

CASE STUDY



Holmes Murphy Connects Offices Across a Continent

Holmes Murphy Increases Collaboration and Technology Utilization with Automated Audiovisual Technology

Des Moines, Iowa

Holmes Murphy, with roots back to 1932, has seen tremendous changes in its provision of insurance and related services - not just in the products they offer but also in the way their people work. As they have expanded their operations across the United States, employees have dealt with multiple challenges in maintaining communication within their head office, national branches, and an increasing number of remote personnel. Providing effective connections was top of mind while planning a new headquarters facility.

Early and Integrated Planning Leads to Successful Design

The main goal of building a new 90,000-square-foot headquarters was to create spaces that would facilitate a collaborative culture and align with Holmes Murphy's workflows. In the original offices, teams endured poor audio quality, lack of video conferencing capabilities, and a constant need for IT support in their meeting spaces.

Seventy-five percent of their meetings include remote participants, and the growing workforce of young professionals expects intuitive technology. Whether on-site or working remotely, Holmes Murphy's teams need to be able to easily connect and share in the new space.

As a result, they decided to include expert audiovisual (AV) consultation early in the design of the building, especially considering the scope of the project.

Objectives

- Improve overall audio quality, especially for all-company meetings and remote participants
- Integrate videoconferencing into everyday workflows
- Reduce the IT team's time spent supporting meeting spaces



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The AV specialist would need to outfit small- and medium-scale meeting rooms, reconfigurable training rooms, collaboration spaces, executive conference rooms, and the atrium in a way that worked with the building's structure, envisioned aesthetic, and the users' needs. Holmes Murphy chose Mechdyne to join the team due to their expertise in providing full service consultation through installation of the AV elements of the project.

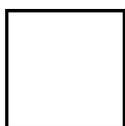
The success of this project depended heavily on early consideration of AV technologies for the varied workflows. Holmes Murphy wanted an expansive building with large windows, open spaces, colorful design accents, and an overall modern vibe—including concrete floors, a mix of glass and concrete walls, and a wooden ceiling. A large, glassed-in central atrium would serve as the venue for all-company meetings that will include remote video conferencing connections.

While modern and visually impressive, the building's lighting and material choices demanded careful attention when considering the AV design and component selection. This included considerations like:

- The unique design of the building, requiring different approaches to sound abatement, including:
 - Sound masking in the atrium to reduce noise and echo from the open space
 - Varying sound-abatement approaches to address the noise created by hard surfaces and configuration of spaces
- High ambient light conditions, requiring special display considerations

Workflow Requirements Drive Technology Selection and Meeting Automation

As part of the discovery phase, Mechdyne conducted interviews with Holmes Murphy employees in order to gain a better understanding of their workflows and primary needs from the AV upgrade. This became the start of the working relationship between the contractor, architect, and Mechdyne, enabling informed collaboration and decision-making on the design of the building.





The newly upgraded collaboration spaces resulted in:

- Advanced meeting room automation
- Integrated audio, including ceiling speakers and microphones
- Web-based video conferencing cameras
- Atrium space outfitted with video and audio capabilities for company-wide meetings
- Tracking camera in the main training room for seamless, remote training sessions
- Scheduling panels connected to Outlook

“The fact that everything is user-friendly and doesn’t take any extra knowledge to get it going, that’s the best thing.”

–Aaron Bush, Tech Support Manager

With this new technology, teams collaborate seamlessly in virtual meetings across locations, and engage in interactive training opportunities. As a result, Holmes Murphy locations are more connected than ever before.

The meeting rooms feature Mechdyne’s proprietary automation software that detects user activities in each room and manages the system power and source routing.

The user can power up the room, per their preference, by doing one of the following:

- Logging into the in-room PC
- Connecting the Barco ClickShare button to their laptop
- Connecting the Extron Show Me Cable to their laptop

Preparing and powering up meetings used to take 20 minutes, with IT support on stand-by. Starting meetings now takes a maximum of five minutes without any IT assistance, resulting in a 75-percent time-savings.

