Zurich Insurance Group

For its new North America headquarters, Zurich Insurance Group sought the collaboration tools that would attract and keep its talented employees.

Highlight the brand

Zurich Insurance Group is a worldwide company that covers large corporations (including 90% of the Fortune 500), individuals, and all types and sizes of businesses in between. As it went about building new North America headquarters in Schaumburg, Ill., a Chicago suburb, Zurich wanted to make sure the new corporate campus would have the collaborative technology its employees expect — tools that would attract top talent and help them work effectively.

"We were going to build something from scratch with all the input possible from all the employees in the organization to make it the place that people want to work," says Dean Pipes, Zurich's chief innovation architect.

In addition to its outdated technology, the problems with the former facility included a limited staff experience that rarely took people

beyond their own floor, and few spaces for people to meet and collaborate.

Not only would the new facility have to have meeting spaces equipped for video conferences, audio conferences, and presentations, those spaces would have to be easy to operate. In the previous headquarters, it took an average of 12 minutes to get a meeting underway. To cut down on that time, Zurich wanted one simple-to-use interface in each meeting area.

"'Simple', 'reliable,' and 'intuitive' were three key words we used throughout any place where we had users that needed to interact with technology," says Pipes. "From the moment you plug in the HDMI cable, I want the projector to turn on. I want the screen to come down. I want these things to work in a way that's seamless and intuitive."

> "Our relationship with AVI-SPL was off to a very fast start. We were very quickly building trust and a relationship that we knew how to operate together."

Increase mobility, ease of use

As construction teams worked on the building, AVI-SPL coordinated daily with Zurich's project management team so it could complete tasks like pulling cable before walls went up.

"Our relationship with AVI-SPL was off to a very fast start," says Pipes. "We were very quickly building trust and a relationship that we knew how to operate together."

Early in the project, Zurich's team asked its employees to help in the design of a control panel for the meeting rooms. With that input in hand, AVI-SPL created a storyboard of the in-room Crestron AV panel for employees to review and then designed the customized graphic user interface based on their feedback.

"AVI-SPL was very collaborative," says Jennifer Kyung, Zurich's high performance culture business lead for North America. "They listened to the feedback from our employees and from our focus groups, as well as our team, and they were making adjustments to that."

AVI-SPL implemented simple controls that anyone can use. Walk into a meeting room, regardless of its size, and there's only one interface to touch. Likewise, easy-to-use booking panels are on the outside of each room so staff can reserve them ahead of time.

"No matter what room you're going into, you have a consistent experience," says Kyung. "You don't have to learn a new process."

Most of the rooms don't require advance scheduling. Of the 300 rooms that were part of the project, nearly 200 are enclaves — huddle spaces intended for the ad hoc meeting (75 percent of Zurich's meetings are four people or fewer). Each feature 42-inch NEC displays and HDMI connections for laptops.

For larger gatherings, Zurich's divisible conference center and Pilling Theater can accommodate hundreds of people. Both are equipped with Polycom video conferencing for internal and external meetings. When the conference center's 32 individual rooms are combined, one control panel will manage all of their technology and Da-Lite display screens automatically drop down to accommodate multiple viewing points.

"Our goal is to bring meetings that were offsite, onsite," says Kyung. "We want our employees and our customers or brokers to have a Zurich experience. The conference center is a way to do that."

So too is the theater, which holds about 250. There, hundreds of displays can combine to function as one screen. The theater ties into Polycom Group Series codecs that make it possible for meeting rooms to connect to one another via video call while also bringing people in from around the world.

Using its Haivision IPTV and digital signage solution, Zurich also shares content like corporate and cable channels securely and reliably throughout the campus, including the cafeteria, meeting rooms and digital signage installations.

In less than a year, AVI-SPL's integration team engineered, tested, and implemented solutions for over 300 rooms. That's even more impressive when you consider the work was done as different trades were simultaneously applying their talents across a complex of over 780,000 square feet.

"One of our major challenges was just the sheer size of the project and the timeframe," says Steve Derrico, AVI-SPL global account manager, Chicago. "I attest our success with that to the coordination between AVI-SPL's Chicago project team and Zurich's project team."

> "Our employees really enjoy the in-room technology, that consistent experience of having a monitor and HDMI in every single collaborative space, whether it's an enclave, a meeting room or a conference room. It's consistent, it's easy, they can use it."

Maintaining that success are the 12 AVI-SPL staff who are working onsite to support Zurich's AV functions and the daily use of its conference spaces. They also provide production services within the theater and conference center, helping develop the meeting scope, and making sure the content is ready to go.

Setting a new standard

Amidst its vast, impressive new headquarters, with space to house about 5,000, Zurich can do what it couldn't before: hold meetings and training events with as many as hundreds of people and do it onsite. And the user interfaces make everything Zurich wanted to accomplish in a room — presentations, video conferences, audio conferences – as easy to start and manage as they are using consumer devices.

"Employees are thrilled with the technology experience," says Kyung. "Our employees are also really enjoying the in-room technology, that consistent experience of having a monitor and HDMI in every single collaborative space, whether it's an enclave, a meeting room or a conference room. It's consistent, it's easy, they can use it. They can bring their laptop anywhere now and do work."

The Pilling Theater, which his already in use on a weekly basis, is expected to grow to include external audiences and regularly host customer, industry, and broker events. Even before reaching the theater, staff can treat guests and colleagues alike to the Zurich brand using the digital signage throughout the building, including the video wall in the Heritage Welcome Center.

"That's been a home run," says Kyung.

Staff have also taken to the collaborative spaces, using them to connect with coworkers they otherwise wouldn't see.

"People's attitudes and their energy is up," says Pipes. "It's going to allow the culture to evolve in ways that it hadn't before."

The success of the headquarters has given Zurich the confidence to undertake similar projects throughout its other North American sites and global offices.

"it wasn't our intent just to set a standard for our headquarters," says Pipes. "It was also to be able to expand that to all of North America and then to extend that further to inform the Zurich global standards as a whole."

At A Glance

Organization
Zurich Insurance Group

Location
Schaumburg, Ill.

Market
Enterprise

Solutions
Crestron
Haivision
Da-Lite
NEC
Shure
Polycom

Services
Integration

About AVI-SPL

AVI-SPL designs, builds, integrates and supports solutions for AV and video communication, digital media, advanced visualization, and control systems for all types of organizations around the world. We also provide a wide range of support services, including cloud-based video conferencing, onsite staffing, call launching for video conferencing, and remote monitoring of AV and video systems to ensure optimal performance. Our Customer Care program delivers manufacturer-certified tech support and maintenance through our 24/7/365 help desk. Since 2006, we have been ranked the number one systems integrator in North America by *Systems Contractor News*.

Featured Partners

CRESTRON   Haivision
DA-LITE   Polycom
NEC   SHURE

Fig 1.1

Fig 1.2

Fig 1.3

Fig 1.4

Fig 1.5

Images

Fig 1.1
Amidst its vast headquarters, with space to house about 5,000, Zurich can do what it couldn't before: hold meetings and training events with as many as hundreds of people and do it onsite.

Fig 1.2
AVI-SPL created the control panel interfaces based on input from Zurich employees.

Fig 1.3
Easy-to-use booking panels are on the outside of each meeting room so staff can reserve them ahead of time.

Fig 1.4
Maintaining the success of Zurich's collaboration and communication systems are 12 AVI-SPL staff who are working onsite to support its AV functions and the daily use of its conference spaces.

Fig 1.5
The success of the headquarters has given Zurich the confidence to undertake similar projects throughout its other North American sites and global offices.