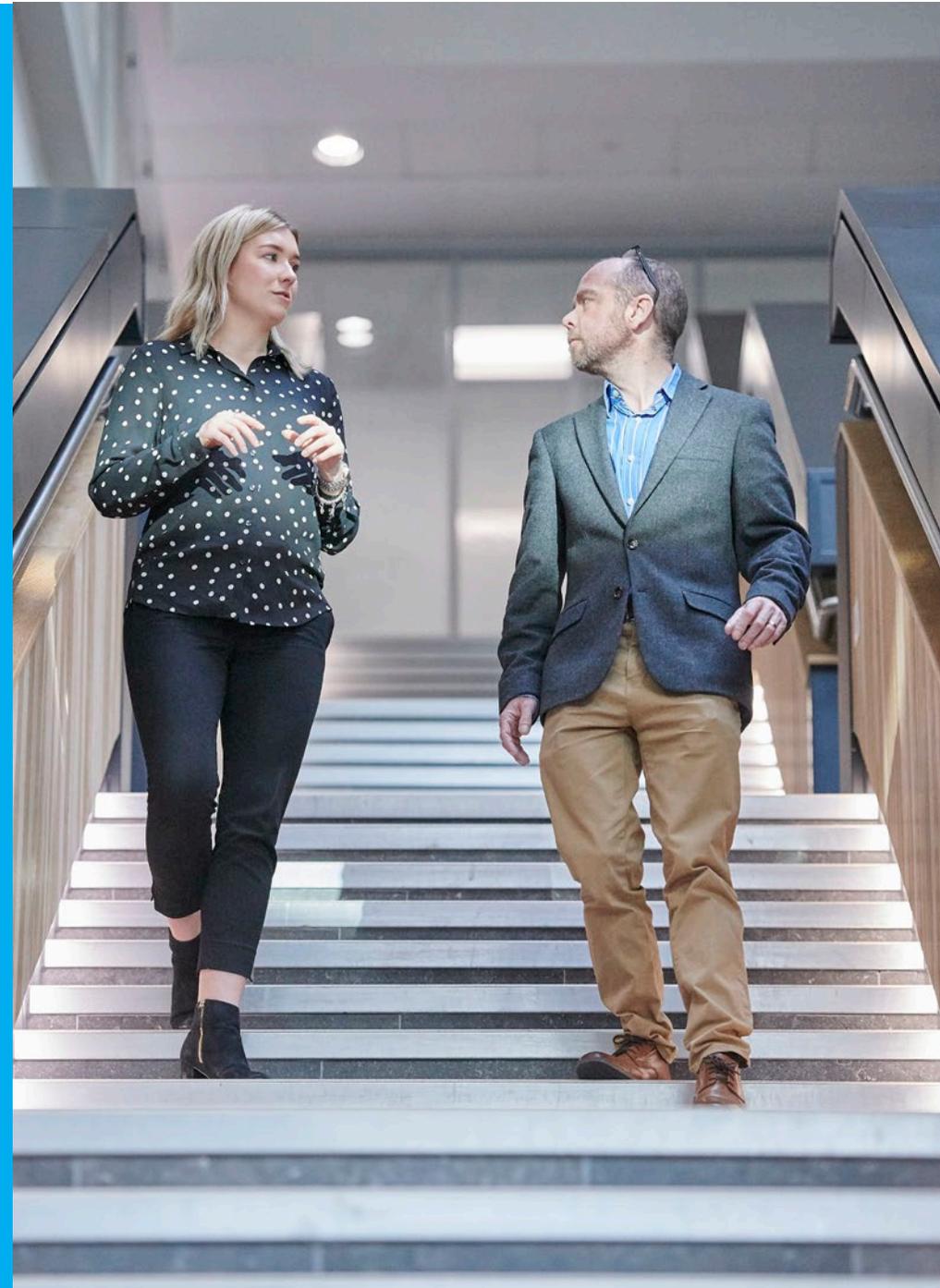


VQ Conference Manager underpins long-term growth of enterprise conferencing at global bank

Cisco Meeting Server and VQ Conference Manager provide robust conferencing service at a global bank, and help maintain exceptional productivity levels during Covid-19 pandemic. This success paves the way for a major upgrade to its CMS service, set to deliver improved performance and greater savings



A history of videoconferencing success

An early adopter of enterprise video conferencing had successfully transitioned from a managed model to a fully self-service approach. The service, underpinned by Cisco Meeting Server and VQ Conference Manager, was delivering 35 million call minutes per month

A large global bank was running one of the world's most successful managed video conferencing services, underpinned by a previous generation of VQ Conference Manager and a globally distributed set of legacy Cisco MCUs. Hosting over 5000 scheduled calls a month (250 per day) the service had been in place and growing for nearly five years. Over this time, it had become a key business tool for the bank. Based on the success and business benefits, the bank was keen to enable broader use of video conferencing across the organization. This required new infrastructure, and a switch from managed calls to a fully self-service model.



