



# PREPARING TODAY FOR THE MEETING EXPERIENCE OF TOMORROW



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## Executive Summary

Encouraged by the promise of intelligent scheduling software, in-room automation, and building management systems, many IT teams have been driven to improve meeting solutions only to be disappointed in the results. Deploying advanced technologies alone will not fully address the problem. Before embarking on a plan to modernize the meeting estate, an enterprise must understand its desired outcomes, user expectations, and usage trends.

## Preparing Today for the Meeting Experience of Tomorrow

If you're a business professional hosting a meeting, the last thing you should have to worry about is the details of connectivity: Remote participants dialing in to the audioconferencing bridge without trouble; the videoconferencing system being up and running properly; or whether the room you've booked has content-sharing capabilities.

The nuisances of the meeting experience stand in stark contrast to modern business goals. Creating an exceptional user experience can give rise to a collaborative work culture that boosts employee engagement, spurs innovation, and increases business agility. These targets have set many companies on a mission to improve the way their teams meet, bolstered by the promise of advanced technologies.

### What IT Can Do Today

Of course, the best strategies address what's doable in the here and now while laying the groundwork for the state of the art — that highly automated, self-learning optimized meeting experience of the future. Here are two ways IT can improve the meeting experience today while exploring more advanced capabilities coming down the pike.

1. **Get Proactive** — Reactively addressing meeting room failures might have worked in the past, but it's not sustainable. Rather, setting up proactive monitoring and management of the meeting room estate to test room environments automatically at frequent intervals will head-off the little gotchas. Is the display connected? Is the conferencing port accessible? Do we have enough bandwidth for optimum call performance during peak usage times? With this, you resolve the most common pain points of meetings today: starting the meeting and bringing others into the call, seamlessly.
2. **Create a Unified Experience** — You might have different AV and conferencing systems from one room to the next, but that shouldn't be your users' problem. Look for ways to establish a unified experience for holding a meeting. To do so, make sure all backend technology works seamlessly together, and, even more importantly, provide a common user workflow. For example, equip meeting spaces of all sizes and types with a one-button-to-push interface. Providing a unified experience encourages adoption, while failing to do so gives rise to a formidable learning curve that'll discourage use and spur calls to the IT help desk.

## What's Coming to the Meeting Room of Tomorrow

With proactive monitoring and management in place and a unified experience across the meeting room estate, your organization will be well positioned to take advantage of increasingly intelligent capabilities. Automation will enter the meeting experience in a number of ways over the next couple of years. These include:

- **Intelligent Room Systems and Scheduling Software.** As meeting room management systems get more intelligent, you'll be able to add automated actions to deflect persistent problems and improve user experiences. Take the common example of one meeting running late, infringing on the start time of another. In the future, intelligent meeting room and scheduling systems not only will monitor meetings in progress, but also will be able to reassign the next meeting to a different room if they detect a meeting is running longer than scheduled. The reassignment will, in turn, trigger a notification that not only alerts participants to the new location, but also shows a map to guide them there. Likewise, if a host schedules a meeting for two people in a room sized to seat 20, an intelligent meeting scheduler would suggest a better alternative — say a “huddle” room suitable for four. Not only will the meeting space be more comfortable and less off-putting for participants than the oversized first choice, IT is able to manage and plan its meeting real estate more effectively.
- **Smart Building Systems.** Just prior to a meeting start time, a smart building system could power up the lights, adjust the HVAC, turn on the display, and connect to the right signal port for the meeting type, be that a video call or in-person project huddle, for example. Conversely, the system would be smart enough to leave the room off if it doesn't detect any bodies there. Or perhaps the meeting has started, but the system detects only four people when the room is suitable for much larger meetings. Armed with reporting on meeting room utilization, IT will be better able to plan its meeting estate.
- **Voice-Controlled Digital Assistance.** Meeting hosts will no longer have to fumble with wired connections or even click-to-start commands. Rather, they'll merely issue instructions to voice-controlled virtual digital assistants: *Start meeting. Share my screen. Schedule follow-up meeting.* These digital assistants might take a physical form, a la a tabletop device with speech interface, or be invoked via speech-enabled software agents. Initially, these digital assistants will be limited to taking action on a single command, but over time they should be able to address more complex commands: *Start the video conference, and mute all participants other than the meeting host.* And, as digital assistant providers build their partner ecosystems, they'll be able to control more room systems by voice command — even systems you've customized to meet your particular user requirements.

