Papa John’s pizza company slices travel costs with GoToMeeting

Each year, pizza grows more popular. With 3,000 restaurants located in 49 states and 22 countries, Papa John’s International is capitalizing on the pizza trend. Today the Louisville, Kentucky-based chain is the world’s third-largest pizza company.

The challenge: curb global travel costs while maintaining franchise satisfaction

Papa John’s is expanding rapidly with aggressive plans to open dozens of stores each year around the world, including in Asia, Europe and Latin America. Over the next five years, the company plans to open 250 restaurants in China alone. Numerous business-class trips to distant countries for training and meetings were time-consuming and expensive. “We wanted to minimize travel to only certain events such as store openings and in-person training,” said Don Clark, senior director-International Finance and Administration for Papa John’s.

Because Papa John’s provides valuable marketing guidance and training to franchisees, replacing travel with typical audio calls wasn’t enough. “In addition to conducting training, we need to review detailed store plans and financial documents with franchisees and our international staff,” Clark said. The company wanted a cost-effective alternative to travel that enabled them to preserve and continue to grow the relationship with franchisees. “We want our franchisees to know they’re getting a good value for investing in our brand.”

Implementing GoToMeeting for franchisee interaction

Papa John’s employees now use Web conferencing from Citrix® GoToMeeting® to review store layouts, provide franchisee training, hold international staff meetings, and securely conduct business around the world – all from their office desks. Features such as application-sharing and annotation tools increase employee productivity and franchisee interaction.
Enhance communications and provide value-added service

Providing franchisees with high-value services is an important concept at Papa John’s. The franchisees are independent business people, so the company works hard to keep them happy and profitable. “Any time we can touch a franchisee we’re adding value to their relationship with us,” explained Clark.

GoToMeeting enables the company to enhance communications and provide better value to their franchisees. “GoToMeeting gives us the ability to show the franchisees that we have invested in their operation and to reinforce our message about quality,” said Clark.

Using GoToMeeting, the company conducts regular meetings and quarterly global updates with overseas franchisees. “Using GoToMeeting, we can touch a significant number of the franchisees at one time. It’s a more personal way of communicating than getting on the phone or sending an email,” he said. In addition, several times each year the company conducts educational sessions for franchisees around the world on topics such as quality management and operating the company’s store software. “We’re using GoToMeeting to train our franchisees in every country. Some of our success would never have happened if we did not have a venue to bring everybody together,” Clark commented.

Shave weeks off schedules and save thousands in travel costs

Conducting franchisee training with GoToMeeting saves Papa John’s weeks of travel time and thousands of dollars in travel costs each year. A typical training session educates eight franchisees who are often located in separate countries. “If we had to actually travel for training, a typical session could take three weeks and cost $10,000,” said Clark. “However, by using GoToMeeting we can complete each session in an hour. If we conduct only five training sessions a year using GoToMeeting, that’s $50,000 in travel savings.”

GoToMeeting is used extensively to save costs of travel to company meetings as well. Recently, one of the company’s overseas directors was asked to attend an operations conference in Florida. “He wasn’t able to travel to the conference because he was busy opening our first store in Portugal,” Clark recalled. Instead, the director attended the conference via GoToMeeting. “It saved us at least $12,000 in direct travel costs.”

“Simple and intuitive” tools enhance productivity

GoToMeeting is easy for employees and franchisees to use, even if they have not tried web conferencing before. “GoToMeeting is very simple and intuitive,” said Clark. Features such as email integration enable employees to set up meetings within seconds. “The Lotus Notes integration is perfect for us. We can set up a meeting directly through our corporate email system.” The meeting presenter can easily share the desktop for collaboration on documents and plans. During meetings, features such as annotation tools
enable the company to review complex store layouts using Microsoft®
Visio® – even if the other participants don’t have the Visio software installed.
GoToMeeting provides significant ease of use while maintaining security for
sensitive information. “Security is important to us because we do financial
reviews with franchisees,” Clark noted.

Flat-rate licensing encourages use without
cost concerns
The All You Can Meet® licensing of GoToMeeting motivates the company
to use online meetings more often as a replacement for travel. Unlike other
Web conferencing providers that tack on significant overage charges or bill
per minute, GoToMeeting encourages use. “We don’t need to think about
whether to use GoToMeeting because it’s a flat-rate charge,” said Clark.

The implementation of GoToMeeting at Papa John’s helps employees keep
up with the company’s rapid growth, rein in travel costs, foster relationships
and provide better value for franchisees. “I have no doubt that GoToMeeting
has given us the ability to open more stores,” Clark concluded.