

HP Virtual Classroom delivers consistent message, cost savings to nuclear power industry



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— Steve Thompson, Senior Evaluator and Webcast Project Lead, INPO

The INPO logo is written in a bold, blue, italicized sans-serif font. A registered trademark symbol (®) is located at the top right of the 'O'.

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## Challenge

- Replace some face-to-face meetings
- Deliver consistent content to a nationwide and potentially global audience

## Solution

- HP Virtual Classroom

## Results

- \$500,000 in travel cost savings during first six months
- Productivity gains for member organizations and INPO presenters
- Improved feedback and participation

### HP Virtual Classroom delivers information

The Institute of Nuclear Power Operations (INPO) has found HP's Virtual Classroom is an ideal way to deliver information consistently to member organizations across the country while dramatically cutting costs and raising productivity.

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The nuclear power industry created INPO in 1979 to promote the highest levels of safety and reliability in the operation of nuclear electric generating plants. All U.S. organizations that operate commercial nuclear power plants are INPO members. Organizations in other countries participate in INPO activities as well, sharing their experiences with one another and helping to maintain safety standards worldwide.

### A complement to face-to-face meetings

Communication is at the core of INPO's mission. INPO serves as a forum for member organizations to exchange ideas and experiences. Historically, that communication has necessitated face-to-face meetings and training, which carries high travel costs (airfare, lodging, rental car, and meal expenses).

Those costs can be reduced thanks to secure remote meetings using the HP Virtual Classroom. "We decided we needed to do something to get information to a large number of people, and to deliver a consistent message," says Thompson. "The HP Virtual Classroom meets both objectives.

For industry executives, the benefit is clear: time savings. "Think of a guy running a nuclear plant," Thompson says. "It's difficult for him to schedule a whole day out of the office and travel for a meeting. But it's easy for him to block out an hour of his day for a remote meeting on the web."

### Consistent message

Another important benefit, Thompson adds, is delivering a more consistent message. "If you organize a series of regional meetings to discuss the same topic, there's always the risk of the message being delivered and perceived differently from one location to the next," Thompson says. "When everyone hears the same presentation, they walk away with the same understanding. That's an enormous benefit."

Equally important, Thompson says, is the feedback that participants gather from one another. After the leader has delivered a prepared presentation, individual participants share their own experiences with one another. So different plants learn from each other. Regional, face-to-face meetings, on the other hand, limit the exchange of information and the frequency of such experiences.

### Features encourage interactivity

Thompson says INPO evaluated other web collaboration tools and chose the HP Virtual Classroom both because of its features, and HP's responsiveness when helping INPO begin using the tool.

Presentation leaders typically prepare Microsoft PowerPoint presentations that last 20 minutes or less, and leave 40 minutes for Q&A sessions. "As people become more and more accustomed to using the HP Virtual Classroom, they're increasingly willing to talk," Thompson says. Some participants use the "hands up" feature to be recognized by the leader and ask a question. Others prefer to simply type in a question anonymously. Still others pursue a one-to-one conversation with someone else who's logged into the session. "The interactive flexibility is a great advantage," Thompson says.

Application Sharing is widely used in INPO remote meetings. Thompson uses the feature to call up INPO's own secure member website to demonstrate how each utility should post data and reports to a central database. Users can also call up commonly used applications, open and share documents, and even load and play animations for the attendees. And replacing a separate feedback form with an online response in the HP Virtual Classroom has increased response rates from 25 percent in the past to nearly 80 percent today.

### Virtual Classroom is easy to use

One of the factors that attracted INPO to the HP Virtual Classroom was ease of use. "As a user, the learning curve is pretty short," Thompson says. "If you can get on the Internet, and you can dial a phone, you're there."

Becoming an HP Virtual Classroom leader is also easy. Thompson and a few others at INPO participated in a four-hour virtual classroom training class from HP. They learned the basics of meeting facilitation: how to load a file, customize presentations with logos, etc. Now INPO has designed templates to help new virtual classroom leaders learn the basics of setting up a meeting and facilitating the webcast. They're also developing an automated registration system requiring participants to RSVP in advance of the session to get login information.

### Success leads to expanding use

The \$500,000 saved by the industry during 20 HP Virtual Classroom sessions in its first six months of use will likely increase even more this year. "You purchase X number of seats, and you theoretically can use it 24 x 7," says Thompson. "It doesn't take long to figure out that the more ways you find to use it over the course of a year, the more you'll save."

INPO is licensed for 66 seats of the HP Virtual Classroom. INPO posts a list of upcoming events on its website, and employees at member organizations sign up to participate. Early on, the events averaged 50-100 participants. But as the HP Virtual Classroom has become more widely accepted, INPO has found it can improve utilization by encouraging each plant to use one "seat" and gather employee groups together in a large conference room. As a result, virtual classroom events frequently now reach 200-250 participants.

But they're not all so large. For example, INPO team managers used to go to utilities for a pre-visit to cover logistics. Some were visiting the same location repeatedly. It quickly became clear that a small virtual classroom meeting could accomplish the same goals in a fraction of the time.



In fact, new uses are occurring to INPO every day. Thompson suspects the organization will increase the size of its license sometime soon. "Given the positive response we've gotten in the first year, I think we'll add capacity. What we don't want to do is have all the seats filled and then find out there's a vice president somewhere who wants to participate. I don't want to have to tell them 'No,'" Thompson says. "When you find a tool that's this effective, you want to keep encouraging its use."

### At a glance

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**Organization:** Institute of Nuclear Power Operations (INPO)

**Headquarters:** Atlanta, Georgia

**Founded:** 1979

**Number of employees:** 350

**Telephone:** (770) 644-8000

**Primary business:** To promote the highest levels of safety and reliability in the operation of nuclear electric generating plants.

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