

Hirschmann Automotive expands their intelligent workplace from the office and IT to OT with augmented reality

Client profile

Over the past 60 years, Hirschmann Automotive has been a driver for progress in the automotive industry. With facilities across the world, they employ more than 5,700 people in manufacturing, development and sales. Creating both standard products or individual customized solutions, their product spectrum ensures reliability under the most extreme conditions and in highly demanding areas within a vehicle.

Which technologies?

- Cisco Webex Teams (as cloud solution deployed with Cisco Collaboration Flex Plan)
- Cisco Remote Expert on Demand
- Cisco Webex Board
- IRealWear HMT-1

Which services?

- Consulting Services
- Solution Design Services

Which partners?

- Cisco
- NTT DATA
- RealWear

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The cooperation with NTT and Cisco in the field of augmented reality is a very good example of how new technologies can be evaluated together and used to the advantage of our customers.

Bernhard Bösch, Head of IT Operations, Hirschmann Automotive

Summary

For Hirschmann Automotive, reducing downtime at their global manufacturing facilities is of critical importance. Building on their investment in Cisco's unified communication platform, they're working with Cisco, NTT DATA and us to co-create and co-innovate new solutions to solve their business challenges.

Using RealWear augmented reality headsets and Cisco Webex Expert on Demand software, they can link technicians at production facilities with experts across the globe. This will enable them to reduce downtime and improve productivity across the organization — this cooperation to resolve issues can even be extended to customers or partners in a secure way if needed.

Working together, we're currently exploring the possibilities of extending augmented reality into other areas of the business and for other use cases.

Business need

Why Hirschmann Automotive looked to technology to drive efficiency

Hirschmann Automotive has been a global player in the automotive industry for more than 60 years. With operations across the world, including Austria, several other European countries, China, Mexico and Morocco, ensuring that employees could seamlessly collaborate is of critical importance for their business.

As a global developer and manufacturer of automotive parts, Hirschmann Automotive is pursuing the vision to be the leader in the adoption and use of technology in order to accelerate the operational and organizational elements of their business.

Creating a unified collaboration environment was a priority for them and to achieve this, they standardized their global collaboration solution on Cisco Unified Communication solutions including Cisco Webex Teams. Working with us, Hirschmann Automotive moved parts of their critical collaboration environment to the cloud, ensuring employees could interact anywhere, anytime and on any device.

This included connecting meeting rooms using Webex Boards, allowing teams across the globe to interact and collaborate in real-time; sharing thoughts, ideas, content and whiteboard sessions via the system.

Following the success of the initial Webex Teams project, they started looking for ways to better align IT and OT, office-workers and production-workers. The result of this was the integration of their Webex environment and operations, to further reduce costs of travelling and time, reduce downtime of production equipment, and speed up scheduled maintenance tasks and time to repair of equipment in order to improve overall efficiency.

Solution

How augmented reality creates the potential to boost productivity and cut downtime

The challenge of having manufacturing operations in multiple countries is often compounded by the difficulty and cost associated with ensuring the appropriate skills are available when a critical incident happens.

Hirschmann Automotive identified the potential boost augmented reality (AR) could provide to the business and started an evaluation process within the OT department.

Working with Cisco and NTT DATA, we identified the RealWear HMT-1 device as the best available option to meet their key requirements. As important as the choice of the AR device was integrating it into their existing collaboration environment.

The key to a successful integration was using Cisco Webex Expert on Demand to connect technicians in the field instantly to experts via Webex Teams, enabling experts from anywhere in the world to use their knowledge and experience to diagnose and resolve problems while using on-site team members to physically fix it.

As they continue to expand their adoption of AR, there are several ways the technology could benefit the organization. In addition to creating a live link between an expert and a technician, they are investigating the creation of a knowledge base containing solutions to common problems. Technicians could then follow a defined and automated process, accessing this information and fixing the problem without having to wait for a specialist to be available for scheduled maintenance work. This would equate to providing them with a list of frequently asked questions but with a video, a workflow-diagram or an exploded assembly drawing or similar.

“Using augmented reality will allow us to reduce downtime, tap into our pool of global experts faster and reduce our environmental impact, all vitally important at this time.

Bernhard Bösch, Head of IT Operations,
Hirschmann Automotive

Outcomes

What a spirit of collaboration means to its digital transformation strategy

Taking advantage of the true potential of AR offers real benefits to Hirschmann Automotive, allowing them to minimize downtime at their production facilities - which is vital in the highly competitive automotive market.

Finding new ways to use AR inside the organization is a collaborative effort between Hirschmann Automotive, NTT in Austria, NTT DATA and Cisco. Working together in the spirit of co-creation and co-innovation, the team continues to explore possible future use cases.

This could include allowing the HR team to adopt this technology for training purposes or the development team to work in virtual reality, modelling new products in the virtual world before creating physical prototypes.

The marketing team could also leverage holographic technology to showcase products at trade shows, allowing the company to demonstrate products without having to bring physical samples to the show.

This is in addition to finding new ways to leverage technology to more closely connect the operational side of the business to the rest of the organization.

The exploration of new technologies to create value reflects Hirschmann Automotive's innovative culture, both in the use of technology and across the entire organization.

With the company's digitization strategy, integrating acquired companies and the fast pace of development in the automotive industry, keeping up the momentum of their digital transformation and partnering with forward-thinking companies, is essential to ensuring their future success.