Choosing VQ Conference Manager and Acano

In early 2016, the bank selected the Acano call bridges (now called Cisco Meeting Server) and VQ Conference Manager to enable enterprise-wide video conferencing – a key part of its workplace digital transformation. It chose this combination for a number of reasons

Firstly, it had witnessed the success of the existing managed service, based on VQ Conference Manager. Secondly, its operations team was familiar with the processes associated with the VQ management platform. And thirdly, the bank had high confidence in the combined expertise of VQ Communications and Acano (now part of Cisco) to deliver on the promise of an enterprise-wide self-service system. Key capabilities provided by VQ Conference Manager included automated user provisioning, real-time usage dashboards and detailed call data record (CDR) information.

The new self-service platform was an enormous success. Within two years, usage had grown to 35 million call minutes per month – or 1.45 million per day. It had also enabled the bank to bring most of its audio-only calls in-house, onto the CMS. This resulted in savings of around \$600K (€500K) per month.

The success of the CMS and VQ conferencing platform meant the call bridges were getting close to capacity at peak times. To free up capacity for CMS and VQCM the bank made the strategic decision to implement an on-premises Skype for Business service, which would enable it to move audio-only calls off the CMS service.

This was in early 2020, shortly before the world was hit by Covid-19.

“VQ Conference Manager has unlocked the full value of our investments in Cisco Meeting Server, by providing the management solution that enables us to run a very large, successful self-service system.”

A spokesperson for the bank reflected on its long-term collaboration with VQ Communications, stretching back to 2008

Enabling exceptional productivity during the Covid-19 pandemic

The VQ-enabled videoconferencing platform played a key role in ensuring the bank remained productive, as 90%+ of its workforce switched to working from home

Lockdowns around the world in March 2020 saw the bank's proportion of home-based workers increase from 15% to well over 90%. As expected, this led to usage on the CMS videoconferencing service more than doubling, with the VQCM dashboards showing call volumes regularly exceeding 3 million minutes per day.

To enable its workforce to remain productive at a critical time for the business, the bank needed to act quickly to ensure those needing to collaborate remotely could continue to do so. With both the CMS and Skype for Business platforms being on-premises, the business had complete control over the services, which put it in a particularly strong position, and enabled it to launch two initiatives. The first was to accelerate the move of audio-only calls onto Skype for Business, where there was spare capacity. Based on insights from VQ Conference Manager CDR data, the bank was

able to run a targeted internal communications campaign to encourage audio users to make the switch.

In parallel, the VQ Conference Manager dashboards highlighted an opportunity to rebalance traffic between CMSes in different regions. For example, with spare capacity on the APAC Cisco Meeting Servers during EMEA peak hours, the bank was able to reroute selected EMEA traffic onto the APAC infrastructure.

At a time when the business was under increased financial and operational pressure, these two initiatives were key in ensuring its global workforce remained productive, enabled by reliable collaboration tools. Teams could focus on their core tasks, with no need to change working hours or patterns because of technology limitations.



Success of the service leads to further investment

The exceptional productivity levels the bank achieved during the Covid-19 lockdowns demonstrated the importance of the CMS and VQ Conference Manager. The bank subsequently approved a multi-million-euro program to upgrade to new versions of CMS and VQ

The reliability and control offered by the on-premises CMS videoconferencing service during the Covid-19 pandemic underlined its strategic importance to the bank's business continuity strategy. As a result, its management approved a multi-million-euro refresh program in late 2020.

This will include an upgrade to latest-generation Cisco Meeting Server 2000 bridges, underpinned by VQ Conference Manager version 3.

The program is expected to deliver up to 60% additional capacity, enabled by the increased capability of the CMS 2000 and the scalability of VQ Conference Manager 3. Moreover,

conferencing users will benefit from greater flexibility around their virtual meeting Spaces.

In addition, VQ Conference Manager 3's call-management capabilities, including participant move and reactive calls, will enable the bank to bring a number of outsourced or legacy services onto the CMS platform. This includes large-scale calls with many hundreds of participants, which will soon be available to employees on a self-service basis. Its premium managed conferencing service, used by the board of directors and senior management, will also be migrated to CMS. Both will result in significant operational cost savings.

“With the huge increase in homeworking and virtual meetings the global bank had a pressing need to add more Cisco Meeting Server capacity. VQ’s excellent platform and long standing relationship with the bank has been central to the success of CMS at this organization.”

John Williams
Cisco Global Account Manager