

Telecommunications

Helping hybrid collaboration thrive

Internet Initiative Japan

Japan's premier internet services provider empowers its people to work effectively from anywhere with a state-of-the-art web conferencing system built on the Lenovo ThinkSmart Hub.



Lenovo

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Who is Internet Initiative Japan?

Founded in 1992 by Koichi Suzuki, Internet Initiative Japan Inc. (IIJ) is the country's first internet service provider.

Today, it provides internet access and related services, such as data center operations and systems integration. IIJ serves approximately 13,000 clients, with a focus on large and mid-sized corporations, as well as government agencies.



Internet Initiative Japan

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The Challenge

Ever since its establishment, IJ has provided internet-related services that have helped businesses and people to make a digital shift. The company applies this same philosophy to its internal work environment, supporting diverse working styles and introducing telecommuting well before it had become commonplace in society.

These initiatives were accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. IJ decided to place restrictions on employees coming in to work, and made telecommuting mandatory, as a temporary measure. As part of the shift, the company made efforts to develop its telecommuting environment. During this process, communication issues between workers in the office and those working remotely became evident.

IJ had been using Microsoft Office 365 and Microsoft Teams since 2017, but it had taken time for the technology to get off the ground within the company. Stationary video conferencing systems were also installed in some meeting rooms, but using two different conferencing systems simultaneously caused a decline in usability and an increase in administrator workload.



Ms. Miho Takahashi

Business System Operation Division,
Business Infrastructure Reformation Department,
Internet Initiative Japan Inc.



“Our use of web conferencing increased as telecommuting became common during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, many people still were not comfortable with participating in web meetings from their homes or office desks. For this reason, creating a framework that would connect office meeting rooms and web conferences using Teams became an urgent task. At that time, connection with the video conferencing systems installed in some meeting rooms called for complicated procedures, so we considered replacing them with Microsoft Teams Rooms devices.”

Modernizing meetings

IIJ decided to move ahead with renewing its video conferencing system and brought in several Microsoft Teams Rooms devices for testing. Lenovo's ThinkSmart Hub for Teams Rooms was ultimately adopted for the project and the solution was introduced in internal meeting rooms for verification testing.


Ms. Miho Takahashi, who works in IIJ's Business Infrastructure Reformation Department, recalls: "We continued testing while increasing the number of units to respond to the COVID-19 situation. We officially switched over from our former video conferencing system in September 2020."

Hardware

Lenovo ThinkSmart Hub for Microsoft Teams Rooms
Lenovo ThinkSmart Bar
Jabra PanaCast

Software

Microsoft Office 365
Microsoft Teams
Microsoft Teams Rooms



Mr. Kazuo Seki, Director-General of the Business Infrastructure Reformation Department, adds: “Employees essentially could not come in for work in 2020, so important meetings started to be conducted on Teams. This resulted in more officers, directors, and executives recognizing the Teams technology. As our conventional video conference system was also expensive, it was decided that a switch would be made to the Teams Rooms devices.”

In this way, implementing Teams Rooms devices got the official green-light, and installation at offices in each business division began in earnest. After careful deliberation, IJ chose to deploy the Lenovo ThinkSmart Hub for Microsoft Teams Rooms and the Lenovo ThinkSmart Hub 500, along with other conferencing devices such as the Lenovo ThinkSmart Bar. Adjustments were made to ensure appropriate combinations and positioning for each meeting room, based on its size and layout.

“We aimed to achieve the best possible layout by experimenting from both user and administration perspectives while receiving advice from Lenovo,” says Ms. Miho Takahashi. “For instance, anchoring all devices will cause issues for maintenance and administration, so we changed installation methods according to location.”



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“We feel that there is less difficulty in holding conferences between offices, and with external parties. This has been an effective step towards achieving our goal of promoting diverse and flexible work styles.”

Ms. Miho Takahashi

Business System Operation Division,
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Results

To date, IIJ has deployed approximately 170 ThinkSmart Hub devices across multiple locations. Web conferences using Teams have now become a standard within the company. As for its original video conferencing system, only three units remain in Japan and nine units in overseas offices, resolving the issues caused by using two different systems.

Introducing the Lenovo ThinkSmart Hub has allowed IIJ to make an important mindset shift when it comes to collaboration. Now, it's about connecting users in different locations, instead of connecting spaces such as office meeting rooms.

Ms. Miho Takahashi comments: "This project has made the benefits of web conferences with Teams recognized. We have received much praise from users, as they are able to participate in conferences in the same way, whether they are physically present at the office or working remotely. There have been many benefits from an administrative perspective as well because there are far fewer user inquiries to respond to now that the conference system has been integrated into Teams."

IJJ has been able to further simplify management effort with the Lenovo ThinkSmart Manager, which it uses to deploy, monitor, manage, and troubleshoot all Hub devices from one centralized location.

Ms. Miho Takahashi has much praise for the ThinkSmart Manager: “A major benefit is the ability to check the status of the ThinkSmart Hub devices from another location. It allows us to confirm which device is participating in a conference and what types of errors are occurring, drastically shortening response times when a problem occurs.”

Next up for IJJ: rolling out the ThinkSmart Hub devices to meeting rooms that previously lacked video conferencing capabilities. The company has already decided to install 40 additional Lenovo devices to support these efforts.

Mr. Kazuo Seki concludes: “Due to the increase in units installed, future challenges will be how to construct a framework for stable operation. To make this a reality, there is a need for more effective use of Office 365 solutions that support telecommuting, which includes ThinkSmart Hub along with Teams. We look forward to Lenovo’s support in this area amongst others.”



Allows both remote and on-site workers to participate in meetings seamlessly



Improves usability by integrating and simplifying a complex conference system



Supports easier device management and faster troubleshooting



Mr. Kazuo Seki

Supervising Director-General,
Business Infrastructure Reformation Department,
Internet Initiative Japan Inc.

“With the Lenovo ThinkSmart Hub, I believe that we have been able to construct a system that seamlessly connects office meeting rooms and those working remotely.”

*This article is based on interviews conducted in May 2022. The data, number of units installed, names of organizations, positions, etc. in the article are current at the time of the interview.

Why **Lenovo**?

The key factor that led IJ to select Lenovo ThinkSmart Hub over a wide array of other solutions was its flexibility in combining devices, cameras, speakers, and microphones according to the office meeting room environment. “The aspect we focused on the most was the sense of presence in communication—in other words, creating an environment in which those physically present in the office and those participating online can conduct meetings without any discomfort,” notes Ms. Miho Takahashi. “To make this happen, we had to select an optimal device that met the needs of each meeting room and incorporate the system while considering the overall situation, including installing devices in appropriate locations among other activities. Under such circumstances, I believe that the Lenovo ThinkSmart Hub, which allows for flexible positioning and combination with various devices, was a major benefit for this project.”

She continues: “For example, because our mid-sized meeting room is slightly larger than the range of use specified for one ThinkSmart Hub, we combined it with a ThinkSmart Bar to resolve audio issues. For imagery, we selected cameras that offered a natural eye-level view of the entire conference room, and adjusted their positions. As a result, we were successful in creating an environment in which telecommuters could comfortably participate in conferences.”



How do you enable remote and on-site employees to connect effectively?

Step up your web conferencing capabilities with the Lenovo ThinkSmart Hub for Microsoft Teams Rooms.

[Explore Lenovo Smart Collaboration Solutions](#)