AVI

Technology Guide:

HOW TO SELECT THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY FOR YOUR HUDDLE ROOMS
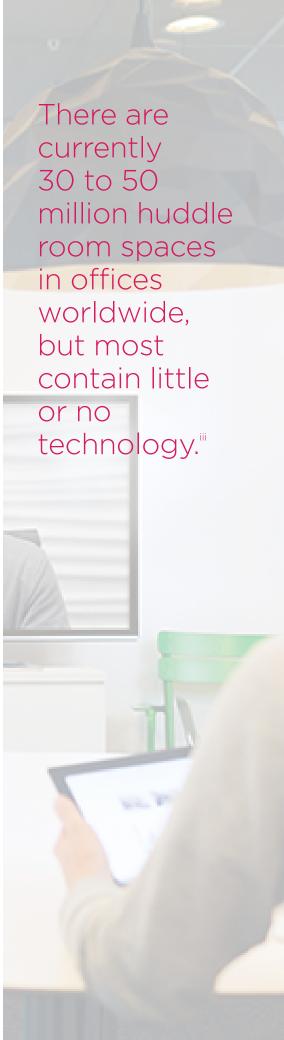
INTRODUCTION

The office environment is undergoing disruptive changes. Physical and metaphorical walls are being torn down as companies look to increase collaboration, stay innovative, and provide their mobile and often millennial workforce a better way to engage with peers and clients.

For the physical space within an office, these new disruptions in how companies and employees approach work means there is a greater need for small meeting rooms, or huddle spaces. Typically, huddle spaces are designed to fit two to six people. The purpose of their use can be as varied as ad hoc brainstorming sessions to small presentations.

While huddle rooms are not a new concept, the demand for these rooms to do more is growing. Wainhouse Research estimates there are currently 30 to 50 million huddle room spaces in offices worldwide, but most contain little or no technology.[i] In fact, the majority are equipped only with basic furniture, such as a small table, a few chairs, and perhaps a speakerphone, despite outnumbering large, sophisticated conference spaces by as much as 50:1.[ii]

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HOW TECHNOLOGY CAN IMPROVE FUNCTIONALITY IN HUDDLE SPACES

More than 50 percent of employees report that the number of meetings they attend has increased dramatically.[iv] However, the lack of technology in many spaces leaves them underutilized. At the same time, Gallup has reported that telecommuting in the United States has risen to 37 percent of the workforce.[v] By revamping huddle spaces and equipping them with technology that allows for multiple uses, companies could see increased benefits for collaboration with both local and remote participants. Companies can improve usage of these collaboration spaces, since equipping huddle spaces is significantly less costly than equipping large video conferencing rooms. Some companies may even find they can spend less overall and accomplish many of the same goals as large conference spaces by maximizing use of huddle rooms equipped with collaboration technology.

DESIGN THE SPACE TO FIT YOUR USE REQUIREMENTS

There are three primary ways that huddle spaces are used in the modern office. Here's a look at the most common uses for huddle spaces and the types of activities these huddle spaces need to be able to facilitate:

A typical huddle room will likely include a display, audio system, cameras, and content presentation solution.

UNPLANNED MEETINGS

More than a third of all meetings are impromptu and that number is expected to grow.[vi] The need for businesses to be more flexible and agile in how they operate and collaborate is driving this increase—and they need spaces that can be agile and flexible as well.

Huddle spaces are the perfect solution, particularly when there are a large number of them throughout an organization. But, these spaces must also be easily accessible and available to employees on an as-needed basis. The use of room scheduling software that allows employees to see what rooms are available in real time is particularly effective in allowing employees to quickly find a place to conduct their impromptu meetings.

37%
of U.S. workers report having worked from home.

Source: Gallup

MEETINGS WITH LOCAL PARTICIPANTS

Whether meetings are impromptu or scheduled, employees frequently use huddle rooms to meet in small groups for project collaboration. In these instances, meeting participants need the ability to not only easily find and schedule a room, but they also need the ability to share content, brainstorm and annotate, and to save their work and share it with the group. Currently, most huddle rooms lack this type of collaboration technology, which means meetings for small groups are often not as effective as they could be.

