3 Huddle Room Designs for Quick-Starting, More Productive Meetings

Enabling employee collaboration is a clear priority for most companies. In recent years, we've seen a significant shift away from traditional large meeting spaces and toward small meeting rooms—also known as huddle rooms. Part of the reason for this trend can be attributed to an increasingly remote workforce and easy-to-use video collaboration technologies that reduce the need for large in-person meetings. The other part is the belief that smaller meetings are more productive, creating better outcomes for the business.

However, huddle room design and functionality vary wildly from room to room and from company to company. That's why it's important to understand the differences between huddle room types and other key factors you need to consider, such as how your employees work, whether you need to monitor device usage, how you will manage and maintain the equipment, and meeting room standardization practices.

Employees expect access to current collaboration tools in every meeting space. So, the limited conferencing and content sharing capabilities of many huddle spaces present a sizable hurdle.

Huddle Rooms Defined

At its most basic, a huddle room is a small area where 2 to 6 people meet to solve problems and collaborate. It can be designated as a drop-in or impromptu meeting room or scheduled like other conference rooms. Huddle rooms are most commonly equipped with a conference or speakerphone on the table, but in many cases there is no technology at all.

The limited collaboration and content sharing capabilities of huddle spaces present a sizable hurdle for employees who are increasingly accustomed to, and expect access to, current collaboration tools. That hurdle can ultimately become a challenge for the IT department to overcome. You will need to transform basic huddle rooms into AV-ready huddle rooms that will deliver the top three capabilities your users demand,[i] namely:

- Audio conferencing
- Local content presentation
- Video conferencing

There are different ways to build your AV-ready huddle rooms, depending upon your employees' work requirements as well as your budget. We've defined three levels of AV-ready huddle rooms that address the difference in technology requirements and budgets. Each level will provide the three required user capabilities and estimated pricing.

Three Levels of AV-Ready Huddle Rooms

	Basic AV-Ready	Enhanced AV-Ready	Advanced AV-Ready
	(Crestron FT-600)	*(Crestron HD-MD-400-C-E)*	*(Crestron HD-MD-400-C-E w/AirMedia)*
Description	Room display, all-in-one webcam (camera, mic, speaker)*, cloud video conferencing	Room display, webcam, scaler switcher, USB extenders, cloud video conferencing, USB mic	Room display, webcam, scaler switcher, USB extenders, air media, cloud video conferencing, USB mic, speaker bar
Price Range	$500-1500	$2750+	$5000+
Meeting Participants	2 to 3	3 to 5	4 to 6
Audio Conferencing	X	X	X
Video Conferencing	X	X	X
Wireless Presentation (BYOD)			X
Wired Presentation	X	X	X
Room Automation		X	X
Device Monitoring System Compatible		X	X

*Assumes webcam with audio capabilities is built into a laptop, no external equipment purchase required.

Basic AV-Ready Huddle Room

The basic AV-ready huddle room provides audio and video conferencing capabilities through the user's laptop that is connected to the room display and webcam. This setup allows any application or content on the laptop to be shared in the meeting. The equipment and services required for this room include a room display, a webcam with built-in microphone and speaker, cloud-based video conferencing, and connection cables.

The basic AV-ready huddle room provides basic AV functionality, good audio, and is the least expensive option. It is best for small groups of 2-3 people.

Enhanced AV-Ready Huddle Room

To create an enhanced AV-ready huddle room, add a USB microphone, scaling switcher, and USB extenders to your basic AV-ready set up. The USB microphone can be placed on the table, closer to the meeting participants, which creates better audio quality. The scaling switcher automatically scales your analog or digital content to the optimal resolution and format for your display without manual adjustments. The scaling switcher allows two people to connect laptops and share content. The USB extenders make it easy to connect additional USB devices to a laptop or room display, such as a USB microphone. The devices in the enhanced huddle room can also connect to control and device monitoring solutions.

The enhanced AV-ready huddle room provides better audio, auto scaling for local content sharing, and is flexible to add USB devices. It is best for groups of 3-5 people.

Organizations are investing in more small spaces and making larger spaces adaptable to smaller meetings. Crestron offers everything you need to instantly connect laptops and tablets for quick ad hoc meetings.

Advanced AV-Ready Huddle Room

To create an advanced AV-ready huddle room, add a speaker bar and an AirMedia device to the enhanced AV-ready set up. The AirMedia allows users to wirelessly present content in addition to wired connections at the table. Wireless solutions like the AirMedia make it easy to share content from mobile devices, a common need in an increasingly BYOD world. The speaker bar allows the audio from the far end of the video or audio conference call to come through louder and clearer to the room participants.

The advanced huddle room provides the best audio quality, supports wireless and wired local content sharing, and supports the most participants. It is best for groups of 4-6 people.

Additional Huddle Room Design Considerations

The three levels described in the previous section give you a quick way to differentiate the functionality and investment for these AV-ready rooms. There are four additional considerations that can help you determine which AV-ready room type you need for your employees.

	Basic AV-Ready	Enhanced AV-Ready	Advanced AV-Ready
Employee Work Styles			
Do employees typically huddle in groups of 4 or more?	No	No	Yes
Do employees need to share content from wireless devices?	No	No	Yes
Do meetings typically include remote participants?	No	Yes	Yes
Do employees need easy meeting controls, touch pad control?	No	Yes	Yes
Room and Device Usage Intelligence			
Do you want to track how often rooms are used?	No	Yes	Yes
Do you want to track which devices are used most frequently?	No	Yes	Yes
Manage and Maintain			
Do you need to monitor and manage room equipment remotely?	No	Yes	Yes
Do you want to be alerted to potential issues before a room goes offline?	No	Yes	Yes
Do you want to be able to troubleshoot issues remotely?	No	Yes	Yes
Standardization			
Do you want to standardize meeting room equipment?	No	Yes	Yes

Understanding how your employees work, what type of room intelligence you want, how you will manage and monitor the rooms, and how to standardize your room offerings to your employees is a step in the right direction towards determining which AV-ready huddle room is right for you.

Next Steps

To see how easy it is to create an enhanced AV-ready huddle room with the Crestron HD-MD-400-C-E, visit our interactive huddle room page.

About AVI-SPL

AVI-SPL is the world's leading AV and video collaboration partner. AVI-SPL designs, builds, and supports the systems and environments that enable communication and collaboration. With highly trained and certified system engineers throughout 34 offices across North America and an international network of solution providers in 30 countries, we've built the infrastructure and partnerships to help any business realize and meet its communication goals. www.avispl.com/about-us

About Crestron

For 40 years Crestron has been the world's leading manufacturer of advanced control and automation systems, innovating technology to simplify and enhance modern lifestyles and businesses. Offering integrated solutions to control audio, video, computer, and environmental systems, Crestron streamlines technology, improving the quality of life in commercial buildings, universities, hotels, hospitals and homes. In addition to its World Headquarters in Rockleigh, New Jersey, Crestron has sales and support offices throughout the U.S., Canada, Europe, Middle East, Asia, Latin America and Australia. www.avispl.com/Crestron

References

[1]"Adding Collaboration to the Huddle Room," Wainhouse Research, 2016