THE MOBILE WORKFORCE AND ITS IMPACT ON COLLABORATION TECHNOLOGY: THREE KEY TRENDS

Real estate is the second largest expense item for most organizations. As a result, optimizing floor space has become a leading concern among organizations fighting for a competitive edge and seeking a balance between personal work space and collaborative spaces.

One result of efforts to optimize floor space has been the growth of open office environments. While open environments are not a new phenomenon, in many companies they have become the norm over the past decade. In the early 2000s, the average square footage allocated to an employee was 250. A decade later, that average had dropped to 190, a 27% decrease.

This is noteworthy, because an organization capable of decreasing their overall square footage per employee is making a direct contribution to their bottom line.

Simply converting offices to cubicles is not the only way organizations reduce their square footage. Another key contributor to greater efficiency is the emergence of the mobile workforce, that expanding group that conducts the majority of their work outside the office.

THE MOBILE WORKFORCE

The typical mobile worker carries 3.5 mobile devices

It has taken at least two decades for 'telecommuters' to officially become a mobile workforce due to the lack of viable technology and network bandwidth required to properly support it. Mobile workforce technology falls into two broad categories: The mobile devices used to consume content, and the AV presentation technologies that enable collaboration over distances.

Everybody knows that the use of mobile devices is skyrocketing. A recent study showed that the typical mobile worker now carries 3.5 mobile devices, up from 2.7 the previous year. Most workers carry a smartphone, tablet and laptop. Over 40% of workers carry a separate phone for personal use. Some carry e-readers, digital cameras or handheld video games. And the list continues to grow: There are now more mobile devices on Earth than people!

NEW WORKPLACE DEMANDS

So what's the relevance of all this to the deployment of AV technology? The continued drive toward floor space optimization combined with the advent of the mobile workforce has led to three key workplace trends:

TREND 1
Demand for quiet space – Workplaces may be open, but people still need quiet places to work, speak on the phone and collaborate in a small group.

TREND 2
Overuse of conference rooms – Conference rooms that were once easy to book are now constantly utilized, even by smaller groups that don't need all the capabilities or space in a larger room.

TREND 3
Demand for technologies that bridge distances – With more of the workforce going mobile, there's explosive demand for technologies like web conferencing and video conferencing.

One of the most effective ways to capitalize on these trends is to deploy technology that enables people to jointly review content and collaborate over distances in spaces where smaller groups of people gather. These small spaces are generally called "Huddle Spaces," "Huddle Rooms," or "Breakout Spaces" and are rapidly becoming the venue where organizations target their AV expenditures.

From the AMX White Paper "Collaboration Technology in Small Spaces" (www.amx.com).

The Mobile Workforce: Yes, it's here!

3.3 Million
U.S. employees who consider home to be their primary place of work

80%
Growth in teleworkers since 2005

60%
Workers who say they don't need to be in the office to be productive

2.7
Mobile devices carried by the typical mobile worker in 2011