Using Polycom to Reduce Costs for Statewide Training

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The Integrated Pest Management Statewide Training has been conducted for several years as a traveling road show. Speakers came from long distances and would travel to three separate locations in the state to provide training. This was very expensive and would take the travelers away from their home base for an approximately one-week time period. In an effort to reduce costs and avoid travel expenses as well as keep speakers at their home base we decided to try polycom as a means to provide the same type of training without the travel. Several conference calls were also used in the past to coordinate this event and the thought was to use email, web tools, and polycom to decrease this cost as well.

Methods

For the initial setup of the training we needed to determine all the sites that would receive the training, determine the date, and set up the different committees that would provide the specific tasks needed for the training. Doodle at <http://www.doodle.ch/main.html> was the tool used for selecting dates, sites, and committee members for the training. This Doodle tool sent a link to all participants. The participants went to the link, typed in their name, and then selected all the dates that fit their schedule. The tool added up all of the selected dates and provided a total at the bottom of the page so it was easily seen which date was selected by the most participants (Fig. 1).

This was also done for committee selection (Fig. 2). Several committees were needed for this training event and they included speaker selection and topics, smart objectives, flyer development, polycom site set up, obtaining continuing education unit (CEU) credits, website for distribution of materials, and evaluation. Each committee communicated directly with the chairperson regarding the status of their tasks and it was up to the chairperson to keep everyone on task and coordinate all the efforts.

Since all slide presentations were shown at each site location, a clearinghouse was needed to house the presentations. The slide presentation distribution site was originally a website. The distribution site was later moved to the UF/IFAS public domain, which was easily accessed by any UF/IFAS employee. Once the
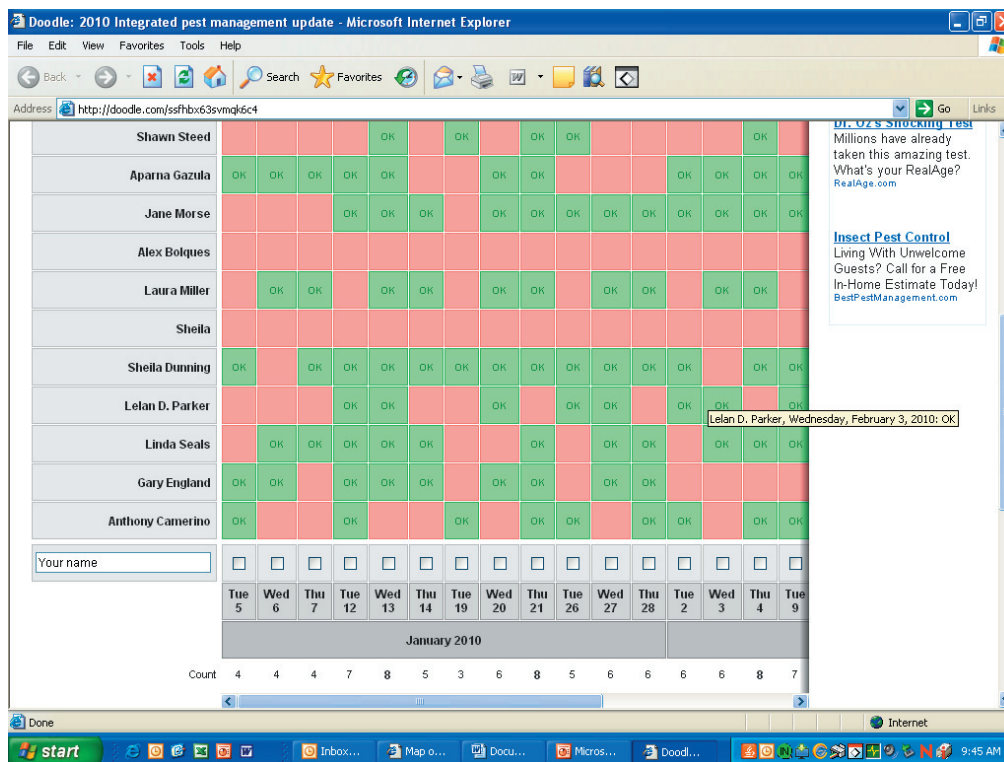

Fig. 1.

