

The InterContinental Montréal

CASE STUDY | HOSPITALITY

MONTRÉAL, QC

➔ Challenge

Bring 21st century technology to a stunning 19th century conference center.

➔ Solution

Install Crestron technology for lighting, signal transport, and system control.



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You've got these beautiful Victorian rooms restored to their original appearance, except for a small touch screen on the wall. Yet when you start your event, you've got all the power and impact of 21st century technology.”

— **Pasquale Fantone**
Solutions PFT, Inc.

The Ultimate Guest Experience

Crestron helps the InterContinental Montréal bring the best new technology to the 1888 structure that houses its conference center

When you hold a meeting at a great hotel, you want everything to be perfect: the food, accommodations, service, and technology. But, at many properties, the audio and video systems fall short. The house sound is poor. To show a PowerPoint®, someone has to bring in a projector and set it up while everyone waits. Even if you just want to adjust the lighting, you may need to wait for a technician.

These are no longer concerns for the InterContinental Montréal, a landmark, four-star hotel in downtown Montréal.

Recently, AV integrator Solutions PFT Inc. teamed with the property's owners, Padox Hotels, and their management team to create advanced video, projection, sound, lighting, and control systems for the hotel conference center. The goal was to dramatically improve the guest experience.

“Now clients have instant access to the technology,” says Ernie Incollingo, Catering Manager for the InterContinental Montréal. “They have high-definition images and sound. They have full control over the lighting, volume levels, even the temperature of the meeting rooms, all from a simple-to-use touch screen. They're so happy with the changes that we've seen our business grow dramatically.”

Crucial to these changes was Crestron technology, which not only helped PFT provide outstanding presentation systems, but also helped them do it without tearing up the 19th century interiors of the conference center.



A competitive advantage

According to Peter Tertsakian, the hotel AV Director and an on-site employee of PSAV Presentation Services, the idea for the new systems arose from discussions with the InterContinental Montréal General Manager, Bernard Chênevert. “He was interested in providing unique offerings to the hotel’s clients, and we wanted to offer something better than other AV companies in the city could.”

The new technology would be part of a \$3 million upgrade to the conference center, which had been opened 20 years before in the historic Nordheimer Building, a striking Victorian landmark adjoining the hotel that was originally built in 1888. Among its rooms are a two-way divisible meeting room and the Sarah Bernhardt ballroom, a theater from the original structure where Ms. Bernhardt, Maurice Ravel, and other luminaries performed. All these rooms can be connected together with sound and video to act as overflow rooms or breakout rooms.

The hotel decided to install new projection, sound, and lighting systems, together with a digital infrastructure in 13 of the 18 Nordheimer conference rooms. Hotel management saw it as a win-win situation: they would offer better technology and faster service at a lower price, yet increase their profitability.

Montréal-based technology integrator Solutions PFT designed and installed the systems. They recommended Crestron DigitalMedia™ (DM®) technology, and Crestron control systems for the AV and lighting. The entire second floor shares a DigitalMedia matrix switcher, making

it possible to send any signal from any source to any combination of rooms – making it ideal for large meetings and events.

“The systems we installed dramatically improved the video and sound quality,” says Pasquale Fantone, owner and head of engineering at PFT. “They are cleaner rooms as well. There’s nothing on a cart, no wires on the floor; everything is permanently installed and very simple to use.”

Installing the systems

Because the landmark status of the hotel protects its heavily wood-paneled interiors, installation of any new wiring was a major concern.

Fortunately, the bulk of the equipment was to be located in three equipment rooms created in the 1992 restoration, when the structure had been rewired as well. The electrical contractor at the hotel installed 13 new Crestron multi-channel dimming consoles in equipment racks in these rooms, where PFT crews also installed new Crestron control systems and DM switchers, QSC® amplifiers, and Biamp® audio DSPs. There was no need to touch the paneling or plaster to do so.

