Meeting space equipped with collaboration tools at JLL, Hong Kong

REIMAGINING REAL ESTATE

Hurrairah bin Sohail talks to an end user and an integrator about their combined efforts to implement an experience-led office design and the technology that enables it.

Commercial offices are evolving as we speak. The demand for change is being driven by the war for talent as companies look to create engaging workplaces.

Jones Lang LaSalle [JLL], a commercial real estate service provider, embraced this shift in the future of work when establishing its new home in Hong Kong. The project is a step in the longer journey of upgrading JLL's technology across its APAC offices.

Patrick Stewart-Blacker is a specialist advisor on smart buildings within JLL's digital solutions. He says: "Our CEO, Christian Ulbrich, has made it very clear to the market that JLL believes that technology will play an integral role in the future of all businesses. As such we need to evolve and change to meet the needs of our clients."

He continues: "Building people-centric office spaces requires us to deliver a frictionless experience day to day, where the technology enables a better working environment without teams even noticing. We set out to deliver an agile working environment where technology supports this journey rather than being the showpiece."

JLL's office in Hong Kong features a variety of meeting spaces ranging from collaboration spaces, breakout areas, and an interactive client suite, JLL NXT Space. Principle One was chosen as the integrator for the project.

Regarding the selection of the integrator, Stewart-Blacker says: "We wanted a partner who understood what we were trying to achieve and who could turn our conceptual ideas into reality with an understanding of how to build an IoT centric space. Principle One brought its experience of building IT systems and combining audio visual systems to the table."

As you enter the seventh floor, the first thing that strikes the visitor is a MultiTaction 5 by 1 videowall which is used to start the journey around the JLL space.

Around the modern office you find a mixture of Cisco Webex enabled rooms and simple presentation spaces powered by a Creston ecosystem. Surprisingly, there is little traditional video swit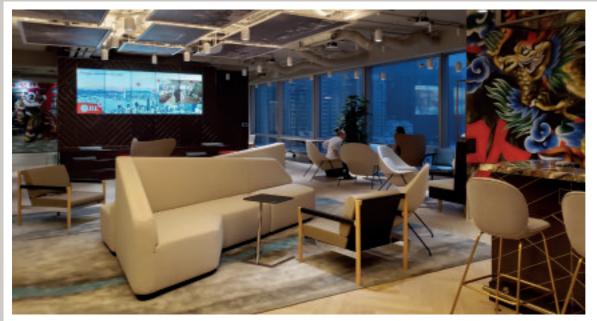ching in the JLL space as it was just not required for the business to operate. The simple spaces use Crestron AM-300 units which provide room booking calendar information in the meeting room, wireless and wired connectivity without any user control devises.

Stewart-Blacker details how the separate AV products work in tandem: "The way that the MultiTaction solution has been set up means that most of the content is driven to this display. It has a Crestron Air Media built into the back and there is HDMI connectivity to the server. There is no videowall engine per se, the display is driven by the server which has a capture card built in. The beauty of the system is that the PC is doing the work and generating the content providing a smooth experience."

The centrepiece of the JLL office in Hong Kong is the JLL NXT Space. Stewart-Blacker details how the AV systems bring it to life: "We use NXT Space to engage with clients in a more collaborative way. For instance, our leasing team uses the space to run client presentations in an interactive environment using live market data, allowing clients to make faster, better informed

real estate decisions. NXT Space also provides all of our teams with a valuable collaboration and workshopping tool built around our design thinking led engagement principle. MultiTaction gives us a dynamic tool that provides flexibility and interactivity on a standard platform without much need for bespoke programming."

Tying the AV systems together is a Crestron control system and a Crestron Fusion system. This forms part of the technology ecosystem that JLL has deployed in the Hong Kong space and will continue to develop moving forwards.

Stewart-Blacker says: "We bought into the Crestron ecosystem because it is easy to look at a lot of the data from AV systems in silos, but we wanted to look at data from the entire installation and Crestron brings that to the table. It gives us an option, not just in Hong Kong, to start looking across our complete portfolio of real estate."

He continues: "We wanted to remotely access meeting rooms and for our support engineers to solve issues from anywhere across the world. We wanted to have a room booking system that was adaptive and could help us intelligently use our spaces."

Krick Lau, executive director of Principle One, talks about the driving force behind the conception and deployment of every AV system: "AV is a tool to enable the operation of the

rooms. In combination with the sensors and the IT systems the main aim is to make the lives of the users as easy as possible and enhance their experience."

Lau continues: "JLL has a very similar philosophy to Principle One, where the journey of the user and the user experience comes first. The meeting spaces are not small, so expecting a user to set everything up themselves or calling up the IT department would mean wasted time. So, all the meeting spaces have been automated and are self-driven."

However, delivering the desired user experience was not always easy. Stewart-Blacker says: "We have a clear desk policy, even for our large meeting spaces such as the boardroom. You can spend a fortune on such spaces and still end up with wires scattered across the table. We worked together with Principle One to find a way to avoid this."

On the side of the integrator making sure no wires were visible or evident was a challenge. Lau says: "We didn't expect JLL to use a lot of HDMI because by definition that means you need to plug in a HDMI cable. Everything had to be wireless which meant that users had to get access to the internet network. This however means that you need to have internal access to the corporate network as well as guest access for the network because you need to protect your information. As you can imagine, this causes firewall issues when external

devices try to connect to the network. This is a known issue and wireless presentation at present cannot cater to this situation. This is the reason a single HDMI cable is provided for when external devices need to be used for presentation. A boardroom is also present in case you need further collaboration."

Audio is provided by a range of QSC speakers and picked up by Shure ceiling microphones.

The Shure ceiling microphone is a key product enabling the desired user experience. Stewart-Blacker says: "You can conduct a panel discussion with three to four people in our meeting spaces without a microphone because of the Shure beamforming microphones in the ceilings. They can do audience voice pick-up if you want and the system can be configured to account for a standing or seated audience. This was perfect for us because we did not want to make meetings any more complicated for users and reducing the clutter of technology that you see in many spaces."

To conclude Stewart-Blacker says: "With the Hong Kong office, we have continued to modernise our workspaces across the world. The next milestone on our journey is the opening of our new Singapore headquarters, which harnesses robust and well considered technology to provide an exceptional working environment for our staff to engage with our clients in more fruitful and innovative ways."

Tech-Spec

Audio
QSC ceiling speakers
Shure ceiling microphones

Video
Crestron AirMedia
Digital Media switcher

Extron extenders
MultiTaction displays, servers

Control
Crestron control processors, room booking system, Fusion