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Fig. 2.

	participating site (only receive, not involved in work on program)	Polycom set up for program and planning (no more than 4 meetings)	Smart objectives and evaluations (work with speakers to create objectives and measure them)	Topics/speakers (select speakers, contact them, ensure they post slides on web)	CEU approval	award submission (we want to submit for an NACAA award this year)
Sylvia Shives	OK			OK		
Shawn Steed			OK			OK
Aparna Gazula			OK	OK		OK
Jane Morse						OK
Laura Miller			OK	OK		OK
Alex Bolques	OK	OK				
Linda Seals					OK	OK
Gary England			OK	OK		
Anthony Camerino	OK					
Your name	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

speakers and topics were chosen, the agenda was developed by the chair and posted on the distribution website.

The Smart Objectives Committee then contacted the speakers to develop a list of smart objectives for each topic. This information would be used to develop an evaluation.

A tri-fold, double-sided brochure was developed and posted on the distribution website. This included a list of speakers, site agent(s) and contact information, location map, agenda, affirmative action statement, UF/IFAS and county logos, and registration information. Each site location would change information on the brochure to fit their particular site (such as the county logo, address, etc.). This brochure was sent to prospective participants three months before the event.

Each site location sent their polycom address information to the Polycom Site Committee. This information included the contact name, email address, site location, and polycom IP address. The Polycom Site Committee also reserved the site date and submitted the site location information to the UF/IFAS polycom reservation site which is located at <http://video.ifas.ufl.edu> (Fig. 3).

The CEU Committee contacted the organizations (FDACS, ISA, FNGLA, etc.) to obtain CEUs. These were distributed as mandated by the organizations.

The Evaluation Committee used the smart objectives to develop an evaluation for the program and this was posted to the distribution site.

It was suggested that all site locations have two separate screens. One screen, via polycom, would show the speaker with the slide presentation to his/her side, the other screen would have the slide presentation projected locally. The speaker's presentation does not project clearly enough to the site locations, therefore the need for a separate on-site screen presentation is needed. By having two screens participants can see the speaker and any motions the speaker makes toward the presentation for emphasis, while on the other screen they are able to see the slide presentation in detail. All sites downloaded the speaker's presentation from the website for projection onto this second screen.

Each speaker was asked not to change their presentation once it was submitted to the distribution site. Since all the sites were projecting this presentation it needed to match the speaker's presentation.

Each speaker and site facilitator were sent information about procedures that should be followed for a successful polycom presentation. The polycom site has a link to this information and there is a UF/IFAS publication entitled: *Videoconferencing (polycom) Distance Education* (Fig. 4). One of the most important of these procedures was to make sure that every site, other than the speaker's site, had their microphone on silence. Feedback and conversations from other sites would be very disruptive. A time keeper for each speaker site was also needed.

Outcome

Twelve sites participated. From 130 surveys that were completed, all participants said they would attend another Pest Management Update Seminar. All sites were muted except for the speaker's site, so there was no interference or feedback from other sites. The training went smoothly with speakers changing seamlessly from five different sites.

