

# Ottawa University Applies Zoom With VTEL's IPanel Solution



Kent Corser  
Director of IT Technical  
and Client Operations at  
Ottawa University

Richard Ford, CEO of VTEL

Video communications technology has become a hot topic among schools that previously felt strongly about the tried-and-true teaching methods used for several decades. The need for "technology traditionalism" has sometimes led to missed opportunities for campuses to further connect themselves to the world around them. Ottawa University, however, is committed to strategically incorporating video communications technology into its educational delivery and has recently broken ground with a new solution that provides the efficiency and return on investment that they have been looking for.

We sat down with Kent Corser - Director of IT Technical and Client Operations at Ottawa University - and Richard Ford - CEO of VTEL - to speak about how the partnership between Ottawa, VTEL, and Zoom has provided an environment in which collaboration takes flight.

## Then and Now

"It's important for us to look at where Ottawa University was and where it is now," said Kent Corser. "Prior to me joining the University, we were relying on a single cart loaded with proprietary telecommunications hardware at each of our sites functioning without a bridge. Out of the box, the best we could do is have one-on-one conversations, meaning that we could talk to only one other site at any given time. Also, we were unable to connect with anyone outside of our network easily."

The university had decided to survey the technologies they could apply as a result of changing and upgrading their network infrastructure and bandwidth capabilities.

"When we started to invest in our network infrastructure and bandwidth, we wanted to find the best way to utilize these new systems," Corser said. "Part of our agenda was improving our video communications technology, making us able to reach our other sites much more easily and to facilitate connections with speakers from outside the University. Connecting to whatever systems other universities had was paramount to our success."

It wasn't very long before it came to the University's attention that their legacy video conferencing platform - largely dependent on proprietary hardware - was approaching something people in our industry call end-of-life (EOL). This led them to search for a new solution and the birth of a new era for Ottawa University.

"We decided to broaden our search to include both on-site and cloud-based video conferencing solutions," he said. "In the end, what we wanted was a solution that was versatile and provided high-definition video and audio."

## The Discovery

"After about a year of trying different solutions for video meetings, we found Zoom back when it was still young," said Corser. "The timing was perfect, allowing us to pit it against all of the other ones we'd found. We quickly decided that Zoom, even back at this early stage in its development, was the best fit for us since it's cloud-based and saves us from having to manage expensive MCUs and other hardware."

Getting into a cloud-based platform did two things for Ottawa University:

- **It lessened the burden of maintaining on-site servers and multipoint control units.**
- **It allowed staff more time to concentrate on the University's service quality** rather than worrying about the quality of their on-site platform.

## Summary

- Ottawa University uses Zoom and VTEL
- They connect campuses and classrooms on these solutions
- Best features: immediate ROI, no learning curve

---

"At Ottawa University, we really want to avoid focusing on managing hardware and instead shift our focus to delivering better services to our students and faculty," Corser said. "Within a few weeks, we were able to deploy Zoom at everyone's desk. It wasn't long before our staff wanted Zoom deployed on the classroom and conference room cart systems. Since our old cart systems were approaching end-of-life, we were looking into what they could possibly be replaced with. This is when Zoom recommended VTEL."

### The New VTEL Carts

"We tried out a VTEL IPanel on loan from the company, and we were satisfied enough to initially purchase four systems," said Corser. "The VTEL system was a very smart choice because we wanted something that was easy to use with a very small learning curve. At the end of the day, our constituents were already familiar with Zoom. They were also familiar with our previous cart system, which was convoluted in comparison to the simplicity of the VTEL IPanel. **By using VTEL with Zoom, the learning curve from both a software and hardware standpoint was literally almost zero.**"

"Now," Corser added, "we have carts that are not only much lighter and more functional than our legacy systems, but they also meet all of our video conferencing needs."

VTEL IPanel units consist of an HDTV with an HD pan/tilt/zoom camera, a professional room system microphone and an integrated PC running Windows 7. They come with a remote control that "remembers" certain programmed positions for the camera, allowing it to pan, tilt and zoom immediately to certain parts of a room. This is the kind of solution that is conducive to collaboration in learning environments. What's particularly great about VTEL units is that they have special compatibility with Zoom that makes them even easier to use.

"We had anticipated that all the action in video conferencing going forward would be in software and, after looking at everything under the sun, we have since made Zoom our software of choice for integrating into our hardware units because of its ease-of-use and high quality," said Richard Ford. "Our newest units have emphasized compatibility with Zoom even further by upgrading the camera and optimizing the IPanel for use with the software."

### Connecting Professors Across Campuses

"Before using our VTEL/Zoom units, students were forced to go to the campus where their professors were," said Corser. "Since we've switched over, students were finally able to go to the campuses closest to them, or even join from home."

**In addition to offering convenience for students, Ottawa University gains operational efficiencies by reducing the required number of adjunct professors while leveraging full-time faculty across their multiple sites.** One adjunct using Zoom can be just as effective as five adjunct professors spread through five different locations. Students have thus far responded positively to the changes.

"We are a very adjunct-heavy university," said Corser. "Previously, we would have had to pay two different adjuncts to teach the same class at the same time in two different locations. The first time we ran a class through Zoom, our students had an unbelievable experience. When a survey was conducted among the students participating in the trial run, there was unanimous agreement that they would definitely take another class in the same format. The same feelings were expressed by the instructor conducting the class."

"In the end, we were able to leverage this technology to minimize our use of adjuncts and lower operating costs without reducing the quality of education for the students," he adds. "Additionally, our travel budget has been greatly reduced by conducting more meetings over Zoom versus traveling across our various sites."

### Zoom's Legacy by the Numbers

The combination of solutions from Zoom and VTEL has provided a platform that became an integral part of Ottawa University's day-to-day function. The numbers don't lie.

"In any given month since I've started tracking usage, we're averaging roughly 32,000 minutes per month," said Corser.

Distributed across the University's 200 host accounts, this totals to around 160 minutes per month per account. In terms of ROI, Corser gives us a clever comparison: "In just one half of a leg of a trip to one of our sites, we've already paid for Zoom's annual licensing cost for half of the year."

A combination of a little Zoom magic and VTEL's versatile hardware solution has led Ottawa University to experience easy-to-use high-definition video conferencing in a way that was previously impossible with any other solution on the market. The products paid for themselves in a fairly short time and have led to positive reforms in the University's educational structure. In the educational arena, Ottawa University's unique and strategic use of Zoom to connect students with professors at different facilities has enhanced the student experience, while simultaneously lowering operating costs. The affordability of Zoom simply further cemented its position as Ottawa University's go-to video conferencing product.



### About Zoom

Zoom, the cloud meeting company, unifies cloud video conferencing, simple web meetings, and group collaboration into one easy-to-use platform. Our solution offers the first available mobile-screen sharing and an innovative hybrid cloud service, and works across desktop, tablet, mobile and room systems. Zoom services over 40 million participants and more than 100,000 businesses globally.

**Website**  
zoom.us

### Innovations

First 3-in-1 Cloud HD Meeting Platform  
First Mobile Screen Sharing  
First Hybrid Cloud Service