



InfoComm 17 Recap

By Mike Sugrue

The AV industry is amidst some big changes: New HDCP protocols, 4K resolutions becoming more popular, higher color and dynamic range requirements. Even USB is going through changes as a viable option to deliver 2-way audio and video for conferencing from a laptop. Amongst all of these new requirements is the continual immersion of AV into IT, bringing new demand for unified and centrally managed platforms. InfoComm 17 was a great opportunity to put your finger on the pulse of the industry, and how the manufacturers are all approaching the new challenges facing the workplace. This recap will explore the trends and important finds from the show.

Trends

Video over IP products were in abundance at InfoComm, many of which support the highest standards of video quality available today. These standards are not easily achieved with HDBaseT solutions. Latency for these products has also been improved to match those of HDBaseT. But one of the most exciting developments within this platform is the inclusion and interoperability with audio over IP solutions. AMX's full spectrum of encoders and decoders will allow for AES67 interoperability, QSC has partnered with Atlona to integrate their solutions, and Biamp offers a single unified system with Tesira over an AVB network.



Manufacturers continued their focus on solutions for huddle spaces and there was a clear trend to provide these services in a sound bar with integrated microphones and camera. The Yamaha CS-700, Logitech MeetUp, Harman Acendo Vibe, and Cisco Spark Room Kit were among the new products in this category.

Although wireless presentation systems have been around for a while, manufacturers have started embedding these services into their switching platforms. Crestron's Airmedia will now be available in DGE hardware for smaller rooms, and DMPS switches for larger rooms. Similar integration was found with AMX and Atlona using native Google Cast and Airplay.

Skype for Business has emerged as the largest Unified Communications platform in the industry, and several manufacturers have begun integrating services into their offerings to support this. Skype Room Systems is a software solution developed by Microsoft that involved partnerships with Polycom, Logitech, and Crestron to provide supporting hardware. While Skype may be the current leader, Zoom has been growing at a rapid pace and was also seeing integration attention from manufacturers such as Crestron and Polycom.

Important Finds

The Logitech MeetUp is a 4K camera with a 120-degree field of view with integrated microphone and speakers, perfect for huddle rooms with furniture installed against the wall. Everyone at the table can be seen and a simple USB connection to your laptop will let you bring everyone in the room into your meeting.



For spaces in need of greater performance and aesthetics, the Harman Acendo Vibe offers similar features in a higher level of quality and sophistication. To accompany this product, Harman launched the Acendo Core and Acendo Book which delivers Office 365, or Exchange integrations not just for video conferencing, but also for room scheduling in a simple to use unified solution.



Improved automation options are now available in huddle rooms with Atлона’s SW-510W and Crestron’s Free Form design. These rooms can be designed to turn on or off with occupancy sensors, automatically display information for connecting wirelessly, or automatic switching from a wired HDMI connection. A button controller can be located on the wall to manually override the automation if a meeting needs to switch between sources multiple times.



Atлона is also recognizing USB-C as a viable video source for AV systems in their SW-510W and in their new 2x1 HDMI/USB-C HDBaseT Wallplate transmitter.

Although Crestron Mercury and Atлона’s HDVS-300 did not make their first debut at InfoComm, their importance for delivering both BYOD and room resource codecs in small spaces cannot be ignored, and both product lines were given significant improvements at InfoComm. Crestron Mercury now supports native Skype for Business AND Zoom platforms as room resources. These services accompany the already popular BYOD capabilities of the device. The HDVS-300 which had always supported dual functionality, now has a professional PTZ cam that can be coupled with the system.

Quirk Logic revealed a new interactive whiteboard called Quilla with a display technology similar to the Amazon Kindle. This monochromatic display is very easy on the eyes, and is less intimidating to users than traditional interactive LCD displays or projectors. The displays draw very little power, which is why they were designed with internal batteries and the ability to take the display off of the wall to bring into different areas if desired.



Final Thoughts

InfoComm 17 left me with the impression that everyone is in agreement that the future of the industry lives in the network. Control communication has migrated a long time ago. Networked audio has also been around for a long time, but there is a clear and present shift in focus from proprietary solutions, to interoperability and establishing communication standards. Networked video already has standards, but heavy bandwidth requirements and processing power to deliver high quality video can still be a challenge.



The industry is also making great improvements to services provided in meeting spaces that bring them closer to being a seamless extension of a user's personal workflow. Whether you reserve a meeting in advance with local and remote participants, or if you need to bring these people in immediately for an un-scheduled emergency meeting, users will be better equipped to focus on "what" to share, and not "how" to share.



For more information on any products mentioned above, see the links below:

AMX Networked AV Solutions – http://www.amx.com/en/product_families/networked-av

Atlona SW-510W – <https://atlona.com/product/at-uhd-sw-510w/>

Atlona HDVS-300 – <https://atlona.com/product/at-uhd-hdvs-300-kit>

Atlona HDVS-CAM – <https://atlona.com/product/at-hdvs-cam>

Biamp Tesira – <http://www.biamp.com/tesira-enterprise-level-audio-platform>

Biamp Devio – <http://www.biamp.com/devio-unified-communications-collaboration-tool-for-huddle-rooms>

Crestron Mercury – <http://www.crestron.com/microsites/mercury-all-in-one-meeting-collaboration-solution>

Crestron Free Form Design – http://www.crestron.com/microsites/design-center/dc_free_form_2_8.aspx

Harman Acendo – <http://www.amx.com/en/news/harman-professional-solutions-introduces-amx-acendo-conference-room-solutions-to-infocomm-2017>

Logitech MeetUp – <http://www.logitech.com/en-us/product/meetup-conferencecam>

Quirk Logic – <https://www.quirklogic.com/solutions>

Skype Room Systems – <http://partnersolutions.skypeforbusiness.com/solutionscatalog/meeting-room-systems>

Yamaha CS-700 – <https://www.revolabs.com/products/video-conferencing-systems/huddle-room-systems/yamaha-cs-700>