

HP Halo enables unparalleled international collaboration for AIG Financial Products Corp.

New 'telepresence' solution increases business effectiveness, enhances social relationships and aids problem-solving



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– William Kolbert, Chief Information Officer, AIG Financial Products Corp.



HP customer case study: International financial institution AIG Financial Products Corp. (AIG-FP) utilizes HP Halo Collaboration Studios to improve business effectiveness, enhance social connections and provide high levels of customer service

Industry: Finance, investment, financial risk management

Objective:

Improve ability to collaborate using technology to further social connections internally and ultimately provide the best service possible for AIG-FP customers.

Approach:

AIG-FP purchased Halo studios for its offices in Connecticut, London, Hong Kong and Tokyo, and will add Paris.

Business benefits:

- More engaging distance collaboration in which every participant is prominently featured and visible to others.
- A more personal experience rivaling face-to-face meetings.
- Confidence in Halo collaboration sessions as an alternative to face-to-face meetings that would otherwise require international travel.
- Customer service enhanced by bringing together all AIG-FP's global resources in a face-to-face, real time environment to solve customer problems.



In the best of all possible worlds, all critical business meetings could take place in a face-to-face environment, starting with a personal greeting and concluding with a warm handshake.

But this isn't the best of all possible worlds. It's a world with a global economy and multinational firms that need to do business around the clock, spanning oceans and numerous time zones. It's a world where managers must reach out to employees, and executives must negotiate deals with their counterparts, halfway around the world.

AIG-FP finds a better solution: HP Halo

That is precisely the situation at AIG Financial Products Corp. AIG-FP and its subsidiaries have offices on three continents and provide clients worldwide with corporate finance, investment and financial risk management solutions.

Like most multinationals, AIG-FP does its best to bridge the vast distances using technology: phone, email, web collaboration tools and video conferencing. But those systems have never been able to rival the benefits provided by face-to-face meetings.

Then AIG-FP learned about HP's Halo Collaboration Studio. "We first heard about Halo in 2005. Someone said that it was like you were in the same room," recalls William Kolbert, Chief Information Officer for AIG-FP. Such a vast improvement over traditional video conferencing sounded too good to be true. So they contacted HP and set up a demo.

But not just any demo. They decided to actually try to conduct business via Halo during the meeting. "We used Halo to link people from our teams in New York and London, and we quickly became so caught up in the work that we actually forgot that we were doing a demo," Kolbert says.

He and CEO Joe Cassano decided Halo was a dramatic improvement over their existing video conferencing system. They equipped their offices in Connecticut, London, Hong Kong and Tokyo with Halo Collaboration Studios, and will add another studio in Paris.

Since 2006, the company has conducted global employee meetings and rollouts using Halo studios, negotiated deals, and even conducted personnel

reviews and training sessions.

Benefits: More productive meetings, less need for travel

Cassano says Halo has allowed AIG-FP to quickly and effectively bring together all the global resources of AIG-FP to bear on issues its clients need to solve. "We gather people from trading, marketing, product development, risk management and credit in a Halo meeting and work toward solving client problems," reports Cassano. "It helps us be more responsive and provide the best possible customer service."

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William Kolbert, Chief Information Officer, AIG-FP

Kolbert says Halo enables employee groups to collaborate and reach decisions that might require multiple meetings in other cases. As the company prepared to roll out its SAP system, many of the planning sessions that would have required widespread international travel were conducted as Halo sessions. That application alone saved AIG-FP tens of thousands of dollars and helped to accelerate the system's deployment.

“We live in a business world where there’s an advantage to positioning yourself with certain technology – whether it’s faster CPUs, or newer office space, or something like Halo – and you want to start using that technology as fast as you can.”

William Kolbert, Chief Information Officer,
AIG-FP



“If we didn’t have Halo, we would have had to extend the whole timetable for rolling out our SAP system,” says Kolbert. Consultants used the company’s Halo studio to train key employees, rather than traveling to major offices for small group meetings.

What makes HP Halo different?

Each location has a dedicated Halo Collaboration Studio that provides life-size, real-time, eye-to-eye communication with outstanding audio and no perceived delay. The technology gives participants the sense of being in the same room.

Participants in a Halo meeting can clearly see one another on one of several high-resolution monitors, and a high-definition collaboration monitor overhead enables participants to share and manipulate documents, computer displays, or even close-ups of three-dimensional objects. Halo studios are typically so quiet you can hear a whisper at the other Halo site.

“I think the room is a huge part of what sets Halo apart,” says Kolbert. “We find the technology is unmatched. But the isolation you feel in the Halo studio — I call it the ‘Cone of Silence’ — really helps you feel connected to participants in the other location. You

feel they’re in that room with you. That’s a big advantage.”

More productive meetings

Some Halo users report shorter meetings, because the work simply gets done faster. Others mention the “Halo effect” — feeling so much like they’re in the same room that they get up to shake hands at the end.

Kolbert says he finds Halo users lose the sense of being in a video conference setting. “Everything seems more tangible. You’re not looking down this long corridor the way you do with a lot of video conferencing systems. Halo creates a very interactive experience.”

Because every participant is clearly shown in actual size on a large monitor, no one hides during a Halo session, he notes. No one pulls out a smart phone to check email or schedule a meeting. Instead, they remain engaged in the subject at hand.

“It’s a clear, crisp meeting experience that results in a true working session,” Kolbert adds. “You’re not just showing a PowerPoint presentation or some other document, you’re truly collaborating.”

Customer solution at a glance

Primary application

- Distance collaboration

Primary hardware/software

- HP Halo Collaboration Studio

Halo as commercial reality

Today, the Halo Video Exchange Network — HVEN — automatically manages Halo room connections around the world. There are no complex, intrusive controls to divert attention from important discussions. A graphical user interface allows users with little or no training to connect with any two Halo studios with the simplicity of just a few mouse clicks.

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William Kolbert, Chief Information Officer, AIG-FP

AIG-FP has used Halo primarily as an internal communication/collaboration tool. But it has also conducted sessions with major international clients, and it expects more of its clients to become Halo users soon.

"The fact that companies that we collaborate with are on this network shows me that this technology will become a new standard for communication," Kolbert says. "We live in a business world where there's an advantage to positioning yourself with certain technology — whether it's faster CPUs, or newer office space, or something like Halo — and you want to start using that technology as fast as you can."

Kolbert explains, "Whenever we bring people through our offices these days, we always take time to show them the Halo studio. It speaks to our commitment to technology that enables business."

"It's state of the art, which is where we want to be," he says. "And it's not the future. It's today."

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