

Blog: Drop the Mic!

Hut, Hut, Hike: How Huddle Rooms Have Changed the Field of Play for Conference Rooms

Just a few decades ago, organizing a meeting meant you had to try and schedule all participants to be present in the same room at the same time. A task that was often easier said than done. For a national or global company and people in various locations around the world, meetings used to require travel and time spent out of the office, adding significant costs.

Fortunately, technology has since evolved, creating new ways to set up and participate in meetings. Enter the world of Audio/Video Conferencing, which has become the standard medium for exchanging thoughts and ideas in today's fast-paced world.

Following the creation of Audio/Video Conferencing came the birth of webinars and on-line classes, and distance learning class sessions via webcams installed in schools, universities, hospitals and other institutions. The need and demand for sharing knowledge instantly with the rest of the world beckoned, and technology answered and changed the way we conduct meetings.

With a plethora of communication devices such as laptops, smartphones and tablets, communication is possible virtually anywhere. Now, wherever you go and wherever you are, you can instantaneously join a meeting regardless of its time and location. This approach to meetings has led an industry and our workplaces to embrace a new kind of meeting room – the Huddle Room.



Extremely user friendly, the Huddle Room has become a widely-used platform for less formal and more impromptu meetings. Providing a space to “jump in” and brainstorm ideas, or solve small issues and business challenges, the room is always “at the ready” so that you can conference at a moment's notice.

Today's 'ready-to-use' Huddle Rooms are at our fingertips. The host sends a simple email invitation to all participants, reserves the room and participants meet to 'huddle up' and discuss what they need to. The field of play is a room that typically hosts three, four or six participants. The meetings are brief and designed to get everyone on the same page or "back in the game" and working on tasks and initiatives once the huddle (meeting) breaks.



There are several benefits that go far beyond the reduced cost of construction for Huddle Rooms. Fostering culture change is one such benefit and that contributes to more effective communication and greater teamwork and collaboration. This in turn can increase productivity and efficiency while providing the right atmosphere for creative problem solving. The new smaller and more intimate design of these spaces allow larger spaces, like boardrooms and main conference rooms, to be left available for their own appropriate uses.

For huddle rooms and the results that meetings in these spaces can deliver, their smaller size is not an issue. In fact, they can be as effective, or more effective, as larger boardrooms but at a fraction of the square footage, furniture and design cost.

With the increasing quality of audio and video technologies, either with soft codecs or more sophisticated equipment, these rooms are often a much less-expensive solution and are rapidly becoming the standard. It is common for companies to incorporate multiple Huddle Rooms to foster an on-going sense of collaboration and to make spaces accessible and available to everyone on staff.



Now people can simply make a phone call, send an instant message or email to the parties involved just minutes before walking into a huddle room, and instantly connect to share documents and ideas. Participants can see each other in real-time, as if they were in the same room, with the added benefit of visual cues that are not available on a traditional conference call.

However, as cost effective as huddle rooms can be, sound quality and intelligibility are areas that should never be value engineered. Whether using an omni-directional microphone, such as the CRM200S-RF, the C002E-RF or the C009E-RF for smaller spaces, or a multiple cardioid-element mic for larger, less-quiet spaces, Clockaudio provides a variety of solutions for Huddle Rooms that are reliable, flexible and that provide great sound quality so that your meeting's message is heard loud and clear.

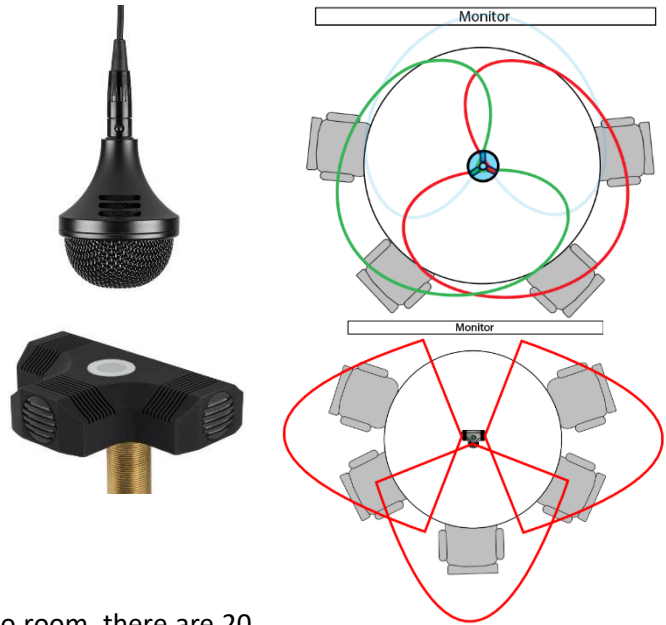
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One multi-element microphone that will perform remarkably well in a huddle room is Clockaudio's suspended C303-RF. It has three elements that cover a full 360°, using three cardioid polar patterns with an acceptance angle of 120 degrees each.



A boundary-table microphone would also be a great addition in a huddle room and would ensure superb intelligibility. The CS3(S)-RF is another perfect solution as it can cover three quarters of the conference table with three half-cardioid patterns.

Industry analysts estimate that for every group-video room, there are 20 – 25 huddle rooms. With approximately 1.5 - 2 million group-video rooms worldwide, the number of huddle rooms is projected to be 30-50 million. *1 The growth for these rooms may be rooted in our up-and-coming majority business-stake holder – the Millennial. Collaboration-minded and with a desire for peer-to-peer feedback, Huddle Rooms provide the high-tech experience and team-based environment Millennials value. With this group expected to dominate the workforce by 2025 (75%)*2 , there is no doubt the Huddle Room will be here for the long-foreseen future.

For Clockaudio and for our industry, that translates to a tremendous opportunity to create rooms that support this changing workforce and that have the technology and sound quality that will deliver improved and Clearly Different results for years and years to come.

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*1 – Wainhouse Research - Understanding the Huddle Room: Maximizing the Value of these Underutilized Spaces (2015)
*2 – Hartford Business - <http://www.hartfordbusiness.com/article/20140818/PRINTEDITION/140819969/millennials-to-take-over-by-2025>