**Drop the Mic!
Blog: Telling the “Hole” Story About Conference Tables**

Perhaps the foundation for every great conference room or board room in Fortune 1000 companies around the world is the “table.” Painstakingly chosen, it is often one of the most distinctive pieces in the room and often the subject of much deliberation when planning the conference space. As the central gathering spot for important meetings, shareholder gatherings and executive briefings, the conference table is considered by many, the crown jewel of a room that could easily cost milliions simply in its design, furnishings and technology.

Agonizing over sizes and finishes, custom shapes, and rare woods, architects around the world spend a tremendous amount of time specifying and selecting tables that will make a statement for the clients they serve. Clients can spend tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars on these tables. So it is no small wonder that when it comes to outfitting the boardroom with technology and adding microphones to the space that there can be huge push back from the architect when the integrator says, “I’m going to have to drill a hole in that table.”

Any audiophile worth their salt knows that throwing an iphone on the table top and using that as a conference device, or using off-the-shelf non-commercial grade teleconferencing equipment will quickly sabotage the quality of the audio as well as the overall functionality and performance of the room. In order for a conference or boardroom to perform as if it is “state-of-the-art”, it needs to integrate high quality technology and this warrants the use of equipment, cabling and other AV /IT devices.

With the knowledge and need for technology a given, the conversation then turns to lessons on how to balance form and function while preserving the room’s aesthetic. Part of that aesthetic lies in the ability to have “clean lines” in the room. Minimizing or completely hiding cables in the bases of the table are one way to help do this. Installing retractable microphones in the ceiling and integrating table top microphones that can retract and become flush with the table surface are others. But before you take the core drill out and start cutting your table, there ar a few steps you should consider:

**Step One:**
First, clearly identify what you want the microphones in the room to be able to do. This will require you to identify the type of meetings the room will hold. Will it be a lecture style or more of a public forum? How many people does the room need to accomodate? Will they be sitting or standing? How many speakers will need to be able to address the room at one time and from how many locations in the room? Understanding how you want the room to function overall will help you identify the right technology to integrate.

**Step Two:**
Consider the size of the overall room – and of course the table. Assess the space you have to work with to make sure you specify the proper equipment and that you are taking into consideration any challenges or limitations that exist in the space and working around them.

*A special note to our Architect clients: May we suggest that you specify and select conference tables that have an even amount of seating. This will allow you to use one microphone for every two participants and you will be able to maximize the coverage. Besides, having an “odd man out” seat at the table will just create disharmony, cost more and will throw off the symmetry of the mic layout.*

**Step Three:**
Identify your different microphone options. Do you want something really durable that sits on the table or something that artfully disappears into the table to keep a flush surface? Would you prefer a mic system that was completely retractable and hidden above the ceiling until needed? Are you looking for a control system to monitor all of the microphones or would you like more localized and manual controls? Whatever you are looking for, be specific and ask for customization when it is needed. The right microphones can be a truly important investment and you want to make sure you get exactly what you need where you need it.

**Step Four through Ten**Measure, measure, measure, measure, measure, measure, measure, measure, measure, measure then cut.

You’ve heard the expression measure twice cut once? When it comes to microphones you are definately going to want to make sure that you are certain where you are going to cut the holes and what size they need to be BEFORE you start to avoid making your conference table look like swiss cheese.

**Important note**: When measuring, you want to make sure that you not only meausre the size of the hole you need, but you also measure the distance from the edge of the table. For boundary microphones and other table top microphones, placement should be between 18” and 24” from the edge of the table. Anything shorter may quickly become problematic when participants gather round the table with their laptops and can’t fit them between the mic placement and the table edge.

Ideally 18” is the sweet spot for a single person’s mic (although you could use 24” for a single person but sound quality and gain would be optimum at 18”). Meanwhile 24” is the sweet spot for two people when sharing a mic (because at 18” for two people it would be too close for the pickup angle)

 **Perhaps more than anything else when you are looking to integrate microphones you will want to make sure you have a strategic partner in your manufacturer. Make sure they include complete directions with their shipments (we do!), that they have a truly responsive customer and technical support line (we do!), that they have on-line resources, videos and tutorials (we do!) and that they can offer you customized options if your project so needs.**

**Not everyone can say that, but at Clockaudio we can say that customization is a HOLE lot of what makes us clearly different.**