7 FUNDAMENTALS OF CONFERENCE & HUDDLE ROOM AV IN A REMOTE WORLD
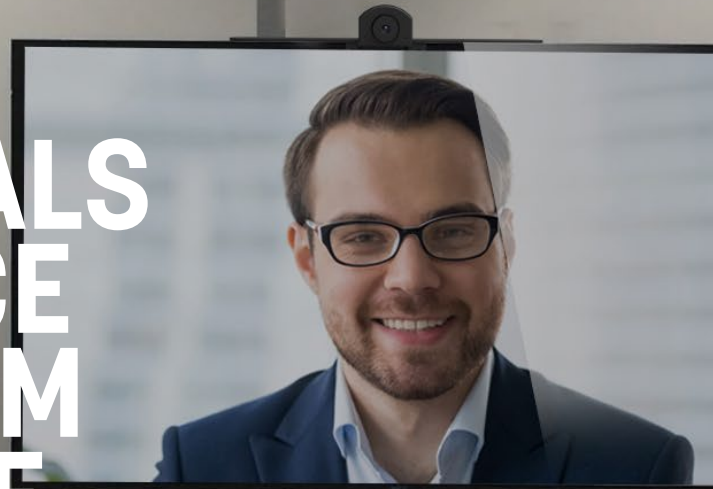
As we move into a world that trends towards social distancing and away from large gatherings, conference and huddle rooms are becoming even more important to operational success. Organizations are reducing the number of people that work in a centralized office, and they are now opting for more audio and video conferencing between those in the office and remote team members, customers and prospects.

Fortunately, recent advances in conference room AV and huddle room technology have enabled the global workforce to collaborate closely and succeed in a remote environment. However, we're now more dependent upon these tools than ever before, and a sound conferencing AV strategy and design are a must. In this article, you'll learn the seven fundamentals that every conference room AV system needs for your team to succeed.

#1 Easy to use

We all know the uncomfortable experience of having meetings delayed because of the difficulties presenters have with the technology. As such, ease of use is essential for any conferencing system, ensuring that meetings start on time and operate as seamlessly as possible for all. An ideal system shouldn't require advanced tech skills to operate, and it should have an intuitive interface and simple controls that even the least tech-savvy individuals can navigate.

#2 Designed for Distancing

Elbow-to-elbow seating arrangements conflict with today's workplace best practices. As such, your conference room or huddle room AV technology needs to be designed in a way that enables physically-present attendees to be clearly seen and heard by virtual attendees. Cameras should offer a **wide field of view**, and audio components should include **multiple mics** to ensure sufficient coverage.

Speaking of audio, more manufacturers are now offering ceiling mics, which can be most effective for optimal and even sound pickup. In fact, most huddle rooms only need one ceiling mic, placed over the center of the desk. Larger conference rooms may need multiple ceiling mics, depending on the size of the room.

Additionally, **screen size and quantity** are also important considerations, relative to the size of the meeting room. Screens should be big enough for all attendees to see,

but not so large that they become a strain to view. Dual displays can also be ideal, enabling presenters to show multiple screens at once when necessary.

Wireless connectivity is also an essential feature, further supporting the need for distance between team members and limiting the appearance of messy wires and cables. Be sure to discuss these factors with any conferencing AV providers you're considering.

#3 Flexible Collaboration Functionality

Make sure the system you choose is equipped with cloud-collaboration software that enables robust teamwork between on-site and remote participants. All participants should be able to easily connect to the platform and share content from any device.

Additionally, your system needs to integrate seamlessly with today's most popular conferencing platforms, such as Google Meet, WebEx, Zoom and MS Teams, to name a few. If you're connecting to someone else's call and they're using a different platform, you want to be sure that your system can easily integrate.

#4 Commercial-grade is a Must

Though the price point of consumer-grade systems can be appealing, their functionality, quality and reliability aren't suitable for enterprise needs. Screen and speaker output, echo cancellation and sufficient audio mixing are common features of commercial-grade systems, but not for consumer models.

Additionally, it's important to remember that the simple design of consumer systems doesn't always equate to ease-of-use. Finally, consumer-grade systems don't come with the robust warranties that you receive with an enterprise system, and they generally don't offer responsive support (more on support in #7). Ensure that you get the most value for your investment and go with a commercial-grade system.

#5 Secure

Huddle room and conference room AV systems rely on connectivity to your network, so they should easily integrate with your existing security infrastructure. Robust protection against internal and external intrusion is mandatory for any system you're considering.

#6 Experienced Design & Installation

Installation may seem like a given, but don't assume that the provider you choose can design and install your system. It's best to work with an experienced provider that can correctly install the system they've designed and sold - and they can do it the right way the first time.

When considering a provider, ask them how many similar systems they design and install on an annual basis. The experience of the provider is an important value factor that should not be overlooked.

#7 Responsive Support

By the same token, responsive support is also essential, and it's not a given with every provider. Your provider should offer remote troubleshooting resources and flexible support hours in the event that troubleshooting doesn't resolve the issue.

A qualified provider will ask the right questions to gain an understanding of your performance needs, space requirements and vision of an ideal conference room AV system. However, starting the conversation by discussing the seven fundamentals covered in this article will ensure you find the perfect setup.

For more information or questions about commercial-grade conference and huddle room AV systems, <u>contact us today</u>.