zoom

case study

Simplifying the Stack:
How The Motley Fool Streamlined
Its Communications with Zoom

What started as an investment newsletter written by brothers David and Tom Gardner in 1993 has grown into an internationally-recognized financial services company with a fanatical group of followers known as "Fools." Headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, The Motley Fool has offices in Denver, Colorado, and Sydney, Australia, and also serves customers in the UK, Canada, Hong Kong, and Germany with regional news and market analysis. Driven by the purpose to make the world smarter, happier, and richer, The Motley Fool has built its success on providing its customers with insightful analysis and clever takes on investing and the stock market. This requires a robust communications infrastructure that allows for constant collaboration and communication among offices and employees around the world.

Challenge

The Motley Fool has almost 400 employees working across its offices in the United States and abroad, and its success relies on these employees working together closely to provide relevant and accurate stock analysis to various markets. Although The Motley Fool had a legacy communications solution in place, it had become too difficult to manage, and the teams at The Motley Fool were using a collection of disparate tools to communicate.

"Previously we were using Cisco, which worked, and for the most part we liked it," said Lawrence Morrisson, Head of IT at The Motley Fool. "However, it was pretty expensive and difficult to manage. We also had other employees using solutions like Skype and GoToMeeting, which led to people using different hardware and devices. There was no consistency, which was a real headache."

The Motley Fool

Founded: 1993

Headquarters: Alexandria, Virginia

Industry: Financial services

Challenges: Disparate technology stack, complex on-premises infrastructure management, geo-dispersed workforce

Solution: Zoom Meetings, Zoom Rooms, Zoom Phone

Business Benefits: Consolidated technology stack, less on-premises management of infrastructure, more connected remote workforce, improved global collaboration

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– Lawrence Morrisson
Head of IT, The Motley Fool

The IT teams at The Motley Fool were also looking for an alternative to their phone solution, which required expensive hardware, complicated software, and significant on-premises infrastructure to support it all. But The Motley Fool didn't want to keep supporting multiple infrastructures and instead sought to consolidate its technology stack.

"We had a big Cisco infrastructure here," Morrisson said. "We had dedicated circuits into the building, trunks for SIP lines, and desk phones, as well as Cisco's call center product to run it all, which was quite difficult to manage."

This lack of consistency and intensive infrastructure management made communications difficult to support, which increased the burden on the IT teams and complicated collaboration between offices.

Solution

Morrisson was considering other video conferencing solutions when a phone call from Zoom's sales team piqued his interest.

"At the time, we were trying to fix the problem we had with consistency, so we were considering Cisco's Webex platform," Morrisson said. "But Zoom gave us a call and offered a free trial, and since my co-workers and I had heard of Zoom and knew it was quite popular, we decided to give it a try."

After experiencing Zoom's platform and its ease of use, Morrisson implemented Zoom's video conferencing solution across the organization. Zoom's flexibility allowed The Motley Fool's employees to use the solution across a wide range of hardware, and its user-friendly interface made implementing the solution effortless.

"Implementing Zoom couldn't have been easier," Morrisson said. "It's a pleasure to use, and it looks and feels great coming right out of the box. There's no complicated install, you just go through an easy setup process and it just works. That was a big selling point for us."

Zoom's video conferencing solution was able to improve communication between offices and employees with its intuitive design and useful features. Employees are able to use the screen sharing feature to collaborate on projects and easily coordinate effective, efficient communications between international offices.

"People love the fact that we can share our screens without any cables," Morrisson noted about Zoom's wireless screen sharing capabilities. "And it's consistent between every room. Our employees walk in, they see the control panel on the desk, and they know what to expect. It's just been hugely successful for us."

Once The Motley Fool had implemented Zoom's video conferencing solution and experienced the reliability and simplicity of the platform, the IT team decided to implement Zoom Phone as its digital phone solution. Because Zoom Phone is a cloud-based application, the IT teams no longer had to support a separate infrastructure for phone communications.

"One of the main reasons we chose Zoom was because we wanted to simplify our stack and reduce the amount of on-premises management we were doing," Morrisson said. "The experience that we have had with Zoom so far has been so positive, so immediately that gave us a great feeling of confidence in the Zoom Phone product right out of the gate."

Result

Since the teams at The Motley Fool have implemented Zoom's unified communications platform, Morrisson has noticed a reduction in the number of tickets IT teams are handling. With a user-friendly interface and the flexibility to work with a range of devices, his IT teams are no longer spending their days troubleshooting hardware solutions or setting up software. The Motley Fool was able to reduce hardware costs and increase its deployment of Zoom's platform fivefold compared with its legacy communications solution.

"There is far less work in setting up our conference rooms and keeping them in shape," Morrisson noted. "The setup for our devices is almost completely automated now, and there's very rarely a problem. If there is, it's usually a local hardware problem, which Zoom is very good at identifying."

And with Zoom's platform, The Motley Fool has been able to develop guidelines for its remote workers based on a video-first culture.

"We only have two main tech requirements for our remote workers," Morrisson said. "They need to have internet that is able to support Zoom, and they need to have their cameras on by default for every video meeting to create that face-to-face connection."

The Motley Fool also creates a deeper connection between remote workers and in-office staff using Zoom.

"We actually have some Zoom Rooms on portable carts that we call 'Zoom Bots'," Morrisson said. "And we keep them on during office hours to create a livestream of the office so remote workers and on-site staff can interact with each other. It really helps create that feeling of being in the office and connecting with your co-workers."