

John Eagle Auto Group Keeps Their Team Connected with Help from Helion



Summary

John Eagle Auto Group's managers and partners were losing an unbelievable amount of time getting together for critical meetings, and phone calls weren't cutting it — they needed face-to-face collaboration.

Helion stepped in and set up every John Eagle store with a simple system for seamless videoconferencing, and the savings started piling up.

The Problem

John Eagle Auto Group has ten stores in the Houston and Dallas areas, which was making the process of getting together for meetings a major drain on managers' and partners' time (not to mention budgets).

Traffic in both Houston and Dallas is congested, and it can take hours to commute between stores in the same city, let alone the half-day or more that it takes to drive or fly between the two cities.

"Meetings are a necessary part of business; we need to connect with all of our GMs, partners and managers on a regular basis," says Duffy Cummings, Chief Financial Officer of John Eagle Auto Group.

What the company needed was a method for connecting team members that had the impact and immediacy of a face-to-face meeting and the logistics of picking up the phone. Lucky for them, Helion knew exactly what to do.

The Solution

One year earlier, Helion upgraded and combined the auto group's three networks into one, increasing data throughput by a factor of more than 1,000. Prior to the network upgrade, John Eagle paid an average of \$62,300 per month to several different vendors. The new, streamlined network cost \$25,000 per month — a 60% reduction in expenses.

The increased data throughout allowed John Eagle Auto Group to upgrade their outdated and largely unused videoconferencing system, and on Helion's recommendation they chose Cisco's high definition TelePresence system. Helion implemented TelePresence along with large video screens in each of the ten conference rooms at John Eagle's dealerships.

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"Our videoconference meetings are like being there in person, and when all the managers and partners get together, it's like having a mini 20 group," says Rene Isip, Chief Operating Officer of John Eagle Auto Group. "Participants make suggestions to solve problems and try new processes, which has helped generate additional revenue."

The Telepresence system offers a completely immersive experience.

"It's nothing like a phone call," says Isip. "I can see what the associates are wearing to ensure they're up to our dress code, and I can see the expressions and reactions on their

faces. I use the system just about every day, not just for meetings but also one-on-one calls. It strengthens rapport and you get to know people better, as if you're working in the same location."

The managers at John Eagle Auto Group also use TelePresence for:

Monthly Finance Meetings

This call involves more than 60 sales and finance managers, GMs, and partners, with an agenda that reviews numbers, policies, incentives, and more.

"It's our most important meeting, and we could never do this on a conference call," says Cummings. "With that many people, you know some of them would just hit mute and continue to work while others are speaking. With TelePresence, they have to pay attention."

Taking all of the managers out of their dealerships for a day is not a viable option either. "The cost of flying everyone to one location is one thing, but even more costly are the lost opportunities," says Cummings. "For every day that a manager is out of the store, that's probably three or four sales or deals that don't get done."

Weekly Service Meetings

This call involves service managers, used car managers, partners, and GMs, and covers numbers, opportunities, advertising, goals, and other issues.

"TelePresence is a great tool for solving problems," says Isip. "If a manager at one location has a difficult situation, other managers can chime in and talk about how they solved that problem."

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"Another benefit of this meeting is it brings accountability," says Cummings. "Every month the service managers announce three things they're going to work on next month, and they make that commitment in front of everyone. Then the next month we'll discuss those goals on the call."

Training

John Eagle Auto Group recently used TelePresence to roll out its new healthcare program. Without TelePresence, Cummings says they would have had to travel to each individual store to explain the new plan in person.

"It would have taken three or four days and a lot more paperwork," he says. "With TelePresence, they instantly connected all the HR managers, controllers, and partners, and completed the rollout training in two hours."

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Remote Meetings

One of the greatest advantages of the TelePresence system is that meetings can be accessed remotely from a desktop computer, laptop, or even an iPad. All that's required is launching an app.

"When I was in Mexico, I was on the beach with my iPad and I was able to sit in on an important call," says Isip. "It's that ability to be present and communicate, no matter where I am, that's worth a lot to me."

Since Telepresence was launched, Cummings estimates that John Eagle Auto Group has added \$1 million to its bottom line. The ROI has been achieved primarily through:

- Reduced travel time and costs
- Increased productivity and sales as a result of reduced travel time
- A more efficient data network which reduced costs by 60%
- Improved problem solving, accountability, and process improvements as a result of 20 group-like meetings
- Strengthened rapport between store managers and partners
- Ability to access meetings remotely from a variety of devices
- High adoption rates thanks to flexibility and ease-of-use

"TelePresence is a cost-effective way to communicate for meetings that require big decisions with many stakeholders," says Isip. "It's also great for individual meetings, giving you that one-on-one experience that a phone call can't duplicate. It's like being in the same room; the only thing you can't do is shake hands."

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