- **Speech Recognition and Speech-To-Text Translation.** Speech technologies will become indispensable to the modern meeting experience, allowing participants to focus on the discussion at hand rather than trying to madly scribble down each word uttered. With speech-to-text translation, participants leave the meeting with a searchable transcript they can peruse as needed at any point going forward. In addition, making meeting notes searchable via metatags means participants can zero in on the precise points of any previous discussion to better prepare and take action after any meeting.
- **Artificial Intelligence With Contextual Understanding.** Ultimately, meeting room solutions and building systems will become self-learning. They'll analyze data from room solutions, scheduling programs, smart building systems, digital assistants, and other pieces of the ecosystem to make on-the-fly adjustments for the meeting experience of the moment. When the CEO walks into the boardroom to host her quarterly call, for example, an AI room solution will detect her presence, use facial recognition to verify her identity, launch the call, connect to the collaboration platform, turn on the interactive displays, and queue up her content. The AI-imbued meeting scheduler will recognize the meeting as one in a series, and will share notes and send action item reminders to participants in advance. And, because the meeting is in the late afternoon, the building systems will automatically lower the window shades to reduce glare on the screens. This is user-focused meeting automation at its best.

Over time, AI will also enhance meeting outcomes. For example, verbal cues can trigger follow-up events, such as tagging articles in a knowledge base, scheduling a follow-up meeting, or requesting a new participant to join a meeting in progress. Based on policies and permissions, an AI-powered meeting solution could send the portion of the conversation and action items related to project stakeholders mentioned in a meeting. Automated access to information can help keep all pertinent parties up to speed, while intelligent meeting management software determines who has access rights, where and for how long the content is available, and which version is current.

## Critical Success Factors

With such powerful technologies on their way to the workplace and meeting rooms, the opportunity to optimize each meeting experience is a promise that's hard to ignore. But without the appropriate due diligence and ongoing oversight, the opportunity for overkill looms equally as large. Here are four ways to get — and stay — on the right track.

1. **Identify Desired Outcomes** — Thoroughly study what this means from an IT, real estate, facilities, and end-user perspective. Is the goal to reduce real estate footprint by providing more team workspaces? Is it to support collaboration among small work teams? Is it to increase business agility and time to market? Is it to enable the use of self-service and automated meeting functionality over time? Identifying the desired outcomes should lead to a bevy of questions about factors such as room sizes, technology choices, and service needs. Achieving the right mix of room types requires careful consideration from the get-go.



2. **Establish an End-User Focus Group** — Form a committee to define the common, ideal user experience. How do users typically schedule meetings today, and what could help improve that process? What do users want when they walk into a meeting room? Without insight from the user base, you can't build a balanced estate or optimize the experience.
3. **Create an Adoption Program** — Establish a lifecycle services program not only to facilitate training and change management, but also to fuel continual meeting room usage. Does usage taper off after the initial excitement dies down? Why is that? Have user requirements changed? Is the meeting room estate no longer meeting user expectations? A lifecycle management program will assess the meeting experience over time so that IT can tweak its plans accordingly.
4. **Gather Actionable Analytics** — Continuously analyze usage and meeting technology performance data to identify trends and make intelligent decisions about your meeting room estate. With the right big picture data, IT will spot trends and anomalies. With these insights, IT can confidently act to best suit ever-changing business expectations, while making smart use of the IT budget.

As you've likely recognized, these four critical success factors are intertwined and ongoing. Optimizing the meeting experience requires a concerted technology strategy that steers investments toward impactful business outcomes.

## Conclusion

Because key breakthroughs and business decisions happen when teams gather and connect, improving the meeting experience is a chief mission of many enterprises. Getting the meeting experience right means improving engagement, productivity, innovation, and agility.

Vendors of all ilk, of course, are working hard at capturing attention for their meeting room solutions. The technologies for improving the meeting experience and reducing inefficiencies are plentiful, and rapidly evolving. Increased intelligence, with self-learning systems as the ultimate goal, will greatly ease the chore of scheduling, hosting, participating in, and following up on action items from business meetings. But don't let futuristic and enticing technologies cloud your judgment.

The best plans for assuring a great meeting experience for today and tomorrow begin with a clear understanding of business goals and desired outcomes. Then, keep pace with the user experience over time, and rely on room intelligence to adapt the meeting room estate as needed.

## About AVI-SPL

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