Multinational Dairy Cooperative
New Zealand

Challenge

Simplify AV, lighting, room booking and video conferencing for NZ's largest company.

Fonterra New Zealand Headquarters

Solution

Integrated a Crestron Fusion solution working with existing Microsoft Lync infrastructure to manage video conferencing, lighting and AV in its new headquarters.

Fonterra Co-operative Group Limited is a New Zealand-headquartered multinational dairy co-operative owned by a collective of 10,500 New Zealand dairy farmers. The business is responsible for around 30 per cent of the world's dairy exports and with a revenue exceeding $NZ17.2 billion, is New Zealand's largest company.

Fonterra
New Zealand Headquarters

The organisation employs around 22,000 people across the globe. As such, video conferencing is part of the lifeblood of the company. In late 2013, the company was looking to consolidate five headquarter locations in New Zealand into a single leased green-fields structure housing approximately 1500 staff.

The new headquarters were designed with 60 meeting rooms of various shapes and sizes, all equipped with the same technology for video, as well as a state of the art auditorium capable of hosting a variety of live and video conferenced events. In the design process, the intention was set to utilise flexible yet consistent new technology for both the meeting rooms and the auditorium, to improve functionality over existing systems that were a number of generations behind.

According to Mike Saint, Fonterra technical lead, "We needed a simple, consistent, reliable meeting room system that just worked."

The chosen solution also needed to work with the existing Microsoft Lync (now Skype for Business) presence, messaging and conferencing system used by the organisation.

Mr Saint said when Fonterra went to market for a new system, Crestron was a clear contender, however several other systems in the marketplace were also reviewed. Crestron, because of its power, simplicity and 'just works' abilities, came out on top. Crestron delivers Microsoft Lync (Skype for Business) – using Crestron RL 2. RL 2 provides a turn-key unified communications suite straight out of the box, and does not require further licensing or maintenance fees. The Crestron RL2 makeover is being implemented across all Fonterra branches worldwide, with almost 70 RL2 products utilised at its large scale headquarters.

Saving time, saving money

One of the problems with the existing system was the fact it could take someone in a meeting room up to 15 minutes wrestling with technology before they could get anything to work.

"It simply didn't work in our old headquarters, and it was never going to be good enough for the new location," he observed.

Simple, Consistant, Reliable
Meeting Room

Rather than charging in head-first, Fonterra worked with Crestron partner, Automation Associates, to embark on a pilot program, a year in advance of the building go live. A total of 300 staff, divided into three groups of 100, were recruited for the pilot, and for the initial product shakedown.

"We built a pilot of what we would have in all the meeting rooms 12 months in advance, and put it through its paces.

"We had great support through the entire implementation process with the team at Automation Associates. We moved people in on day one as planned, and they were able to walk into a meeting room, press a button and everything worked as it was supposed to," he said.

Fusion oversees entire infrastructure

Fonterra settled on the Crestron Fusion solution which allows complete control of a room and its set up, including video, audio, room booking and lighting. With Fusion, users can walk into a booked room with their presentation device of choice – and then press a button and a video conference or on-screen presentation is ready to go.

Each of the 60 Fusion-controlled meeting rooms has a Crestron booking screen positioned outside, and then inside is another Crestron screen controlling the audio, video and lights.

Users can book a room using Microsoft Outlook. When the room is booked, the user receives a confirmation via email. When the meeting starts, a prominent red light is displayed on the booking screen outside the room to indicate it is booked and in use.

Mr Saint said the red and green lights are a great tool for staff. When they are in a hallway looking for a meeting room, they can see the red or green lights at a glance, indicating whether or not the room is available for use.

Allowing productivity to soar

Prior to implementing the Crestron solution, it could take up to 15 minutes for a meeting to get underway because of technical issues associated with getting devices connected.

Mr Saint said those 15 minutes have been saved using Crestron because everything just works at the push of a button. “We know it is quicker to start a meeting or to start a video conference,” he said. “What was sometimes a 15 minute process is now down to almost zero, and that is a significant contributor to productivity.”

Because the company is global, video conferencing is an absolute necessity to ensure the smooth running of the organisation, and has long been a key element in reducing travel costs.

Through Crestron DigitalMedia, the only field-proven solution for managing and distributing digital AV and control signals, Crestron has become the backbone technology powering collaborative working at Fonterra’s world headquarters and wider sites.“We are minimising travel costs because video conferencing is now a serious, productive alternative to getting on a plane,” he said. “With Crestron, people are more comfortable using video conferencing, and it is a real, viable alternative to travel which, in turn, saves the company money.”

“We had some technical issues during the pilot and pre-move, but Crestron provided great support to our AV partner in identifying and resolving,” he said. “Crestron takes the focus off the technology and allows people to get on with their jobs.”

Future plans

“Although Crestron has competitors in the market, it is a unique solution in terms of the fact that it is a total package with the Fusion management system and the booking panels,” he said. “We wanted a simple, consistent, reliable solution that our people could trust – and Crestron have delivered that for us”.