

CASE STUDY

BlueJeans Helps DFB to Prepare for Agility and Change of Direction

As the largest sporting federation in the world — with more than 7 million members — the German Football Association (DFB) is in charge of the organization and management of more than 1,000 annual football games and projects in an ever growing, people-focused enterprise.

Productivity Tools for an Agile Workforce

In recent times work has become increasingly decentralized federation-wide, which means DFB employees need access to tools that support easy mobility. This also holds true for stakeholders — like committees and representatives in DFB-organized leagues — as well as external service providers. With frequent travel, mobile video conferencing tools that facilitate on-the-go communication are highly valuable for employees — not just in Germany, but throughout Europe, and across the world.

To increase workforce productivity, the DFB's IT and digital teams modernized DFBnet, the organization's Football Management System. This involved adopting cloud-based workplace tools, beginning with Office 365, so employees could easily connect through a shared platform and work from home, on the go, or in the office. The speedy implementation and intuitive nature of tools like Office 365 maximized employee adoption.

Unified Video Calling for Multiple Endpoints

Flexible working and the tools required to support it are reshaping workplaces and work relationships. For the DFB, the organizational shift to SaaS-based communication included using the BlueJeans by



Industry: Sports

Challenge: The DFB needed to provide its employees and stakeholders with collaborative tools to support their mobility and increase workforce productivity. When Germany went into lockdown due to COVID-19, the DFB had to find a way to continue an ongoing hackathon.

Solution: The DFB expanded its deployment of BlueJeans Meetings to more than 450 users. To save its hackathon, it relied on BlueJeans Meetings to deliver keynote presentations and used BlueJeans Events for the grand finale.

Results: Usage of the BlueJeans platform within the DFB soared 1129% in the first three months of Germany's first lockdown. And the DFB was able to quickly pivot and turn its hackathon into a virtual event using BlueJeans Meetings and Events.

With large-scale event support, robust moderator controls, and audience engagement tools, BlueJeans Events seemed the perfect match for Hackathon².

Verizon video conferencing platform, a tool that a few DFB employees had used in the past to successfully connect with their remote co-workers. With the shift towards cloud, usage of the tool was expanded to the entire organization: more than 450 DFB employees, and full-time employees and volunteers of regional football associations were provided access to BlueJeans. Following the first COVID-19 lockdown, BlueJeans saw massive spikes in monthly video meetings, with more than 8,000 per month over April and May 2020. Though these numbers were already quite impressive in themselves, BlueJeans platform usage had grown significantly by 448% since the lockdown, and increased 1129% in the first three months.

Business Use Cases for Video Meetings at the DFB

The DFB relies on BlueJeans for video communication with regional and state associations, as well as partners and service providers. The platform's system and endpoint flexibility allow video calls to happen across various business scenarios — from organizing national team staff members to meeting with colleagues from small district leagues. BlueJeans Meetings accommodates multiple business use cases at the DFB, including presentations, short training sessions, informational seminars, recruitment interviews, tournament preparation, and project work. And it can be a game changer when everything is turned upside down, as it was during the pandemic.

How BlueJeans Events Saved the DFB's Hackathon

When the pandemic hit and Germany went into lockdown, the DFB needed to react fast and find a solution for its second hackathon, which the DFB-Akademie had already launched together with the German football club Eintracht Frankfurt and the Deutsche Fußball Liga subsidiary Sportec Solutions GmbH in February 2020.

Hackathon² brought together selected data scientists, match analysts, and mentors from all around the world. The goal was to use data for tactical game analyses and to generate new application-oriented knowledge to gain actionable insights that would improve game practice.

The event had already kicked off and a keynote session from the mentors had taken place as planned on site in Frankfurt. Invited international participants had been divided into teams of two, each consisting of a data scientist and a game analyst. The teams would compete against each other in programming and challenges. During the grand finale, planned for August 2020, a renowned jury would judge the winning team. Leading up to the final event, three international speakers would support participants by giving keynote addresses on using artificial intelligence and machine learning in football.

Taking advantage of BlueJeans Events' multiple levels of security, the DFB chose to restrict the live streaming using the "By invitation only" setting. Using this configuration, only attendees invited through the event interface were able to join.

