In recent years, the workplace has shifted towards a collaborative environment with the aim to increase innovation and efficiency stemming from advances in technology and access to more information. Today’s businesses are looking to attract younger talent and promote innovation through collaboration among workers. But what does “collaborative” mean? And how is it driving change in space and technology?

A financial analyst will have a different idea of collaboration compared to an art director, and the architect who designed the space might have a different idea of a collaboration space than the end users.

For the integrator, collaboration requires creating an AV system that not only allows the end users the ability to collaborate but tailoring the AV system to how the end users collaborates most effectively. Whether you-the integrator - are working within a new space or retrofitting a space, it is important to understand the different styles and methods of collaboration to best suit your clients.
As companies and facility managers look to cut costs, especially with rising real estate prices, the challenge becomes how can we increase collaboration without increasing our office space?

This means that there is no longer a universal solution to space planning, and more importantly the audio-visual gear inside. From a workdesign article entitled “Open Offices: One Size Does Not Fit All” author Bob Fox explains the rising costs of office space.

“Office space is costly. In large urban markets, it’s not uncommon to be paying $50/SF per year. As a simple example, if you do the math, a company with 100 people will on average require about 20,000 SF of space. The rent, in that case, totals $1 million per year or $83,000 per month.

Switching to an open office plan, you can easily save 25 percent or in this case 5,000 SF. You just saved your company $250,000 per year, enough to hire about three people, including taxes and benefits; and that saving is each year, over the life of an office lease the dollars are significant.”

Today, around 70% of offices in the US are adopting a version of the open floor concept. Steering away from cubicles and personal workspaces, the open floor concept uses less space and brings everyone together in a lunchroom styled layout. Modeled after the startup culture, the open floor plan is meant to instill creativity and collaboration by removing barriers between employees. While in theory this concept is great for collaboration and cross department communication, the constant activity creates difficulties in focusing on tasks and detailed activities as well as added strain on employee relationships by removing their personal space.

The rise of companies adopting open floor plans as an attempt to increase collaboration have found that although they attract talent and are on the forefront of current trends, the research is saying its workers are actually 15% less productive with a fully open floor plan.
Before dismissing the open-office plan and sticking with cubicles and corner suites, consider having the best of both worlds, a sense of privacy along with a feeling of togetherness and collaboration.

The meeting room has typically been a place for large groups or a manager to share critical information but has quickly evolved into a space to workshop, discuss, concentrate and many other types of activities. Because the meeting room is being used in so many different ways, we have to reevaluate the layout and design to accommodate more. As the integrator, you must view the room as a toolbox rather than an empty space where end-users gather. Tools within this metaphorical toolbox can range from the basics such as furniture and display size, to more detailed considerations like microphones, acoustics, lighting etc. As the overall office space is decreasing, the importance of the meeting space is critical, and must be designed to support the end-users. The integrator is truly responsible for defining and connecting the tools to drive communication and collaboration in today’s meeting space—allowing participants to seamlessly share voice, video & content from anywhere.

When it comes to space planning, facility managers are measuring costs, efficiencies and space used in corporate offices, and things like an open office plan makes sense financially, but are they considering what is best for the end users? With office space decreasing, the collaboration market continues to grow and the opportunity for the integrator lies in understanding the way the end user collaborates and providing the right solution.

**So how large is this opportunity for the integrator?**

An **enterprise** collaboration system is an information system that facilitates the sharing of documents within a company. Solutions include videoconferencing, messaging and cloud platform applications such as: google hangout, slack, skype, cisco, Highfive, etc.
From the study of Enterprise Collaboration Market by component (Video, Enterprise Social Network, Project Management & Analytics, Unified Messaging, Services) is projected to grow from USD 34.57 billion in 2018 to USD 59.86 billion by 2023, at a CAGR of 11.6% from 2018 to 2023. Factors such as widespread use of social networking websites and increasing usage of mobile devices for collaboration are expected to fuel the growth of the enterprise collaboration market across the globe. For you, the AV integrator, this trend creates an enormous opportunity for you to provide your clients with optimal collaborative AV solutions for their specific environment.

