Toyota Australia Builds Boardroom of the Future with IBM Technology and Expertise

Overview

■ **The Challenge**

To showcase Toyota Australia's use of advanced technology by streamlining processes around preparing for and conducting board meetings.

■ **The Solution**

Toyota engaged IBM Global Services to design, implement and manage an integrated boardroom environment that would revolutionise the way it conducted meetings. IBM worked with partner e-Centric Innovations to develop and deploy the solution.

■ **The Benefits**

The paperless boardroom solution has dramatically reduced the time needed to prepare for board meetings and eliminated cumbersome paper documentation. Applying advanced technology in the boardroom has made meetings easier and more enjoyable for board members.

About Toyota Australia

Toyota is Australia's largest car exporter and one of Toyota Japan's global manufacturing centres. Since the company opened in 1963, it has produced more than 2 million vehicles. As well as supplying domestic markets through sales and distribution centres across the country, Toyota exports vehicles to markets in Oceania, the Middle East, South Africa and East Asia. Toyota directly employs more than 4,500 people. Thousands more are employed in its Australian supplier and retail networks.

Eliminate inefficient processes

When Toyota Australia built its new corporate headquarters in Port Melbourne, Victoria, it wanted to translate its commitment to applying advanced technology in its cars to the company's business operations.

The company identified several areas where technology could be used to increase efficiency and improve productivity. One of these was scheduled company board meetings.

Toyota has several management levels across numerous operations, which makes preparing board papers for meetings an onerous task. Before every meeting, each unit provides any relevant documents to the board and these need to be reviewed, signed off and circulated to directors in advance. This time-consuming, complex and often disruptive process was distracting staff from more valuable tasks and inefficient systems were creating unnecessary work.

IBM takes the 'bored' out of boardroom

Toyota approached IBM Global Services to create a 'boardroom of the future' that would streamline the document review process and use advanced technology to make board meetings more efficient and enjoyable.

IBM Global Services worked with systems developer and Melbourne-based partner e-Centric Innovations to design and construct the boardroom. This involved project management, hardware procurement and the development of online collaboration systems.

"We felt that IBM had the breadth and depth to design a system for us that was more than just a standard desktop implementation," said Scott. "We had quite a few requirements for the room, and IBM met all of them with flying colours."

The e-Centric Paperless Boardroom system, developed by e-Centric Innovations is based on IBM's Lotus® QuickPlace, Sametime and Lotus® Domino® products. It gives Toyota's managers the ability to prepare board papers electronically, with full document management and workflow approval capabilities.

But the innovation didn't stop there. The boardroom includes a table with individual integrated computer access and control; XGA 1024x768 resolution data and video projectors; multiple play-out and record systems; and multiple presentation facilities including high-bandwidth, multiple-camera video and audio conferencing.

"We wanted the room to be so leading-edge it would still be at the forefront of technology in five years time, but not so advanced that it was difficult and costly to implement today," Scott said.

Development and installation took approximately four months from planning approval to the first board meeting.

"We wanted to make clear to the Australian automotive market that Toyota is here for the long term," said James Scott, IT Manager at Toyota. "A boardroom is a very tangible reflection of the way a company runs its business and this was a great opportunity to reinforce the fact that we are more than just a car company."

wwtechnology allows Toyota to conduct paperless board meetings. Agendas are generated automatically and all documents distributed digitally. Preparing board papers online simplifies the tedious process of making changes, securing approvals and managing the addition of extra information and supporting documents. It also significantly reduces Toyota's paper use, lessening the company's environmental footprint.

"It's just magic," said Scott. "No-one has to sit down and create an agenda – it's automatically generated by the time stamps given to each of the documents. Once directors are in the meeting, they simply open the application, go through the agenda and launch each document that has been submitted.

Executives responsible for delivering board papers can now check the progress of documents online and redirect the workflow where necessary, avoiding bottlenecks and identifying and preventing potential delays. This has significantly reduced the time spent preparing for meetings.

"This process has really made a difference to the board," Scott continued. "Now, directors receive information before each meeting rather than on the day. It has also reduced and simplified the amount of information that goes to the board, which has really streamlined their meetings."

During Toyota's new-look board meetings, the chair conducts proceedings using the electronic agenda and board members review the documents under discussion on their individual screens. They also have access to the minutes of previous meetings, any archived information and an instant chat facility. They can even use IBM Lotus iNotes to access their email during the course of the meeting. Board members' follow-up actions and notes are captured and distributed in real time.

Adaptability central to successful technology

The boardroom's versatile design means it can be quickly converted into a crisis management centre or a place for directors to review advertising material.

It is also a major video-conferencing hub, making it simple for Australian executives to communicate with their counterparts in Japan. The technology is specially designed to fold away, so the board table can also be used as a large dining area for functions such as Formula 1 events.

"IBM Global Services has proven to be so much more than just an implementation partner," said Scott. "It provided a turnkey solution which they designed, implemented and managed from start to finish."

The success of the Melbourne boardroom has prompted Toyota to consider the same set up for Sydney.

For more information

Please call **132 462** in Australia or
0800 801 800 in New Zealand.