



Select Wines Chooses StarLeaf for Collaboration Solutions

Select Wines reduces travel costs, bridges the distance gaps in its remote team, and builds stronger customer and supplier relationships with StarLeaf.

From its headquarters in Vancouver, British Columbia, Select Wines has grown into one of the most successful privately owned import wine agencies in Canada. Its entrepreneurial drive, commitment to strategic innovation, and a nationwide team working from 8 locations across Canada has helped it build strong relationships with suppliers and retailers around the globe.

With most of its employees working remotely, and travel costs on the rise, Select Wines made it a top priority to find an affordable, easy-to-manage cloud-based collaboration solution. Since implementing StarLeaf, Select Wines has leveraged the power of video conferencing to bridge the distance gap between team members, launch new training initiatives, and reduce travel costs, which had reached an average of more than \$50,000 per year.

“Our StarLeaf system has greatly reduced the amount of domestic and foreign travel, although it won’t replace travel entirely for us,” explained Mervyn Cheah, Help Desk Technician with Select Wines. ***“Meeting face-to-face is important when we are negotiating—or renegotiating—a big contract with a supplier. Making the travel and time investment for that kind of meeting goes a long way in building rapport and trust in that relationship.”***

Select Wines is leveraging StarLeaf video conferencing and calling for meetings and conversations with many of its suppliers in Western Europe, the United States, Chile, Argentina, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as a number of locations across Canada. In addition to travel cost savings, the Company has seen a tremendous impact in other key areas of its business as a result of the video conferencing system.

“Our sales and marketing teams use StarLeaf every day,” said Cheah. ***“Mondays are always the busiest with our remote sales meetings. We have employees in Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, Quebec City, Nova Scotia—literally coast-to-coast—and they all call into StarLeaf every Monday morning for our weekly sales meeting.”***

Most employees had not used video conferencing before, so Select Wines took a more conservative approach to implementation. Cheah conducted training sessions via StarLeaf, providing a hands-on way for everyone to learn how to use the features, and giving them plenty of time to get comfortable with the system. It wasn't long before employees started using StarLeaf for more of their daily communications, holding face-to-face meetings with other team members, instead of just calling them on the telephone. Cheah attributes the ease of adoption to StarLeaf's design.

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“StarLeaf has a very straightforward interface,” remarked Cheah. ***“It is extremely easy to call in—just a click of a button—and they’re in the video meeting.”***

Managing and administrating the StarLeaf system has been pretty simple for Cheah, as well. ***“I don’t spend much time at all maintaining the system,”*** he said. ***“It’s solid and StarLeaf is great about letting us know when the system is due for an update. I have plenty of advance notice and plenty of time to let our teams know when the downtime will be so we can better manage the schedule.”*** On that note, StarLeaf typically plan for maintenance to take place outside of normal working hours.

Cheah has observed what he calls a ‘snowball effect’ on StarLeaf’s adoption and usage within the company. Select Wines now uses the system to conduct orientation and Business Intelligence (BI) training for new hires, and before the end of this year, they will use it to hold their first Town Hall meetings, more training sessions, and Q&A sessions for new products and services. After being trained on using StarLeaf via tablets in their day-to-day work, Cheah’s own IT team used the video conferencing technology to train the rest of the company during its national rollout of the program. Now that everyone at Select Wines is using at least the basic functions of the StarLeaf system, the company is focused on getting employees to consistently use it on a daily basis and learn the bigger features, like scheduling meetings.

When asked how StarLeaf has made his life as a Help Desk Technician easier, Cheah was quick to disclose his favorite feature: screensharing. ***“It’s one thing to tell people where and what to click,”*** he explained. ***“But being able to show them through StarLeaf’s screensharing capabilities? That’s pretty good, that’s pretty awesome!”***

Perhaps the most exciting development is the fact that Select Wines has started connecting with their current and prospective suppliers through StarLeaf. ***“We’re inviting people from all over the world using StarLeaf’s guest invitation function,”*** Cheah shared. ***“In the past, we would just pick up the phone, send an email, or use a standard conferencing application to communicate with suppliers. StarLeaf has made face-to-face easy, and now our teams are using it to meet with suppliers to plan out the next six months.”***

With StarLeaf, Select Wines has made video cloud collaboration an integral part of its overall business strategy, giving it a distinct competitive advantage. StarLeaf’s affordability, ease of use, and ability to connect through the cloud with any platform is opening new communication opportunities and getting Select Wines closer to the goal of replacing their old POTS phone system with StarLeaf for all corporate communications.