From David Danto, longtime industry consultant and analyst, and the director of emerging technology for the IMCCA: “Integrators, if they haven’t already, have to fundamentally change their approach to the market—evolving from hardware resellers to trusted advisors,” Danto said. “Their new value-add is helping clients machete through the hype and identifying solutions that will meet the client’s actual needs in the client’s actual environment. These are not always the same answers for different organizations. Understanding desired business objectives, current technical environment, and what’s going on in the industry are the three pillars to determining what a successful blend of products should be in any given organization.”

Most AV integrators monitor the latest trends and solutions in the AV world through events such as Infocomm by Avixa where companies around the world showcase their technology. Today, companies are relying on the integrator to beyond the latest audio and visual equipment to a complete AV experience. To provide an effective experience, you must be able to discern different types of spaces and needs within those spaces to provide the right solution. Understanding clients’ needs requires observing how end users work and determining areas where you can provide an AV solution that not only supports but enhances their experience. Keeping up with these changes and combining them into a single AV solution produces a whole new set of challenges for the integrator and this guide will provide you with tools and resources on adapting to the future of AV in the collaboration space.

The work dynamic is no longer hierarchical and linear but a complex web of interconnected teams. Employees’ roles are growing to encompass multiple positions that require constant communication and collaboration, resulting in group-based work accounting for more than half of today’s organizations and growing. The question for the integrator becomes, how do you accommodate so many groups within one organization in a collaborative manner? Here are some of the different types of collaborative work spaces and how they can be outfitted:

**Changing Spaces**

**WORKSTYLES HAVE SHIFTED**

**GROUP-BASED WORK CONTINUES TO EXCALATE**

**20TH CENTURY WORKSTYLE**
Linear flow/hierarchical structure

**21ST CENTURY WORKSTYLE**
Complex flow/networked structure

**Percentage of organizations’ work classified as group work**

- 2012: 40%
- Today: 52%
- In 5 years: 63%
Whether it be at their home, on the road, or a local coffee shop, workers are increasingly working outside of the office. The population of people who work at home (excluding self-employed) is growing by 103% since 2005 with 3.7 million employees now working from home, at least half of the time.

Laptops and cell phones have disrupted the preconceived notion of only being able to get work done between the hours of 9-5. Employers are allowing workers to have a more flexible schedule and the ability to choose hours that suit their lifestyle and productivity needs. With this freedom, there are still some guidelines or best practices such as core hours. Most remote workers are required to come in or be available for at least a few core hours certain days of the week such as 9am-1pm so that it still falls within traditional business hours and others that are in the office have a chance to connect if they need to. Remote working can be a huge relief to commuters who get back hours of their day by skipping the commute to the office, as well as health benefits to workers who feel more in control and productive during the time that suits them.

As millennials now dominate the workforce, the flexible schedule is becoming a standard for attracting and retaining talent. Currently, millennials make up 20% of total leadership roles in the workforce and that number will continue to grow. The new wave of a younger workforce is bringing with it, new ideas, culture, and technology, making the workplace more dynamic than ever.
AV Integrators and remote workers:

Bringing your cell phone home and responding to emails while you run errands doesn’t count as working from home. This privilege is coming with an expectation of productivity made possible through technology and subsequent rise of the videoconferencing market which poses a large opportunity for AV integrators. The opportunity lies not just on an employee level for the integrator, but entire businesses and organizations can expand relationships and connections with the right collaboration tools. A report from Transparency Market Research in April 2018 valued the global video conferencing market at just over $5 billion in 2016 with a compound annual growth rate of 7.9% from 2018 to 2026. Whichever a compound annual growth rate of market at just over $5 billion in 2016 with a compound annual growth rate of 7.9% from 2018 to 2026. Whichever ever environment workers choose to work from should enable them to be able to collaborate with others effectively as they would if they were working out of the office.