“We’re now in more of a seeking environment as a result of the new technology. The technology enables users to figure things out on their own rather than always asking for help with IT or information from other teams... When I came here, it was seamless. Everything is very intuitive.”

– Kay Murphy, Learning & Development Business Partner, PC

The meeting spaces are also equipped with a Crestron control panel, used for basic controls—volume, telephone call dialing, camera aiming, and other advanced controls.



At the end of a meeting, when the user logs off the PC and disconnects, the display(s) will automatically power down after 15 minutes of inactivity. The room scheduling system is also on a 15-minute timer since the meeting spaces are in high demand. If a user does not come into the room within 15 minutes of a scheduled meeting's start time, the room status automatically changes to "available" and the scheduling panel outside the door displays room availability.

Since some of these new spaces would serve as templates for future branch office upgrades, a few of the smaller huddle rooms were purposely equipped differently for limited A/B testing of technology return on investment (ROI). Single flat-panel monitors were installed in specific rooms, two in others. Through employee use and feedback, Holmes Murphy's IT team will determine whether the second monitor increases productivity, increases user contacts to IT, or adds value they had not considered previously. If a second monitor is not adding sufficient value, they will not include them in future deployments.

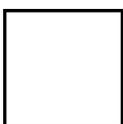
AV Challenges to Overcome in a New Building

High Ambient Light

As soon as visitors and employees pass through the reception area, they see the expansive, bright atrium. It is used for hosting company-wide meetings and events, visitor presentations, and occasional collaboration meetings among large employee groups. Mechdyne designed a mobile projection and motorized screen solution that deploys only when needed. Retracting the screen when not in use preserves the aesthetic of the atrium and building design. Dual Digital Projection 18,000-lumen HD laser projectors on a rolling cart are used to project 80-feet onto the motorized drop-down screen. This type of projector is optimal in an open space filled with natural lighting. Also, utilizing dual projectors provides users and their audience with comfortable viewing brightness and a back-up capability.

Sound Management

The open design of the building required sound abatement. In the atrium, wall-mounted speakers are carefully positioned to surround the space to provide uniform sound for all-company meetings.





To fill the open space and reduce echo throughout the building, Mechdyne designed a sound-masking system made up of active emitters. However, the only options for installing white noise speakers were structural beams spanning the ceiling. In order to design a mounting solution that would allow the speakers to hang low enough to work effectively, and not disrupt the aesthetic of the building, the Mechdyne installation team constructed a physical mock-up of the ceiling structure and designed the mounting solution that would complement the open design. To ensure the solution would work optimally within the space, the team coordinated on-site testing with the general contractor during construction.

Positive Results

Since Holmes Murphy opened the doors to their new headquarters, employees are experiencing immediate improvements from their old technology infrastructure.

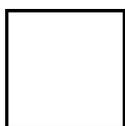
“The biggest [improvement] is the reduced start-up times with the smaller PCs. It’s phenomenal. It’s gone from a long loading-time for the older PCs to maybe a 40-second loading time for new users or a 15-second start-up time for regular users.”

– Ben Wilker, Learning and Development Consultant

Holmes Murphy achieved their goals due to the advanced planning and collaboration with Mechdyne. Complete designs and regular communication instilled confidence in Holmes Murphy’s project team during construction and AV installation. Increased user confidence and higher utilization rates result from designing simplified meeting spaces and intuitive user interfaces. The technology selected and regular service will lead to longer utilization and lower overall costs of operation.

About Mechdyne

Mechdyne is one of the world’s leading providers of innovative visual information technologies. Mechdyne bends technology to our will in ways that transform complex data into insights and ideas. To ensure our clients succeed, Mechdyne provides comprehensive, customized solutions that include consulting, software, technical services, and hardware integration.



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