



## CONFERENCE ROOM REFRESH MAKES SPACE WORK HARDER

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New technology drives collaboration and productivity while refreshing the timeworn meeting activity.

### At a Glance

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**COMPANY:** Ogilvy & Mather

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**HEADQUARTERS:** New York, N.Y.

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**EMPLOYEES:** 600+ (Chicago Office)

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**I.T. STAFF:** 7 (Chicago Office)

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**BUSINESS:** Founded in 1948 by David Ogilvy, Ogilvy & Mather is an international advertising, marketing and public relations agency based in Manhattan, and is a WPP company. The firm operates 450 offices in 120 countries with approximately 18,000 employees.



Ogilvy's Chicago office Bernhard conference room now includes video conferencing capabilities, tabletop controls, an interactive whiteboard and more.

Organizations everywhere are looking for more productivity and collaboration. While there may not be one single be-all, end-all solution, refreshing what could be the most used room in the office — the venerable conference room — comes close.

Conferences are often a part of everyday work life. And regardless of what people say, a well-designed, well-equipped and highly functional conference room can make a massive impression on both visitors and staff.

The key is to look past traditional room designs and imagine how a mix of the latest technology innovations can turn these valuable resources into dynamic collaboration and communication hubs. The idea is to quickly link people together to brainstorm ideas, solve problems and improve decision-making.

For organizations that value the private interaction of meeting rooms, having the best setup to accomplish meeting goals is paramount. Understanding that the conference room is one of the most important spaces in an office, many forward-thinking organizations are considering the benefits of a conference room refresh.

## Conference Room Refresh at Chicago Agency

The 11th floor of the Chicago Sun Times building is home to the Chicago office of the esteemed advertising, marketing and public relations agency Ogilvy & Mather. Servicing Fortune Global 500 companies as well as local businesses through a network of over 450 offices in 120 countries, the firm knows the value of collaboration.

"A collaborative and connected workspace has always been essential to our agency," says Larry Gordon, manager, creative technology at Ogilvy's Chicago office, one of the firm's nine divisions cited for its focus on analytics and experimental marketing. "Furthering that goal was our primary focus when the agency decided to remodel the Chicago office several years ago."

Designed to foster more collaboration between staff as well as a greater sense of community, the office features an open floor plan. "The layout allows for lots of conference space," notes Gordon. "This includes conference rooms of all different sizes — everything from two-person rooms to a large "theater" capable of hosting the entire staff."

Two of the most popular conference rooms, refreshed during the remodeling, include the Ogilvy and Bernhard conference rooms. Named after agency founder David Ogilvy, the Ogilvy conference room offers space for 20-plus people. The Bernhard conference room, named for agency vice president and founding leader of the Chicago office Hank Bernhard, holds 15-plus individuals.

New accoutrements to both rooms include dual LCD monitors, 103 inches and 80 inches respectively, ideal for video conferencing. "We use the Cisco Unified Videoconferencing solution," Gordon says.

Other conference room amenities include overhead speakers, wireless microphones and Crestron FlipTop Control Centers, which deliver the entire nerve center of the conference right to each seated meeting participant. The Crestron controls can be controlled by an iPad.

Tablet control of the system conveniently brings the interface of the entire room right to a participant's tablet PC. "There's no need for meeting participants to touch the screen or ask that someone control the room for them," Gordon adds. "It also allows us to quickly and easily train employees on how to control the room — eliminating a lot of intimidation."



A wall-mount Crestron touch screen control offers a single interface for controlling conference room technology.

Adding to the philosophy of collaboration, the conference rooms feature Hitachi StarBoard interactive whiteboards. "A file server can bring up the collaborative activities on the screen, for example a website or presentation, without the use of a notebook computer," Gordon adds.

When participating in collaborative discussions, it also helps to be able to remotely see what a presenter is marking-up on the screen. (Think about how ineffective NFL coach and football commentator John Madden would've been when he drew all over the screen to accentuate previous plays if only the people in the room could see what he was actually highlighting.)

The conference rooms also feature a Wow-Vision VEOS box for in-room collaboration of "eyes only" projects. This solution allows creation of a private wireless access point for all meeting room participants. Once connected to the VEOS, they can quickly start to share their personal device's content with other users in the room without worrying about connections or access to a central network and private data.

And to help keep impromptu and planned bookings in sync, outside each conference room door are LCD digital room monitors and wayfinding signs. "The Crestron RoomView solution is ideal for avoiding double bookings of rooms and providing effective management of no-shows," Gordon adds.

## Boardroom Refresh at CDW

In many ways, the executive boardroom is the nerve center of CDW, a leading provider of technology solutions. It is where proposals are presented, information is dispersed and decisions are made. The boardroom is in almost constant use by senior executives at the Vernon Hills, Ill.-based firm, either to discuss matters of importance internally or to conference with some or all of its 25 locations, shareholders or business partners.



When the boardroom was last upgraded about five years ago, it received a complete technological overhaul with equipment and features that were state-of-the-art at that time. But the pace of technological change has quickened, and what was cutting-edge five years ago is much less so today.

Paving the way toward better collaboration, CDW recently upgraded the room, adding a mix of the latest technology innovations.

"We kept hearing from our executives and our IT department that they needed better communication capabilities, both

from within the conference room and with people calling in for meetings from the outside," says Aaron Klechak, an audio/visual solution architect with CDW. Klechak, along with A/V Solution Architect Jeremy Disse, made up the two-person team that spearheaded the conference room refresh initiative.