PFT did need to run new wiring to the Crestron wall plates, touch screens, and occupancy sensors, as well as to the NEC® projectors or Sharp® displays they installed in each room. However, they were able to use twisted-pair Crestron 8G cable, snaking it through the walls and ceilings with little or no disruption to the décor.



Another challenge was to tie into the heating and cooling systems. Crestron provided all the hardware and BACnet® software protocols needed. “With proper coordination with the HVAC contractor,” Fantone says, “we were able to avoid the need for a separate panel for guests to operate and integrate all building automation systems control into the Crestron panels.”

A better guest experience

Now guests at the hotel always have everything they need for routine meetings right at their fingertips. The staff has only to provide cables to connect the guests’ laptops or video gear to the Crestron wall plates installed in the front and back of every room. “Once they’re hooked up, they can push one button that turns on the projector, lowers the screen, dims the lights, and adjusts the sound,” Fantone explains.

If a guest needs something special such as a video conferencing connection or multiple microphones for a panel discussion, staff can run the signals through the DM wall plates without having to run cables across the room.

“A great feature of the Crestron system is that you can be in any room, yet control anything in any other room from any panel,” says Tertsakian. Technicians can also access the systems from a Crestron app installed on their smartphones. “I can show clients one or two buttons and they have everything they need. I can then leave the room and go to lunch, confident that if they have a problem, I can fix it from wherever I am.”

The Crestron touch screens also allow guests to select video and audio sources, bring up or mute background

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music, change volume levels, change lighting levels, and adjust the temperature of each room. “Even five minutes can be an eternity during a client event,” Incollingo explains. “They appreciate having control of their own systems and instant support should they have a problem.”

The new systems also provide significant energy savings, because the Solutions PFT team tied the AV, lighting, and climate control systems into the new Crestron occupancy sensors. If there’s no movement in a room for a specified period, the system shuts down the audio, video, and lighting equipment and returns the temperature to default settings. “For an evening meeting,” Tertsakian explains, “we might show the client how everything works and then go home. Yet when we’d come back the next morning, as often as not, the projector would still be on. We don’t have that issue any more.”



No other hotel

Fantone explains that the benefits of the Crestron infrastructure will only increase as technology advances. While the hotel continues to use their lighting fixtures from 1992, when they're ready to upgrade to LED, the Crestron dimmers and control processors will be ready as well. Should they decide to make 4K ultra high-definition their presentation standard, they'll find their Crestron switcher chassis and wiring are already compatible.

The Solutions PFT team has also worked out the parameters for an upgraded version of the room automation system. "When the InterContinental Montréal is ready, we will set up the system so that guests can request additional services without having to make a phone call," Fantone explains. If they want more croissants, for instance, they'll be able to hit a button on the touch screen to make the request, and catering will instantly receive an email. "In the same way, if they spill something on the floor or want an extra microphone, they'll press two buttons and the right person will automatically receive the request. Should they prefer to speak to someone instead, they will be able to do so from the touch panel itself!"

Phase Two plans also include updating the control system to include Crestron Fusion® room scheduling software. "Today there's a touch screen installed on the wall outside each door, but it's just a name tag for that room," Fantone says. "When our implementation is complete, it will tie into the hotel scheduling system to show who is occupying the room at what times, and allow staff and guests to see all future scheduled events."



While some other area hotels have permanently installed flat-panel displays, the InterContinental Montréal is unique in its large-scale implementation of installed, automated high-definition gear. "There's no other hotel in Montréal that has what we have," Tertsakian says.

"We've noticed that we're busier and busier on a regular basis," Incollingo adds. "Our regular clients are very impressed by how far we've come from last year."

"The InterContinental Montréal has achieved a great blend of the modern and the historical," Fantone says. "You've got these beautiful Victorian rooms restored to their original appearance, except for a small touch screen on the wall. Yet when you start your event, you've got all the power and impact of 21st century technology."

Integrator
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Photos courtesy the InterContinental Montréal

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