

# Texas Association of REALTORS® Educates State-Wide With Zoom



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## Challenge

The Texas Association of REALTORS® needed to find a more efficient and cost-effective way to provide continuing education for their rural associations.

## Solution

Use Zoom to connect classes throughout the state under one instructor.

## Result

About 3,500 attendees took courses on Zoom in 2014, resulting in \$200,000 additional revenue and a greater audience for their courses.

Texas is the second largest state in the United States, and the second most populous. Recently, it's seen a large influx of migration from other states and other countries, which has ignited the housing market. Since real estate is such a huge phenomenon in Texas, it needs some sort of organization to help keep its members focused on the important issues, provide services and benefits to assist them in their roles, and provide legal guidance to ensure both the member and the consumers they serve are protected. Enter the Texas Association of REALTORS®, an organization founded in 1920 with over 90,000 members in the present day.

Since its inception, the Texas Association of REALTORS® has worked to make the process of purchasing a home as simple as possible while protecting the rights of both the buyer and seller. Servicing an area of 640,000 square miles can be quite a burden on a volunteer trade association, but the Texas Association of REALTORS® has a partnership with 89 local associations, as well as the National Association of REALTORS® as part of the tri-level REALTOR® association. Many don't realize that not all real estate licensees are REALTORS®; only volunteer members of the association may call themselves REALTORS®.

As part of the services they offer, REALTORS® associations offer training to their members. For many smaller associations however, this is a daunting task, since seats may be difficult to fill. The Texas Association of REALTORS® recognized a need to ease this burden on the smaller associations that simply cannot find the number of members necessary to justify the investment required to run the courses. Of course, the logistics of doing this quickly become complicated. How does the Texas Association of REALTORS®, for example, facilitate a course for students in Paris, TX from its headquarters in Austin?

The answer is simple: Just use Zoom. We sat down to speak with Debra Hernandez - Director of Professional Development - and Jon Houser - Professional Development Manager - from the Texas Association of REALTORS® about their adoption of our software and how they applied it to improve their operations.

"This started when we ventured into pre-licensing and we made a guarantee that we wouldn't cancel classes," said Debra Hernandez. "In some locations, we had two or three students in one class, so we were dedicating resources for an instructor to teach the courses for a handful of students for 180 hours. This turned out to be an astronomically expensive ordeal. We were searching for a solution where we could continue to teach these students while limiting

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the financial burden of having instructors dispatched to these locations. The whole idea of using video conferencing for educating pre-licensees was born from this dilemma.”

When the department refocused those creative solutions and resources back to their members, the idea of servicing the smaller associations through video conferencing was a natural progression. Since there aren't enough people in some of these associations to justify sending over an instructor, the Texas Association of REALTORS® recognized that it was better to consolidate resources and offer courses for these smaller associations through video conferencing.

“This whole endeavor becomes nearly risk-free for associations with low participation rates because they only have to pay on a basis of how many students are attending, rather than paying one flat fee for an instructor when they may or may not have enough seats filled to justify the cost,” said Houser. “Since there’s no up-front cost, we’re able to offer a quality education throughout Texas without forcing anyone to travel or endure unnecessary financial burdens.”

Prior to using Zoom, the Texas Association of REALTORS® attempted to run its video course operations through other video conferencing solutions.

“We’ve tried solutions that just weren't viable,” said Houser. “They didn't work for our needs, they weren't user friendly, and one of them even severely affected bandwidth. We also had various issues throughout our remote locations. **When we used Zoom, it provided a broader expense. We were able to do a lot more with intuitive software that did not affect our bandwidth.**”

In looking for the best solution, the Texas Association of REALTORS® got in touch with Zoom’s technology partner VTEL.

“Richard Ford at VTEL introduced us to Zoom and told us that we should try it out,” said Hernandez. “As soon as we tried it, we had no other word to describe it with but ‘awesome’. The support offered to us was first-class; we receive excellent response and have had no problems worth mentioning. **Zoom’s service has been very reliable and was easy to use and simple enough for our end users to understand.**”

Now the Texas Association of REALTORS® is using Zoom in conjunction with VTEL’s IPanel across multiple locations, and it is also looking to expand this adoption into others. For the moment, they have set some guidelines as to what kind of equipment an association is expected to have in order to participate in these Zoom-hosted classes. The highly affordable VTEL IPanel has enabled even small offices to enjoy the benefits of a boardroom caliber videoconferencing system. Further, no technical expertise is required to be up and running with the Zoom / VTEL combination in a matter of minutes.

Zoom’s flexibility with regards to equipment compatibility has been a saving grace in this particular adoption phase, as underlined by Houser’s own relation to their experience: “One thing we like about Zoom is that you don't have to have one particular type of equipment to communicate through it,” said Houser. “We do expect local associations that are hosting classes to have the type of equipment we have or something like VTEL with higher performance in order to establish a presentation standard that will provide uniformity throughout all locations.”

Many organizations migrate to Zoom for various reasons. Usually, the chief reason is the desire for flexibility and extended reach of communications. Plenty of times, Zoom is judged on the merit of being easy-to-use software. Aside from that, however, Zoom does have an effect on an organization’s finances. Debra Hernandez relates the financial effect that Zoom has had on the Texas Association of REALTORS®.

“We had around 3,500 attendees take courses through Zoom in 2014,” said Hernandez. **“In relation to our total education revenue this year, Zoom and VTEL offerings accounted for almost 40% of that revenue, and led to a healthy increase over our 2013 revenue. Most of the audiences we’re reaching in all likelihood would not have been able to offer live courses this past year had this kind of system not been implemented.”**

Running an education department for an organization as large as the Texas Association of REALTORS® is no walk in the park. With Zoom, the task of organizing courses has given them a certain degree of freedom that would have otherwise been lacking. Our software has played a pivotal role in this achievement and continues to provide reliable, intuitive video conferencing with a low bandwidth footprint and a significant veritable return on investment.



#### About Zoom

Zoom, the cloud meeting company, unifies cloud video conferencing, simple web meetings, and group collaboration into one easy-to-use platform. Our solution offers the first available mobile-screen sharing and an innovative hybrid cloud service, and works across desktop, tablet, mobile and room systems.

Zoom services over 40 million participants and more than 100,000 businesses globally.

**Website**  
zoom.us

#### Innovations

First 3-in-1 Cloud HD Meeting Platform  
First Mobile Screen Sharing  
First Hybrid Cloud Service