Photo credit: Jeppesen
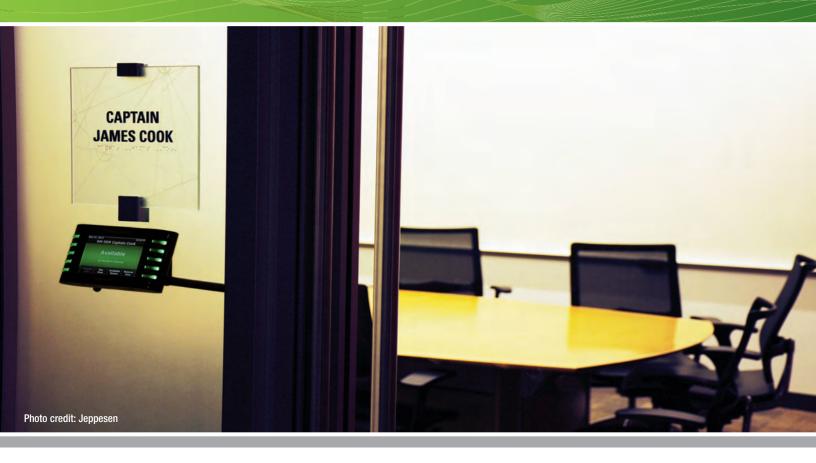
Scheduled Savings

Crestron helps aviation information and resource optimization company manage its conference centers

Challenge

It can be tough to schedule a room in a large corporate conference center, especially for a last minute meeting. Typically, you go to the Microsoft® Outlook® calendar and see that the rooms are all booked up. But if you walk down the hall, you might discover that some of the booked rooms are empty. So you select an unoccupied room and wonder if the scheduled meeting has been canceled or rescheduled for a later start. You ask yourself, "Can I use the room or not?"

Studies suggest that corporate conference centers are chronically underutilized, largely because employees who reserve spaces forget to release them when they cancel meetings. As a result, companies are forced to build more meeting rooms than they really need because they're unable to schedule them efficiently.

Solution

At the Jeppesen headquarters in Englewood, CO, the solution is Crestron Fusion RV® room scheduling software, coupled with Crestron GLS-series occupancy sensors. If the sensor doesn't detect motion during the first ten minutes a room is scheduled, Fusion RV releases the room in the conference center calendar. At the same time, the Crestron scheduling touch screen outside the door turns green to indicate that the room is available. Fusion RV also turns the AV systems off in the event that participants forget to shut them down after a meeting ends, thereby conserving energy and preserving projector bulb life.

The system is proving to be so highly beneficial that Richie Hoeft, Multimedia A/V Technician for Jeppesen, says the company plans to roll out Crestron Fusion™ globally. "We have 33 sites worldwide," he says, "and at some point all of them will have this platform."

Simplicity

Jeppesen, a Boeing subsidiary, provides specialized navigational systems, fleet management, and flight training services to airlines, general aviation, and the military. The conference center at their headquarters includes 19 meeting rooms and serves roughly 900 employees.

Hoeft says he first began looking at the Crestron Fusion enterprise building management platform last July, visiting the Crestron regional office in Colorado as part of his research. "We learned that Fusion RV would offer a much more proactive approach to managing our meeting rooms, allowing us not only to schedule the rooms but also to anticipate maintenance issues before they cause a breakdown." Among other advanced capabilities, Fusion RV can track room and equipment usage, notify technicians when maintenance is needed, and notify security if components are disconnected.

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Hoeft says he researched several other scheduling solutions, but rejected each of them because they didn't include the asset management functions that Fusion RV offered. "One in particular had a very nice interface, but it cost almost three times what Fusion RV costs and did only half as much." Hoeft

ended up hiring Linx Multimedia of Denver to install and Kore Logix to program the Crestron system, and they quickly had it up and running by April.

Today, if employees want to use a conference room, they can schedule a meeting through Microsoft Outlook, or they can walk up to the four-inch Crestron touch screen mounted outside the door. Either way, any changes they make are reflected both in Outlook and on the Fusion RV platform. When they walk into a room, an occupancy sensor turns on the lights, and after they leave, the system turns off the lights and the AV system should they fail to turn it off manually. "The Crestron occupancy sensors are intelligent enough to use passive infrared and ultrasonic signals, so they're very sensitive to small movements," Hoeft explains.

As in other large conference centers, employees will often leave AV systems powered on when a meeting is over, causing systems to sometimes stay on for hours before anyone notices. "We have two really large rooms, each with dual projection systems. If that's left on, we're burning lots of dollars." The new system completely eliminates the problem."

Hoeft reports that the installation went very smoothly. Linx Multimedia installed a Crestron 3-series™ processor to control the lighting system, integrated occupancy sensors, and dimming systems through Ethernet wiring (part of the Jeppesen company network but designated as a virtual private network). They installed Fusion RV on a virtual Jeppesen network server so the IT department can access it from anywhere on the network.

Other than adding occupancy sensors, lighting control and the scheduling panels, for the most part Jeppesen did not touch

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Photo credit: Jeppesen

the AV systems already installed in their conference center. "A few of the rooms have Crestron control panels, but not all do. The great thing about Fusion RV is that we don't have to have a control system in each room to use it." In fact, today Hoeft is using Fusion RV to track meeting room usage at Jeppesen sites around the world, even though they're not connected to the Crestron system.

"Because Fusion RV interfaces with Outlook, we can set up a tree of rooms in its web interface and include any of our conference rooms. When someone schedules a room, they normally send an Outlook invitation to meeting participants. Once Outlook registers that the invitation has been accepted, Fusion RV will pick that up and include it in the report. So even though we can't see whether the meetings actually take place, as we can here, we're able to track the number of hours each of our rooms has been scheduled for, worldwide, and analyze that data to learn why some rooms are used more than others."

Hoeft says he has been extremely pleased with how the new system has been working. "When Linx came out to install the system, our technical people asked if we were going to do a training session for employees. I explained that the system is so intuitive that we wouldn't need to. They scoffed at that, so the first day we had it running I camped out in the conference center to answer any questions users might have.

"One woman came in, walked up to a panel, woke it up, scheduled her meeting and started to leave. I stopped her and asked, 'How did you know how to use it?' She said 'I didn't, but it's really easy. Just try it.' I followed up with a survey at the end of a month asking employees how they liked the new system. Feedback has been really good."

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