Small group meetings are often held in large conference rooms with complicated technology, even if they have only basic collaboration needs. But this wastes time and lowers productivity. In fact, in one study, 67 percent of employees stated that more than half of the meetings they attend are not of value, and said it was often due to delays in starting meetings because of the difficulty of using traditional web conferencing tools for ad hoc and on-on-one meetings.[vii]

MEETINGS WITH REMOTE PARTICIPANTS

Dispersed teams, a more mobile workforce, and an increase in remote workers makes remote collaboration a common occurrence amongst business teams. Today, 32 percent of all meetings are virtual, a trend that skews higher for younger workers (age 26-35) who report that 38 percent of all of their meetings are held virtually.[viii] Not surprisingly, many workers are connecting to these remote meetings via a number of devices—smartphones, tablets, laptops, or desktop.

To make these small group remote collaboration meetings productive and effective, choose a cloud-based video conferencing solution that allows local and remote participants to connect via any device. Additionally, they need the ability to present and share content remotely, including the ability to annotate and brainstorm with remote participants.

Real-World Collaboration: All-in-One Huddle Solution

Walk into the room and start collaborating with the Cisco TelePresence® MX300 G2 and MX200 G2. Even the initial setup is so simple it only takes 10 minutes. The solution includes the codec, display, camera, integrated microphone and loudspeakers, and cables. You don't have to worry that one component won't work with another one because it was designed to be an all-in-one unit. An easy-to-use "one button-to-push" control ensures you start your meetings on time. And it's also easy to share content with just the push of a button.

ASSESSING YOUR HUDDLE ROOM NEEDS

To make huddle rooms effective and productive spaces for employees to conduct meetings, there are several important requirements you should consider. The chart below includes a comprehensive list of user activities and the associated technology solution you will need. Use the chart to assess and score how important each of these requirements/technology will be to your own environment and working needs:

Need	Technology	Importance (Scale 1-10)
Ability to easily schedule and find an open room	Room scheduling/reservation solution	
Ability to see if the technology participants need for their meeting is available in a given room	Room scheduling/reservation solution that tracks devices in the room	
Ability to conduct conference calls with high-quality sound	Audio collaboration system	
Ability to share content locally from any device (phone, tablet, laptop)	Local presentation/content sharing solution	
Ability to share content wirelessly	Local wireless presentation/content sharing solution	
Ability to brainstorm and conduct group work on a project	Interactive display	
Ability to connect remote participants via audio and video to the meeting from any device	Cloud-based video collaboration solution	
Ability to share content locally and to/from remote participants	Cloud-based video collaboration solution	
Ability for both local and remote participants to participate in group work such as brainstorming and annotating	Cloud-based collaboration software	
Ability to save work and send to participants	Software application	
Ability to clear the device used for sharing and end session so it's ready for next use	Software or interactive display	

FINDING THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR HUDDLE ROOM

There are a number of different solutions on the market for huddle spaces, which makes finding the right combination of solutions challenging. To help, we've highlighted a variety of technology solutions that can help you meet your end users' needs, whether it's for simple audio conferencing or a full interactive collaboration solution.

Consumer vs. Enterprise Solutions: What's the Difference?

While there are consumer-grade solutions on the market that can meet some of the same end-user needs, these solutions often come with limitations that impact the overall quality of the experience and are, therefore, not appropriate in a business setting. For example, consumer-grade cameras or audio solutions may allow for group audio and video conferencing, but the sound quality may be poor on the far end, and the cameras may not have the zoom width to capture all the speakers in the room.

Furthermore, the complexity of getting consumer-grade solutions from different vendors installed and working seamlessly together is often daunting and time-consuming for IT, making the additional cost of an enterprise solution well worth its return on investment.

Real-World Collaboration: Everyone Gets Seen and Heard

Using the Polycom® RealPresence Centro™ ensures everyone stays on camera and gets even audio coverage. The integrated directional microphones capture audio from anywhere in the room, and 360-degree video technology means no one gets cut out of view and remote participants aren't stuck staring at a table. You can even share content right from your smart phone.

SOLUTIONS

Below is a brief description of various enterprise technology solutions you may want to deploy in your huddle rooms as well as a comparison chart of what features each solution offers. It is by no means comprehensive but highlights quality options that address the range of huddle room needs and is representative of a variety of solution categories.

