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Research

Adding Collaboration to the Huddle Room

Understanding user needs and IT requirements for small enterprise meeting spaces.

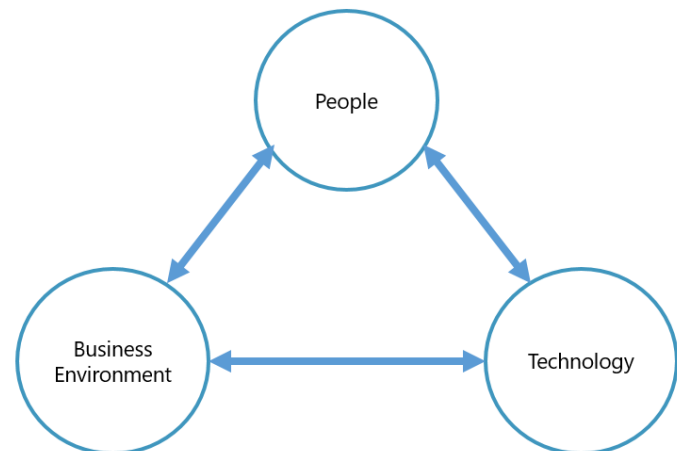This study sponsored by ...

zoom

The Changing Work Environment

This is a time of significant change in the conferencing, collaboration and audio-visual world. Wainhouse Research (WR) has identified three of the key drivers behind these changes in how people meet and work together.

Driver #1: People

The mix of employees is changing within the enterprise. As of the first quarter of 2015, Millennials (adults ages 18 to 34) outnumbered Baby Boomers and Gen X-ers within the US labor force. In fact, one in three American workers today are Millennials.[1]

More importantly, today's younger workers have different priorities, for both their work and personal lives, than their more mature colleagues. These workers are driven by a desire to collaborate with others and contribute to the success of their organization. They expect to be able to work flexible hours, from various locations, using different devices – including personal / BYO devices, over different networks.

Yesterday's Workers	Today's Workers
• Risk averse – seek stability / consistency • Focus on financial achievement • Used to "formal" work environments • Happy to present / be presented to	• Driven by desire to contribute • Focused less on compensation • Thrive in informal, fluid work situations • Want to collaborate – not listen

Figure 1: Comparison of Priorities of Yesterday and Today's Workers

Driver #2: Business Environment

Today's business environment is very different from that of the past. While globalization has expanded the customer and prospect base for many companies, it simultaneously generated increased competition, additional support burdens, and a countless number of other headaches and challenges.

To address the heightened expectations of their customers and employees, companies have had to embrace a faster-paced, less-structured, more nimble way of working. In such an environment, many items that used to take weeks or months are now handled in hours or days. And many things that used to be scheduled well in advance are now processed on the fly or with only a few minutes notice. Time-consuming, labor-intensive, formal ways of conducting business have been replaced by a "do it now" and "close it out immediately" mindset. Such is the requirement for companies seeking to attract next-generation talent and serve today's savvy customers.

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[1] Source: Pew Research - http://pewrsr.ch/1KAFrQ0

Driver #3: Technology Advancements and Dependency

Back in the day before cell phones and the Internet, people were often unreachable. Perhaps you knew a person was "on the way" from the office to home or at the airport waiting to board a plane, but you could not easily communicate with them until they arrived at their destination.

But that was then, and this is now. Today, thanks to technology advancements, people are always connected. In fact, for many people, their communication technology has become a natural extension of their person, making them available to clients and colleagues (e.g. their manager) anytime – day or night. If you think this is an exaggeration, consider the following …

- More people own a cell phone today than a toothbrush. [2]

- There are more mobile phones on the planet than TVs. [2]

- 91% of all US citizens have their mobile device within reach 24/7. [2]

- The average person checks his cell phone 110 times a DAY, and as often as every 6 seconds in the evening. Some users even check their devices up to 900 times per day! [3]

Why have we become so dependent on technology? Simply stated – our technology holds our most important information, makes us reachable by those we love, and lets us connect to the rest of the world. Technology used to enhance our lives. Today technology makes our lives possible.

Also noteworthy is the inter-dependency between these drivers. Technology enhancements have driven changes in people's expectations, which in turn forced changes in the business environment, which in turn prompts additional technology advancements, etc.

The Legacy Meeting Room Environment

Unfortunately, the audio-visual estates within most organizations were designed to address the scheduled, formal, structured meeting requirements of yesterday. Specifically …

- There are simply not enough AV-enabled meeting rooms available to support today's uber-collaborative workforce.

- Most of the existing AV-enabled meeting rooms contain technology and systems that have not been updated to reflect today's requirements.

- Traditional AV-enabled meeting rooms are expensive – in terms of real estate and technology.

To address today's needs, many organizations are looking to their smaller meeting rooms, which Wainhouse Research refers to as "huddle rooms."

