Non-Profit

Global Education Charity Speeding Up Education Reform with Yorktel Webcasting, Social Media

A small group of educators with a desire to make a positive impact on education is engaging a global audience of educators and policy makers through social media and the latest webcasting technologies.

"If we want to reach real peace in this world, we should start educating children."
— Mahatma Gandhi

It's hard to appreciate the empowering and enriching value of education until one becomes aware of the poverty and hopelessness that flourish where education is lacking. While several organisations and institutions are hard at work combating illiteracy and trying to effect positive educational reform, disconnects among teachers, students, leaders and policy makers make progress painfully slow. It was with these ideas in mind that Global Education Charity (GEC) was started in 2010 — to engage education communities globally in discussion and debate of key education issues and challenges and accelerate education and education's systems "faster forward."

From the beginning, GEC cofounders believed the latest broadcast technologies and social media would play key roles in accomplishing the group's mission.

It's encouraging to see how quickly the GEC movement has developed a strong and active following of educational advocates. We also realise that webcasting and social media are two keys that enable a group our size to be able to make the kind of global impact we're making."

GEC's inaugural forum addressed the topics of turning schools from "teaching factories" into "learning environments" and focused on two propositions: "The right to digital skills development should be adopted internationally as a basic human right" and "In the digital age, creativity in education will play a critical role, even more critical than STEM [science, technology, engineering and maths] education in achieving national economic success." GEC utilised telepresence technology to link audience members from various global locations such as London, Paris, Budapest, Hong Kong, Johannesburg, Virginia, Toronto, Glasgow, Sao Paulo, Libya, and Seoul.

The fact that GEC attracts companies and organisations such as UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), the World Bank, the Red Cross, and the British Council, says something about its influence. Additionally, GEC's audience and participants include ministers of education, lords, professors, education activists, field workers in third-world countries, and representatives of major international agencies.

One of the keys to GEC's success is making its debates easily accessible for all participants — regardless of device or location and minimising any interoperability and compatibility issues.

GEC ADOPTS YORKTEL STREAMING SERVICES, INCREASES AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

In 2015, Yorktel joined forces with GEC to assist with the "Preparing a Better World" live debate, which addressed the United Nations' agenda for Sustainable Development. Yorktel provided live streaming services via Yorkcast, its webcasting and streaming media services platform. Yorktel also worked with one of its video conferencing solution partners, which provided participants access to its Executive Experience Centres in New York, London, Cairo, and Bengaluru.

One of the highlights from the debate was the engagement of the audience members who were watching the Yorkcast live stream, and then using social media outlets such as Twitter to ask questions and submit comments directly to the panelists. "It's so integral to our debate and adds so much enrichment to be able to interact with the live conversations happening during the presentation, and to bring that feedback to our panelists," says COO of GEC since 2014. "It's what makes our events true debates and not just one-sided presentations, and it confirms that there is widespread interest in participating. Using this format as well as the webcasting and streaming media services platform makes the debates easily accessible to anyone with an Internet connection. This is a big leap forward from the early days when participants had to use a dedicated videoconference room outfitted with proprietary A/V equipment to participate in a live event."

In the early days of our debates, the teleconferencing technology was a distraction and difficult to configure. Now, the technology is moving to the background where it belongs, which enables us to focus on what matters most — hosting engaging debates with our audience members regardless of location or technology
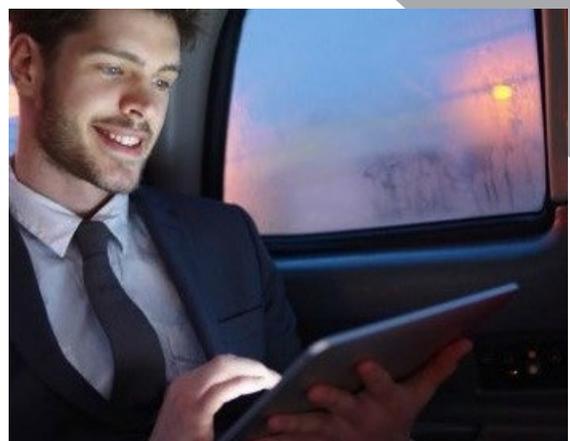
yorktel
Making complicated simple.

Since this debate, GEC's audience has continued to grow, and it now has more than 3,000 Twitter followers. "What's also nice is that when you account for our Twitter followers' shares, we've been able to reach more than 2 million people," added COO. "We know we still have a long way to go, but it's encouraging to see how quickly the GEC movement has developed a strong and active following of educational advocates. We also realise that webcasting and social media are two keys that enable a group our size to be able to make the kind of global impact we're making."

GEC's most recent debate was held during Mobile Learning week in Paris. "We partnered with UNESCO and discussed how mobile technology can strengthen the quality of education and facilitate learning," says COO. The pros and cons of mobile learning were discussed to better understand the educational promises, limitations and risks of new ICT [information and communication technologies] tools and pedagogies. Expert panelists examined some of the ways technology is fostering innovation in education at the level of systems, schools, classrooms and individuals."

While the COO expects video conferencing and broadcasting technologies to continue playing a key role in GEC's future, there is one change she has noticed over the years. "In the early days of our debates, the teleconferencing technology was a distraction and difficult to configure," she says. "Now, the technology is moving to the background where it belongs, which enables us to focus on what matters most — hosting engaging debates with our audience members regardless of location or technology. The sharing of insights can not be replaced."

One of the keys to GEC's success is making its debates easily accessible for all participants — regardless of device or location and minimising any interoperability and compatibility issues.