BIAMP DEVIO™

A single-box solution, the Biamp Devio provides an exceptional audio conferencing experience for huddle spaces. Its beamforming microphone provides full 360-degree coverage of the meeting space. It includes acoustic echo cancellation (AEC) and noise reduction technologies, resulting in quality audio for all call participants.

POLYCOM® REALPRESENCE CENTRO™

Designed as a collaboration and content-sharing hub for local and remote work teams, the Real Presence Centro's intelligent 360° camera captures everyone in the meeting. As a standing unit, it is ideal for an open huddle space without traditional meeting equipment. Integrated microphones and powered speakers provide high-quality audio, while content sharing capabilities allow local and remote teams to share, annotate, and save content. Integration with Microsoft Outlook also makes it easy to start collaborating with one touch.

CISCO TELEPRESENCE MX 200 OR 300

This solution includes single or dual-screen options, powerful cameras that include intelligent speaker-tracking technology, and features presenter tracking, where the camera follows presenters as they move. In addition, content sharing can be done on a second display or through Cisco's intelligent proximity, allowing users to view content on their personal devices.

MERSIVE SOLSTICE

Multiple users can connect simultaneously to the display using any of a number of devices (including Windows, Apple and Android) over an existing Wi-Fi or Ethernet network. Users can easily connect and share content. Running on a standard Windows platform, this solution integrates with existing in-room AV control systems and runs in parallel with unified communication solutions such as Skype for Business, WebEx, GoToMeeting, etc. Users can live stream desktop, apps, documents, videos, and more and see changes on display in real-time.

NEWLINE INTERACTIVE TRUTOUCHX

This solution features a display that enables team interaction using voice, video, data, and annotation. Users can collaborate with anyone, anywhere no matter what device or system they use while enjoying clear sound quality, and two wide angle cameras let participants be seen wherever they are in the room. It stores files and information locally, and users can annotate with their fingers.

Requirements	Biamp Devio	Polycom RealPresence Centro	Cisco MX	Mersive Solstice	Newline Interactive TRUTOUCH
Integrates with calendar scheduling software		X		X	
Conduct audio conferences	X	X		X	X
Share content locally from laptops and/or mobile devices	X		X	X	
Share content wirelessly from any device		X	X	X	X
Connect to remote participants via audio and video	X	X	X	X	X
Collaborate locally and remotely	X	X	X	X	X
Annotation capabilities		X			X
Save work and send to participants		X			X
Clear device of content and end session		X			X

CONCLUSION

With so many options on the market, it can be difficult to determine what is the best solution to meet all your huddle room needs. A qualified AV integrator, such as AVI Systems, can help determine what solution will provide the best experience for your users, meet your requirements, and be most cost-effective.

To learn more, contact AVI Systems at 855-521-0050 or www.avisystems.com.

ABOUT AVI SYSTEMS

Founded in 1974, AVI Systems is currently the nation's fourth-largest AV solutions provider, and the only 100% employee-owned one.

Our success owes in great part to having the most highly credentialed, capable and motivated work force in the AV industry. The strength of our process, the unparalleled support we offer, and our conviction that technology should liberate, not impede, are also foundational to our success.

By working together, we remove communication barriers instead of creating them, freeing our customers to seize opportunity, and imagine new possibilities. This is our definition of Communication Liberation, and it's reflected in the incredible diversity of AV solutions we provide for business, commercial, educational and government clients across America.

ABOUT CISCO

Cisco is the worldwide leader in IT that helps companies seize the opportunities of tomorrow by proving that amazing things can happen when you connect the previously unconnected. At Cisco customers come first and an integral part of our DNA is creating long-lasting customer partnerships and working with them to identify their needs and provide solutions that support their success.

ABOUT POLYCOM

Polycom helps organizations unleash the power of human collaboration. More than 400,000 companies and institutions worldwide defy distance with secure video, voice and content solutions from Polycom to increase productivity, speed time to market, provide better customer service, expand education and save lives. Polycom and its global partner ecosystem provide flexible collaboration solutions for any environment that deliver the best user experience, the broadest multi-vendor interoperability and unmatched investment protection.

SOURCES

i.   "Understanding the Huddle Room," Wainhouse Research, October 2015.
ii.   Ibid.
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