The challenges organisations should consider when transitioning to Microsoft Teams Rooms

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We caught up with our global video collaboration experts to get their insights on the challenges and potential pitfalls organisations face when planning their transition to Microsoft Teams Rooms within their corporate meeting spaces.

Ongoing managing and support for all your rooms

We have seen some customers increase their video-enabled rooms and spaces by over 80% (i.e., 200+ rooms split across multiple global locations). Installation and deployment of Microsoft Teams Rooms is just the start. Organisations should consider how to manage and support large-scale deployments in multiple global locations as well as peripheral AV equipment.

- Simplify your support agreements - Many organisations work with multiple vendors resulting in different support agreements for one room, leading to different SLA agreements, management tools and support processes. This can make problem and incident management extremely challenging and lengthens the time it takes to get reactive support and overcome issues or problems with your conferencing environment.

- Assess your current in-house support capabilities and plan accordingly – You will likely have different support teams providing local support globally. As the number of MTRs you roll out increases, so will the demand for planned and reactive support/management for these rooms. Working with a single service provider who can support all your rooms on a global scale will relieve the burden on existing teams and increase cost efficiencies whilst maintaining the desired level of service for your users no matter where they are.

- Don't treat the MTR like a PC – MTRs can sometimes be seen as just a 'PC in a room', but this couldn't be further from the truth. Whilst MTRs are fundamentally windows or android based, they cannot be treated in the same manner as a personal device, both in terms of encryption and security as well as corporate IT policy on device configuration.

- Implement tools which provide the visibility to enable problem identification and the quickest time to resolution possible.

- Determine a strategy for remote support of the MTRs – Ensure you opt for a management tool or application that's offers a single pane of glass view of the management, monitoring and performance of the complete room environment (including all AV peripherals).

- Consider working with a supplier that offers a global SLA of onsite assistance and replacement parts the next day.

- Consider what dedicated local onsite support resources are required to supplement the correct monitoring remote management tools - Service providers can supplement resources to allow you to scale up support to cover the magnitude of increase in MTRs, whilst keeping a reliable service - ensure you factor this in before deployment.

- Fully align your internal teams - If using a service provider ensure they are fully aligned with your internal Microsoft Support Team and customer security teams to ensure you have all the commissioning details prepared ahead of the installation.

- Test applications on MTRs – Ensure you test applications on a pilot MTR or work with a service provider who will test these and stage your devices prior to deployment.

Gaps in the AV design and user experience strategy

There are some key factors in the design and planning phase which we have seen organisations misinterpret, or fail to fully understand:

- Understand the desired experience for ALL your users – This is probably the biggest challenge we see our customers face. Users' expectations are higher than ever before, and people expect a fully immersive experience and seamless transition from using Microsoft Teams on their desktop or mobile devices through to the conference room.

- Evaluate your user landscape - Executives, clients, partners and employees will have different needs and expectations around how they want to collaborate. Establish how the needs of each group of users might differ and plan/build workflows, which align to the particular requirements of each.

- Don't view Microsoft Team Rooms as a commodity item – Keep sight of the AV implementation and the unique requirement of each room such as acoustics, lighting, microphone choices, content presentation, Microsoft Front Row layouts etc.

- Plan how to integrate the MTR into existing or complex meeting spaces – Don't forget to consider what AV and technology challenges this might bring, or the work needed to expand into larger spaces.

- Determine a standard approach – Work out an approach for your small / medium / large meeting spaces such as preferred cameras, preferred content sharing, displays, cameras etc... This can then be used as a guide for most of your meeting spaces (there will be some exceptions for auditoriums, town hall or custom meeting spaces).

- Which platforms do your MTRs need to connect to? *Zoom*, *Blue Jeans*, *Google*? If so, you need to establish the user workflows for achieving the desired user experience.

Transition

Organisations are scaling up at speed, but many of them don't consider how to move to Microsoft Teams Rooms quickly without impacting current business operations. During the transition and roll-out of large MTR deployments, it is commonplace to have inconsistencies and multiple technologies in place during the transition phase. If you can work with one service provider, who supports all technologies in use, transitions become simpler to manage.

Summary

New Era Technology advises customers to be outcome-focused. Using technology to deliver the outcome rather than forcing or adapting technology to a purpose for which it is not entirely suited. Keep your users and their needs at the forefront, and do not underestimate the importance of how you will support and manage large-scale deployments to ensure optimal service and user experience for all.

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