This study, sponsored by cloud conferencing provider Zoom, provides information and insight into the functionality, IT, and user requirements for collaboration-enabling small meeting rooms.

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[2] Source: http://bit.ly/1h4PjXs

[3] Source: http://dailym.ai/1gATNlP

Collaboration in the Huddle Room

Exactly what is a huddle room? The short definition is a small meeting room well suited for people to huddle together for impromptu meetings, discussions, brainstorming and problem solving sessions.

WR has conducted extensive research into this topic and has compiled a list of characteristics applicable to the typical huddle room today.

> **What is a Huddle Room?**
>
> A small meeting room supporting six or less participants. It is the "room around the corner" that flies below the radar, attracting little or no attention from facilities, IT, and the AV / VC teams within the organization.

First of all, huddle rooms tend to be less formally appointed than larger meeting rooms. In most cases, huddle rooms contain standard (meaning low cost) meeting room furniture, and have not received any costly facilities improvements (e.g. additional lighting, acoustic treatments or panels, cable management systems, etc.).

In addition, unlike traditional AV / video conferencing rooms, huddle rooms are typically unmanaged, meaning that they are not centrally scheduled, coordinated, or controlled. Instead, huddle rooms tend to be used on an ad-hoc basis.

Furthermore, the majority of enterprise huddle rooms are NOT currently collaboration ready. Some companies have installed speaker phones or desk phones on the tables in some of their huddle rooms. And some organizations have installed flat screens in some of their smaller meeting spaces. But in general, the typical huddle room is not AV-enabled.

WR estimates that there are 30 – 50 million (yes – this is not a typo) huddle rooms in the world today. And indications are that this number is increasing over time as organizations include large numbers of huddle rooms in new building plans and re-work existing buildings in favor of smaller meeting spaces and more flexible (e.g. open) work spaces.

User Requirements / Expectations

Compared to their larger, more formal and traditional cousins, huddle rooms have relatively basic functionality requirements. Specifically, WR has determined that the typical organization requires the following features / functions (in order of priority) in their huddle rooms:

- **Audio Conferencing** – users expect to be able to place standard phone calls and participate in audio conferences from their huddle rooms. Equally important is the ability to place calls easily using a standard workflow (e.g. dial a number, press the dial button, etc.), and without the need for in-room or remote support.

- **Local Content Presentation** – one of the most common use cases for a huddle room is the local presentation of PC and mobile content (e.g. PowerPoint presentations, websites, images, etc.) on a shared in-room display. Huddle rooms users expect to be able to quickly and easily share content from various devices, without the need for in-room or remote support, and without having to manage in-room devices (e.g. power on displays, switch inputs, etc.). To simplify and expedite connections, huddle rooms should support wireless content sharing and wired (HDMI, VGA) connections as an alternative.

- **Video Conferencing** – although many of the sessions will require only audio conferencing and/or content presentation, the majority of an organization's huddle rooms should also support video conferencing. Depending on the room design and user expectations, the video capabilities may range from basic (e.g. a fixed USB webcam) to advanced (one or even several motorized pan / tilt / zoom cameras). Once again, the video conferencing functionality should not require in-room or remote support.

Specific features aside, huddle room users also expect …

- Collaboration to be available globally and throughout the company
- Short time from request to realization of benefits
- A streamlined and consistent workflow
- Strong ease of use such that support and training are not required
- A high quality experience (audio, content, and video)
- Exceptional reliability (like a standard telephone)
- Availability throughout the organization

In addition, huddle room users expect to use BYO (bring your own) devices (cell phones, tablets, and even notebook PCs) in several ways including:

- As content sources (e.g. share content or images from a smartphone or tablet)

- As the system codec (e.g. run a collaboration client like Zoom, Skype for Business, Lync, Jabber, etc. on a notebook and use that software to host a collaboration session)

- As the system control interface – if required (e.g. for dialing, changing volume, etc.)

IT Requirements / Expectations

The large volume of huddle rooms, combined with the need to control cost (to support a broad deployment) gives rise to a specific set of IT requirements and expectations including:

- Easy purchasing - a single SKU, limited number of options, understandable pricing

- Low cost – both up-front and ongoing (maintenance, updates, management, etc.)

- Easy and quick installation – ideally requiring only basic skills and little or no training

- Centralized provisioning, monitoring, and management – a vital part of ensuring reliability and a consistent, end-to-end user experience, without the need for in-room support or local resources

Essentially, IT expects the huddle room AV solution to behave like an IT device (e.g. a printer or a phone), and integrate seamlessly with other systems in use throughout the organization (e.g. Microsoft Skype for Business / Lync, Microsoft Exchange / Outlook, Google Calendar, Slack, etc.).

Solution Spotlight

The sponsor of this study, Zoom, is a collaboration service provider offering a product / service solution combination that addresses the core requirements and priorities of enterprise huddle rooms.

