VIDEOCONFERENCING: HERDING THE CATS
HOW TO OVERCOME THE OBSTACLES TO A SUCCESSFUL STRATEGY

Despite a seemingly daunting list of obstacles, it's fairly easy to implement a few actions that will allow your organization to deploy videoconferencing as a key asset while maintaining the appropriate levels of usability and security.

The first and most important step you can take is to **standardize on a single conference room automation platform** across your organization, and to control the VTC system as part of that platform. In other words, you can treat the VTC system as another source device like a DVD player, and manage all the controls directly from a single touch panel. And by controlling all the conference room AV systems with a single user interface, you create a consistent environment that users will understand and use regardless of which room they're in.

Even more, using the right conference room automation system allows you to set up macros so that the video conference can be initiated and conducted by the push of a single button that activates the conferencing system, dims the lights, turns on the display, sets the audio volume, and dials the number. Just taking this step will lead to a radical reassessment of videoconferencing within your organization.

The second key step is to **ensure that the entire conference room ecosystem is set up to deliver a high quality user experience**. This means more than simply selecting the right VTC system – it means deploying an end-to-end solution that delivers optimal audio and video quality in the conference room regardless of whether a videoconference is underway. It also means selecting a solution that minimizes the number of separate components so that the system is reliable and easy to operate and troubleshoot. It simply won't do to cobble together a system with a set of different components now that today's reliable AV systems can pack so much functionality into a single chassis.

The third key step toward an ideal videoconferencing strategy is to **integrate your conference room AV strategy with the overall IT strategy.** This is the most effective way to ensure that the conferencing experience is not hindered by insufficient bandwidth or other issues that negatively impact video quality. It's also the best way to ensure that the VTC system has the appropriate levels of security in line with other IT assets throughout the organization.

Another key step is to **provide training for all employees in using approved web conferencing applications like Skype and Lync.** These applications are useful and generally easy to use; however, there are many steps during a web conference where things can go wrong and leave attendees staring at a blank screen, or trying to listen to audio that isn't there. Proper training can go a long way to eliminating these time-wasting interruptions.

And finally, i**mplementing the correct Enterprise software for monitoring and maintaining your AV assets that integrates with your automation system** is a surefire way to make the system easy to troubleshoot and manage. With the right system, you can even power assets like the VTC system on and off remotely to reduce energy costs.

You can also take some quick steps within your organization to encourage people to embrace behaviors that will lead to more widespread use of videoconferencing. Some of these steps include:

1. Provide simple user training and refresher courses, especially to employees who could benefit the most from videoconferencing;
2. Train "super users" in each department that can help users establish or troubleshoot a video conference without relying on IT support;
3. Provide small incentives for people to use the system, like gift cards or corporate trinkets for employees who host their first videoconference;
4. Contact business partners with whom you have regular meetings and set joint goals to migrate some meetings from face-to-face to videoconference.

From the AMX White Paper "Videoconferencing: Can You See Me Now?" (www.amx.com).