In addition to needing better and more functional audio and video, the IT department wanted to make sure that the executive boardroom would be future-proofed to the greatest extent possible. That way when technology changed, it could be easily upgraded.

Working quickly with an end-of-year deadline in mind, Klechak and Disse finalized the specifications in less than four weeks. Because of the short time frame, they decided on a forklift upgrade, and contracted with TSC, a Michigan-based high-tech engineering company for the actual installation.

## Forklift Upgrade

With the forklift upgrade, every piece of equipment was replaced. The new gear offered more functionality than the former setup.

In addition to two Sharp 90-inch LED displays and a full-height lectern, new equipment included several types of microphones; a server for streaming content onto any device via the Internet; and flush-mount tabletop Crestron FlipTop Control Centers delivering the entire nerve center of the new boardroom to each seated meeting participant.

The new setup improved the audio quality of the room. For this, a ClearOne CONVERGE Pro 880T audio matrix mixer coupled with the CONVERGE Pro 8i, for additional microphones, were added to significantly improve audio-processing capability and quality of the overall system.

An always-on lectern microphone was also added. It is designed to pick up the sound of anyone speaking, even if they are away from the mike. In addition, a wireless microphone is available for roaming presenters, as well as in-table microphones which increase the clarity of audio calls.

Video was also greatly enhanced. By opening up the room to HDMI and VGA interfaces, digital as well as analog video input is acceptable. "That's important because analog connections are slowly being phased out," Klechak says.

The new setup also includes in-streaming capabilities, which allows video to be streamed wherever it is needed, to any device users choose to use. It also offers conference leaders the capability to record or store the video stream – if they choose.

The revamped room also includes a Wowza Media Systems server solution that can stream whatever content is presented in the room, no matter what device participants are using – both inside and outside of the conference room.

With audio and video enhanced, the next step was installing a bridge to accommodate CDW's unified communications

## Advances in Conference Room Technology Spur Upgrades

With so many advances in conference room technology, it's not surprising that organizations consider now a great time to upgrade conferencing capabilities.

"We see a mix of companies doing forklift upgrades and upgrading conference rooms by function or technology," says Roopam Jain, industry director for unified communications and collaboration at Frost & Sullivan, a technology consultancy. "Typically, as companies phase out older technology, they are doing wholesale replacements with high-definition codecs and associated infrastructure components such as bridges and management software."

Others with more restricted budgets tend to first invest in new devices and then stagger other updates, she added. Here are some areas where some of the biggest advances are taking place:

### Unified communications systems:

Video conferencing systems are now natively integrating with unified communications systems, allowing UC users to seamlessly escalate their sessions to multiparty video calls.

**Displays:** Large flat-panel interactive touch-screen displays, used for video conferencing, allow users to switch easily between video and content sharing, making collaboration more intuitive.

**Projectors/Whiteboards:** Companies like Hitachi, Mimio, Promethean and Sharp have the technology to integrate their

whiteboards seamlessly with the video conferencing experience. This allows both onsite and offsite participants to see content in a video call. Participants can use the interactive whiteboard in a combined video and data conference by splitting the screen into video and content.

**Control systems:** Remote controls are being replaced by intuitive touchpad controls, making it easy to launch a call or invite participants into a call. They also allow users to easily control meeting content and perform actions such as changing the screen layout and displaying data and visuals.

system, which uses a mix of Avaya, Cisco, LifeSize and Polycom products. With the bridge in place, the system is now fully interoperable with products from all four companies, and meeting participants have the flexibility to conduct multi-site video calls between locations, no matter what system is being used on the other end.

A Crestron 3.9-inch color touch-panel is mounted in front of each participant, while a 6-inch touch panel is integrated into the VFI flat-top lectern. With the lectern control panel and an iPad device running Crestron's Mobile Pro app, users can control every piece of equipment in the boardroom. Using the individual control panels, for example, a meeting participant can push the "Present from Here" button and their content is live to the room.

"When you walk into the room, you're looking at a touchscreen that says 'Welcome to CDW: Touch anywhere to begin,'" Klechak explains. "If you want to start a video conference, just push that button and the teleconferencing menu appears. It's about making the home screen simple and logical."

## A Measurable Difference

Since the upgrade was finished, dozens of conferences have been held in the executive boardroom. Klechak says feedback has been positive.

One of the biggest gains has been in productivity. The new system removes barriers to collaboration, and the system's

ease of use means that users don't have to waste valuable time figuring out how to use the equipment.

"By adding effective video conferencing to the room, we can now reach out to other CDW offices very quickly," Klechak says. "We have the space, flexibility and technology to not only conference but collaborate with larger groups of people at a moment's notice."

"Organizations have long known that they could improve productivity by bringing more people together in meetings," says J.D. Vaughn, a consultant and chairman of the advisory council of the Visual Communications Industry Group. "Now with video conferencing and video-ready mobile devices, they can extend collaboration capabilities even more."

In addition, the new technology offers the opportunity to reduce the amount of budget earmarked for employee travel. Even though video conferencing was possible, to some extent, with the previous CDW boardroom configuration and some travel had already been eliminated, the newer technology can up the ante.

"There is some communication that still had to take place face-to-face before because many believed that enough couldn't be conveyed through the old setup," Disse says.

Now that the executive boardroom transformation has proven successful, CDW has embarked on a major renovation of the company's roughly two dozen additional conference rooms throughout North America.

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