The core of Zoom's offering is its cloud conferencing service which supports direct (person-to-person) and multi-party audio, video, and content sharing sessions.

Zoom also offers *Zoom Rooms*, a software application that turns a Windows or Mac PC into a dedicated, Zoom-based meeting room collaboration system. A complete Zoom Rooms system requires a suitable host computer, a USB camera / speakerphone combination (e.g. Logitech Group), an iPad to control the Zoom Rooms system, and a Zoom Rooms license.

Zoom Rooms offers a range of features that make it well suited for huddle room deployments including:

- Support for all three of the key huddle room feature requirements – audio conferencing, content sharing (including wireless and wired sharing), and video conferencing

- Very low cost (requires only a $49 / month Zoom Rooms license)

- An IT-friendly approach (install software on a standard computer, register easily and quickly with the Zoom cloud)

- Ability to use almost any USB camera (webcam, PTZ camera, etc.), microphones system and speaker system

- Strong ease of use for ad-hoc calls (using the iPad controller and integrated directory) and scheduled calls (integration with Exchange and Google calendar enables single-click dialing)

- Ability to include H.323, SIP, Skype for Business / Lync, and telephony participants in calls

- Strong BYO device support

- A high quality video, audio, and content sharing experience

The takeaway here is that Zoom Rooms, which is powered by the Zoom service, addresses the key functionality and usability needs of huddle room users, as well as the low cost and IT-friendly installation requirements of the IT department.

In addition, Zoom Rooms offers advanced features (e.g. support for up to 3 displays) that make it well suited for larger meeting rooms. And regardless of the room size, the Zoom Rooms UI remains the same, offering a consistent workflow and experience for enterprise users.

> **Key Takeaway:**
>
> Zoom Rooms addresses the key functionality, usability, and budgetary requirements of enterprise huddle room users and IT managers.

Perhaps the only flies in the ointment are the inability to order a complete, pre-configured Zoom Rooms system directly from Zoom via a single SKU, and the lack of centralized monitoring and management within the Zoom platform today. However, we expect Zoom to make some major announcements regarding new solution bundles and monitoring and management capabilities in the near future.

For more information, read our evaluation report on Zoom.

Conclusion

Changes in the way people meet, the way people and companies work, and the cadence of business itself have driven changes in the enterprise meeting room environment.

Savvy organizations have recognized the importance of empowering their staff with collaboration-ready meeting rooms. However, most legacy audio-visual estates are unable to meet the needs and expectations of today's workforce. To address these needs, many companies are looking to their deployment of smaller meeting rooms or "huddle" rooms.

Huddle rooms are not just smaller-versions of larger, old-school meeting rooms. Huddle rooms are best suited for the thousands of less formal, highly collaborative work sessions that happen every day. In these rooms, ease of purchase, ease of use, and "speed to contribution" are paramount.

And WR's research shows that while larger rooms were traditionally designed to offer a vast feature set and tremendous flexibility, typical huddle rooms need offer only three key functions: audio conferencing, wired and wireless content sharing, and video conferencing.

Organizations seeking to deploy AV-technology in their smaller meeting rooms should follow the Occam's razor principle and seek simple solutions with a single user interface. Zoom Rooms is an excellent example of just such a solution.

About the Authors

Ira M. Weinstein is a Senior Analyst & Partner at Wainhouse Research and a 25-year veteran of the conferencing, collaboration and audio-visual industries. Ira has authored and contributed to dozens of articles, white papers, studies, reports, and evaluations on rich media communications, video conferencing, streaming and webcasting, audio-visual design and integration, business strategy, and general business practices. Ira specializes in providing strategic advisory services to vendors, resellers, and end-users within the collaboration space. Ira can be reached at iweinstein@wainhouse.com.

Saar Litman is a Senior Researcher & Consultant at Wainhouse Research and has 15 years' of experience in the audio-visual and video conferencing industry. Saar's primary focus is the products, services, and companies within the audio-visual space. In addition, Saar provides AV design services, helps enterprise organizations define and implement global AV standard systems and designs, and manages the WR test lab in Coral Springs, Florida. Saar can be reached at slitman@wainhouse.com.

About Wainhouse Research

Wainhouse Research, www.wainhouse.com, is an independent analyst firm that focuses on critical issues in the Unified Communications and Collaboration (UC&C). The company conducts multi-client and custom research studies, consults with end users on key implementation issues, publishes white papers and market statistics, and delivers public and private seminars as well as speaker presentations at industry group meetings.

About Zoom   (copy provided by Zoom)

Zoom unifies cloud video conferencing, simple online meetings, group messaging, and a software-defined conference room solution into one easy-to-use platform. Our solution offers the best video, audio, and wireless screen-sharing experience across Windows, Mac, Linux, iOS, Android, BlackBerry, Zoom Rooms, and H.323/SIP room systems. Founded in 2011, Zoom's mission is to make video communications frictionless.

For more information about Zoom, please visit zoom.us.