For AV integrators, the challenge is working with IT to ensure that the network at the office has the right audio and visual equipment to support it. From Commercial Integrators 2018 Video Collaboration Special Report featuring input from David Kung, Vice President of Product Strategy at Oblong- a company aiming to deliver a better human-computer interface the fluid nature of conferencing and collaboration now means that more and more participants will be able to log in externally through their own devices; however, Kung cautious, the implicit downside to that is that the weakest AV connection to the meeting — poor-quality audio or video — in effect sets the bar for the entire meeting. “What can help offset that is the use of the best components available,” he says, citing wide-angle lenses and high-quality loud-speakers. “To the extent possible, you want the remoter to have the same level of experience as the participants in the room.”

When remote workers do spend time in the office, it can often be uncomfortable and unproductive when they don’t have the right space. Companies have saved space by allowing employees to work from home, but usually don’t account for times when the remote worker is in the office. Rather than adding desks that are used once or twice a week, integrators are looking to add solutions that are flexible with technology to maximize their space. Two of the most important considerations for integrators when building a space for video conferencing are displays and the cameras. At 2018’s Infocomm, displays and cameras were heavily featured giving the world a glimpse of the future of audio visual design. Some of the highlights for displays included:

- Transparent for high ambient lighting areas
- Smart displays with interactive touch screens and built in cameras for collaboration
- LED screens becoming more prevalent as the cost of LED declines, replacing the projector with brighter, more vivid colors and images

For cameras and teleconferencing software, here are some of the latest tech:

- Automated Pan/Tilt/Zoom cameras for meeting rooms with the ability to encompass an entire room and focus on different speakers based on their voice
- Cross platform meeting space technology where users can plug in their device and use the audio and visual technology on a wide array of video conferencing platforms to accommodate remote workers and clients with other systems

According to a report by Frost & Sullivan, less than 5 per cent of the 30 million huddle rooms worldwide are video-enabled. This could be due to several factors, including high acquisition and operating costs of the technology solutions, as well as education — many companies are simply not aware of what is possible. Businesses are willing to pay for an increase in video conferencing users but are unlikely to invest in more IT resources to support the solution. A SaaS model can help break that barrier and make it easier to deploy and manage operating costs.

Helping fuel the importance of camera and display technologies are software as a service (SaaS) companies. The remote worker and advancements of video conferencing are bringing multiple SaaS solutions to the forefront of AV integration. Today, building an a-la-carte system of these services for collaboration spaces is the key to giving customers the best features from multiple partners. From Curtis Rose on “How Cloud and SaaS are Changing AV Integration” For AV professionals, the cloud will bring both opportunity and change to technology and to business practices.

The challenge will be in product development; how to integrate a thousand services and help customers search through it; choosing the right products in the right configurations.

From the original concept to the final product, finding a custom design group that supports each project with a team of highly qualified designers, engineers and customer service representatives will take your project from an idea to reality.
The Huddle space is a small, private work area designed to accommodate groups of four to six. The huddle room is much like a huddle in football, gathering together with your team for a quick solution or interaction. Unlike traditional meetings that require a reservation and planning beforehand, the huddle room is much quicker and informal. Accessibility is one of the key features of a huddle room meaning that when the space is vacant, it is available for anyone to use, allowing for a quick conversation or brainstorming session.

The huddle space has emerged from a trend towards increased conversation and open collaboration within the workplace as well as outside the workplace. Whether you need a space for a presentation, to sit down to work on a project with others, or simply have a quiet space to make a phone call, the huddle room gives the user flexibility. One of the best features about huddle rooms for integrators and the end-user is the cost. A huddle room can be made from almost any unused space at the office by outfitting it with a few key items, making it a cost-effective solution.

