

Prophet Adopts Beam to Control Travel Costs without Sacrificing Global Presence

About Prophet

Prophet, with headquarters in San Francisco, CA, is a brand, marketing and design consultancy delivering solutions for clients ranging from national restaurant chains to European mobile phone networks to leading home appliance companies. Employing approximately 300 people, the company maintains 10 offices worldwide and actively leverages its global presence. Its unique team of thinkers, makers, and doers works in a collaborative, multidisciplinary way to bridge the gap between strategy and execution with clients.

Prophet



“There are a lot of critical conversations that happen after a conference call and people miss out on it. But on Beam, they don’t.”

Beam Makes the Grade

In the past, Prophet has relied heavily on employee air travel between offices. For example, global project teams regularly congregated in central locations, while C-suite executives might visit all 10 offices in a single year. These trips created “out of control” costs, as well as placing considerable demands on employee time. Consequently, reducing travel without sacrificing productivity has been a longstanding priority at the company.

Prophet’s relationship with Beam began when Jeani Vance, chief information officer, was at a client site and observed an employee interacting via the telepresence device. The client sent a video of the experience to her and she shared the idea with others. Perpetually on the lookout for technology that could improve global collaboration and productivity, she contacted Beam and arranged a “test drive” of the product. Vance was impressed with the way that the device’s sturdy build provided a more genuine physical presence than other telepresence solutions, and decided to purchase three Beams for the company’s primary U.S. locations, followed by two others for deployment in the London and Hong Kong offices.

Prophet Collaborates Globally with Beam

Prophet’s employees began utilizing the Beam almost immediately, embracing it as a “cool” technology that transformed remote collaboration from a fallback strategy to a vital part of project development. After three months of steadily growing use, the vast majority of employees, spanning support staff to board members, had adopted the device.

Across employee and client team members, Prophet’s remote collaborators value the “in the room” quality that Beam presence provides. In particular, they praise the natural mobility, noting that the wide-angle cameras give them “peripheral vision” and make “it easy to see where [they’re] going,” while the ability to view the environment through simultaneously operating forward- and downward-facing cameras “emulates how [they] walk in real life.” In addition, these employees emphasize that the device provides them with true autonomy, facilitating active participation in a variety of multidisciplinary collaborations. “For our Palo Alto office, when everyone is remote, there are no after conversations. You just hang up,” Vance says, describing scenarios where Prophet still relies on Zoom. “For meetings on site [with Beam], you can see everything that is going on in the room—on the wall, on the screen, etc. You don’t have to be carried on a screen, or looking at a screen.”

Effective use of Beam with clients has produced various benefits for Prophet, including the “wow” factor. Besides encouraging clients to “beam in” to meetings, it actively demonstrates the company’s commitment to digital strategies.

Beam Delivers the Unexpected

Users aren’t the only people who appreciate the “in the room” quality of Beam presence. Thanks to the device’s lifelike presence, on-site team members seldom overlook remote teammates during meetings, and more often solicit their input. Most notably, interactions via Beam often continue during coffee breaks or after the conclusion of formal meetings, as if the remote teammates were there in person.

Beam’s impact on Prophet’s culture has been so noteworthy that employees have repeatedly given the device a starring role in the light-hearted videos that they use to celebrate achievements and build inter-office rapport. For instance, one humorous “day in the life” video that employees created for the company’s global Year in Review meeting featured an IT staffer providing support to a motley queue of devices that included a wall clock, a microwave and Beam, garnering rave reviews. In another memorable video, the company’s Chicago-based CIO beamed in to the London office and rolled off an elevator (in the London office in a Beam)—screaming tire sound effects included—to announce the promotion of an employee.