

Life Fitness Turns to West to Whip Webcasts into Shape


 The West logo consists of the word "west" in a lowercase, sans-serif font, enclosed within a white square border. The logo is positioned in the upper right corner of the page, overlaid on a red-tinted photograph of a person's hands pointing at a screen.

Founded in 1968, Life Fitness, a division of Brunswick Corporation (NYSE:BC), is a leading global manufacturer of exercise equipment for commercial and home use. The company revolutionized the exercise industry with the Lifecycle, which introduced electronic fitness to the marketplace, and today manufactures and sells more than 400 cardiovascular and strength products under the Life Fitness and Hammer Strength brands. Life Fitness is headquartered in Schiller Park, Illinois, and its products can be found in more than 120 countries around the world.

SITUATION

In any far-flung global operation, it can be difficult to keep top executives informed on the state of the business, including operations and manufacturing news, sales performance data, upcoming opportunities and corporate updates. Life Fitness solved the issue by conducting a series of quarterly webcasts throughout North America, EMEA, and Asia, as well as one for the heads of its three manufacturing facilities. These webcasts are led by the president of Life Fitness.

When they first started using webcasts, the webcasts were beset by technical issues. If an attendee had difficulty connecting, the entire webcast would stop until the problem was resolved. There was no way to mute participants globally, so if any did not mute themselves, everyone on the call would hear the road noise, co-workers bustling, dogs barking or other extraneous sounds in the background. Brunswick holds itself to high standards and was unhappy with how unprofessional these issues made the organization appear. In addition, because of the international nature of the webcasts, there were many different call-in numbers. Users would have to figure out which number to use based on their region and dial in to an international number – a process that was laborious and expensive.

SOLUTION

After looking into several alternatives, Life Fitness selected InterCall Webcast Pro as its webcasting platform. In addition, the company elected to use West's Operator Assisted service to manage the calls rather than doing it internally.

“Overnight we went from having a rather ‘ad hoc’ feel to our webcasts to coming across very professionally.”

Jesse Strittmater

VP / CIO

Life Fitness, A Brunswick Company



LifeFitness
WHAT WE LIVE FOR

One of the first changes participants noticed with the new platform was the ease with which they could join the call.

“Prior to using West, each participant had to dial in on a conference line, then enter the conference code,” says Jesse Strittmater, Vice President and CIO of Life Fitness. “Since executive team members were dialing in from all over the world, we had to remember which call-in numbers were attached to which locations and include them in the invitations. One wrong digit and they’d have to start all over again. Now they just click on a link, fill in their phone number, and the conference dials out to them. It’s far more efficient for time-pressed executives.”

The Operator Assisted service was another important factor in Life Fitness’ successful upgrade. With it, West provides a professional on each call to manage Q&A sessions, take care of individual user problems, and handle all the call’s details.

“We needed the ability to handle individual problems behind the scenes,” Strittmater says. “Prior to West, one user with an issue could bring an entire webcast to its knees. Now, if a participant has a problem he or she can dial 0 and the event manager will handle any issues offline, while the rest of the webcast proceeds as scheduled, without interruptions.”

RESULTS

The change in presentation of the calls was noticeable to the participants – and the President – from the very first call on the new platform.

“Overnight we went from having a rather ‘ad hoc’ feel to our webcasts to coming across very professionally,” Strittmater says. “The platform itself is very stable and powerful. We pride ourselves on how easy Life Fitness and Hammer Strength products are to use, even for a novice. The Webcast Pro platform is designed the same way – very intuitive and straightforward, which helped make a difference in our webcasts from the first day. Our president was happy with the performance, which relieved a source of tremendous stress.”

While it was originally selected for its stability, Strittmater and his team also like Webcast Pro’s flexibility, which allows them to tailor the experience to the needs of the audience as well as the preferences of the presenter.

“Our former president liked being able to see who was on the calls,” says Strittmater. “Our current president doesn’t, so it was easy to turn that part off for him. We can mute all the phones at once, and open up phones individually if needed. Through the Q&A, participants can ask a question and have the president answer it during the call. We do that a lot to keep things interactive and ensure everyone understands the information we’re presenting. We can record the calls so they can be posted later, especially the ones that provide information about Brunswick. No matter how we want to conduct the calls, Webcast Pro can do it.”

Strittmater was pleased with the performance of Webcast Pro’s “white glove” managed service. The platform combined with the capabilities of Operator Assisted Conferencing eliminated concerns about setting up and managing a webcast from his team. This allowed Strittmater and his team to strictly focus on content and not worry about the technical aspect of the webcast.

“We feel the Operator Assisted and Event Manager functions are critical to the success of our webcasts, ensuring everything goes according to plan,” he says. “We always have one of our team members join the meeting from the conference room, and have someone participate from the outside, just to make sure everything goes smoothly. At this point, though, it’s really more of a habit. The West Unified Communications Services event managers are great at taking care of everything.”

When post-event reports come in, Strittmater always reviews them closely to see if there are any issues. Since switching to West, however, he says there haven’t been any. In fact, he says that they have been so successful, the company plans to use the platform for its Life Fitness Academy dealer and sales rep training. It’s also why he recommends West to anyone having an important meeting with more than 25 users.

“It’s a great product, and I’ve been happy with it since we moved onto the platform,” Strittmater says. “Anytime you’re putting on a meeting with a group of top executives, it can be stressful. Their demands are high and their patience short. With West, though, I don’t have to give it a second thought. I know from experience that the image we will project through our meetings will be one we want to project – that of a deeply committed, professional organization. It has been well worth the investment.”