Cost Effective:

Traditional large conference rooms are costly in both a company’s budget and space. Outfitting a huddle room with tech and furniture can cost as low as $5,000. A huddle room with video and teleconferencing capabilities can dramatically reduce travel expenses and still allow for a “face-to-face” meeting. With its first come first serve availability, the huddle room reduces time previously spent on scheduling and preparing for meetings days or even weeks in advance. Converting unused office space into a huddle room or multiple huddle not only saves you space but allows for more collaboration between employees.
The huddle room also gives you accessibility to collaboration technology such as displays, work surface, and audio-visual gear making it faster and easier to get your task done. By design, huddle rooms should be fast and effective, and that means the technology in the room should be as well. The huddle room should be equipped with audio-visual gear for communicating and collaborating with remote workers as if they were in the room.

From HB Communications on “The Role of The AV Integrator in Huddle Space Design” the integrator plays a pertinent role alongside the architect when designing a great huddle space. “Integrators and architects also need to think about the positioning of microphones, screens, outlets, and all other AV components. The AV integrator’s goal is to not only supply the tools but install them as seamlessly as possible and provide support throughout the project lifecycle. Equipment, such as LED displays, projectors, speakers, microphones, monitors, and switches, should be housed in dedicated racks to preserve the aesthetic look of the space.”

Here is a list of key features that make an effective huddle room:

- Video conferencing solution
- Central display (interactive flat panel, LED, LCD, Smartboard)
- Collaborative furniture (table large enough for group work, adaptable seating [4-6])
- Sound barrier (small room, white board dividers, display walls etc.)
Conference Rooms

With these new meeting spaces in the workplace, the conference room remains useful, but, like the rest of the office, it too is evolving. With Open floor plans, huddle rooms and agile working, companies are continually working to maximize their space usage, and the large conference rooms are taking a hit. Although the need for meeting rooms remains as critical as ever, their size is ultimately shrinking.

Conference rooms that comfortably sit 20 people at a large table are not as common compared to 10-15 years ago. Studies show that large conference rooms that hold 10+ people only make up 30% of all conference rooms. As meetings become more intimate and collaborative the space they’re in does too.

Most companies will still need large conference rooms, but that doesn’t mean the room can’t be used for other purposes. Things like modular furniture, multiple displays and acoustic panels allow for conference rooms to be transformed into scrum spaces and huddle rooms. A key feature in the modern conference room is having a clear, easily visible display setup. Almost all meetings and presentations in the modern workplace are paired with a visual element and ensuring it is visual to everyone in the room is critical. Another recent need in the conference room is an digital whiteboard or other type of IFPL in order to workshop and collaborate between users both in the meeting or remote. Unlike with a traditional whiteboard, an interactive display that can sync with a computer or mobile device in real time, removing the need to write “do not erase” or “save” until the next meeting. Having multiple displays, interactive whiteboards, and acoustic panels not only enhances large meetings using the entire room but lets the space be flexible and broken into smaller rooms. From Ubiq’s Conference Room Technology:

5 Investments You Should Make:
1. Wireless Presentation Solution
2. Projectors and 4K TV’s
3. Productivity Tools
4. Unified Communication System
5. Meeting Room Scheduling Software

1. C5 Credenza Series
The C5 Credenza series combines support, protection, and reliability for AV gear. The C5 Credenza can store up to 42RU with Middle Atlantic’s slide out rotating rack. Integrated thermal management and power make the C5 an all in one unit. Available in 22” 27” or 31” depths and 1, 2 or 3 bays. The C5 meets the needs of any space.

2. Pedestal Rack
Patent-pending swing-out pedestal rack can be located in the table pedestal of choice. Innovative flexibility for up to 3 RU of sideways rackmounting, small device mounting or a combination of the two. Includes three tool-free Lever Lock™ plates for mounting small devices.

3. Wiremold Integrate™ Table Boxes
in black or silver with 2 retracting HDMI cables and 2 AC outlets for power and connectivity at the surface. Table boxes and cable retractor are concealed by the table’s pedestal. Vertical power distribution, cable management strips and bridge lances.

4. T5 Series Conference Table
T5 Series offers convenient and discreet storage for AV gear. Patent-pending swing-out pedestal rack can be located in the table pedestal of choice. This pre-configured all-in-one furniture system includes vertical power distribution, Lever Lock™ for mounting small devices, and table boxes. All with connectivity and cable management.