Confronted with the pandemic, the DFB-Akademie decided in less than a week not to cancel Hackathon² but to change its tactic and continue the event virtually. "With increased digital services, we wanted to continue to fulfil our role as a pioneer and source of inspiration in these difficult times," commented Prof. Dr. Tobias Haupt, Head of the DFB-Akademie. Thanks to the DFB's long experience with BlueJeans Meetings, the change went smoothly.

For the online keynote, the participants simply joined BlueJeans Meeting where Sudarshan Gopaladesikan, Head of Sports Data Science at Sport Lisboa e Benfica, presented "The utility of data science: A new module in coaches' education", and Paul Power, Lead AI Scientist at Stats Perform, talked about capturing context from data. After the presentations, a moderator used BlueJeans Meetings' interactive features to allow participants to ask questions and provide feedback.

"The first online keynote worked so well and the feedback was so positive that we decided to add another keynote and do four instead of the three originally planned," explained Pascal Bauer, Manager Data Analysis and Machine Learning at the DFB-Akademie. "Given the international background of our participants, this was a bonus, only possible with a virtual event."

For the grand finale, the DFB aimed even higher and wanted to recreate the live event experiences for participants, jury, and viewers. Because of the COVID-19 measures and various travel restrictions across Europe, the Hackathon² team decided to go for a mix of online and on-site events. To better cater to all these different requirements, the DFB decided to use BlueJeans Events — a solution that combines the collaborative features of the meetings platform with the scalability of a broadcast tool. With large-scale event support, robust moderator controls, and audience engagement tools, BlueJeans Events seemed the perfect match for Hackathon².

"Though we were very confident because of our positive experience with BlueJeans Meetings, I must admit that we were nevertheless a bit nervous," said Pascal Bauer. "We didn't have a dedicated event manager on board. Instead, we had five people from my department to manage the event — none of them with previous BlueJeans Events experience. Furthermore, the set-up we had in mind with some participants in Frankfurt and others online, plus the live streaming, was probably not the easiest to start with."

Fortunately, the BlueJeans Events platform was extremely easy to learn and use. Furthermore, BlueJeans' customer service team provided phenomenal support before and during the event.

A major security concern for the DFB was to ensure that only legitimate viewers would join the live streaming. Taking advantage of BlueJeans Events' multiple levels of security, the DFB chose to restrict the live streaming using the "By invitation only" setting. Using this configuration, only attendees invited through the event interface were able to join. These included people from Bundesliga and Bundesliga 2 clubs, some international clubs, and interested technology companies. The security feature proved very essential: approximately 100 people who had not been invited were filtered out.

During the grand finale and after welcome speeches from special guests such as Fredi Bobic, a former player and now Board Member at Eintracht Frankfurt, and Oliver Bierhoff, a former player and now General Manager of the National Teams and the DFB-Akademie, the top five teams presented their results in real time to the judges — who participated live online.

"We wanted to give the teams the feeling that the whole jury was live on the spot," explained Pascal Bauer. "Therefore, we installed big screens where we projected the online judges via BlueJeans Meetings so that it felt they were really physically there."

Four people from the DFB-Akademie helped ensure that the technical execution of the finale went smoothly. One was responsible for the two cameras — one fixed and one mobile. Another took care of the existing standard sound system, which was easy to integrate as BlueJeans offers a broad range of integration into audio and room systems, enabling crystal-clear audio for the event. Two other members took care of the master computer and screen sharing as well as streaming the event to up to 200 viewers. Further, two members of BlueJeans' customer success team were on standby to provide help, but their intervention wasn't needed at all.

"It turned out that there was no reason for us being nervous," said Pascal Bauer. "Everybody was really happy with the finale of Hackathon². We used the post-event survey capabilities of BlueJeans Events and the feedback was positive throughout. Though I hope we will be able to meet each other in person again next year, this mixture of live and online event was an excellent compromise for all."

ABOUT DFB

The German Football Association (DFB) is the governing body of football in Germany and in charge of the organization and management of championship games and competitions. With more than 7 million members, the DFB is the largest sporting federation in the world. As part of its social and sociopolitical responsibility, the DFB feels strongly committed to the idea of fair play. It also promotes recreational and popular sports.