We conducted a review of the event. Suggested changes were to allow extra time for speakers to answer questions, move event time to the afternoon, make sure speakers stay on time, choose topics that will attract both the landscape and nursery clientele, and have the committees meet via polycom or conference call quarterly.
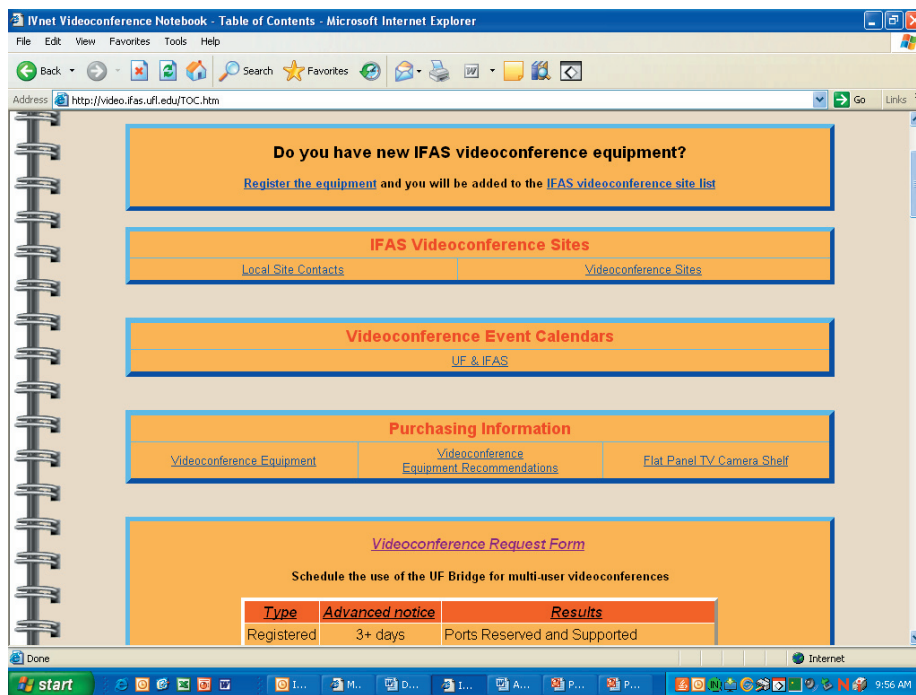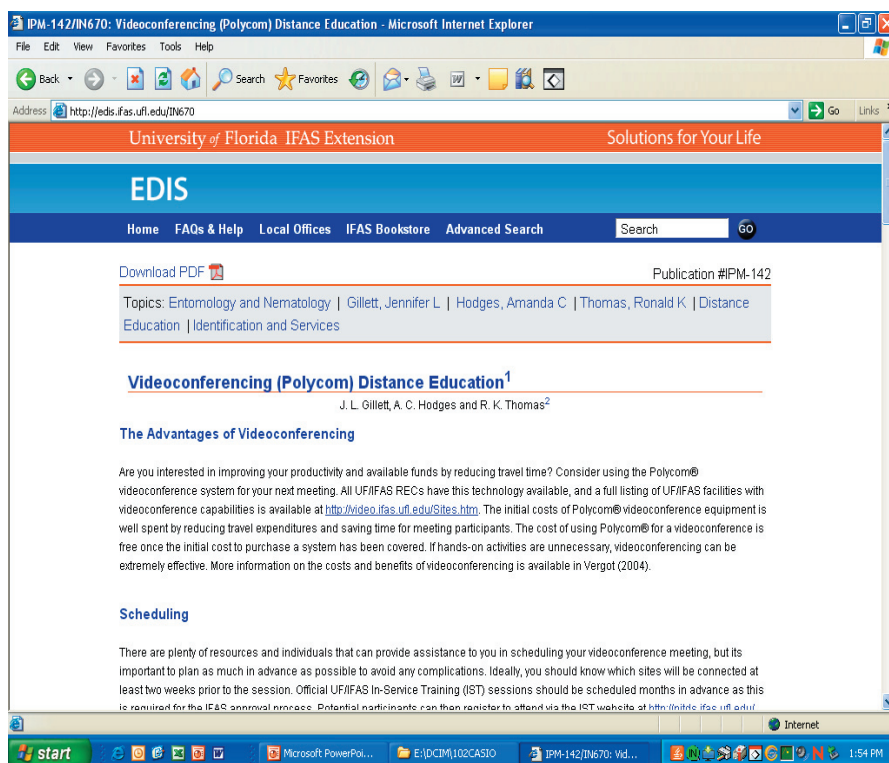
Fig. 3.

Fig. 4.

Conclusion

Using polycom was much cheaper (all sites already have the equipment) than using travel. Rather than speakers traveling to three sites over several days, 12 sites were reached in one day with no travel. This also reduced energy consumption and pollution that would have occurred with speaker travel. Speakers did not have to leave their home city and were able to stay with their families. Participants were all willing to return next year. Polycom is a very useful method for presenting material to a statewide audience all at one time. Using polycom is a sustainable form of training. It reduces economic and environmental costs, while allowing more time at home with family.