

Telstra Gurrowa Innovation Case Study Laboratory

Challenge

Design a space that empowers and allows enterprise customers, partners, incubators and research institutes of Telstra to connect in a physical environment that fosters the ability to co-create and collaborate.

The Gurrowa Innovation Lab



A fully integrated Crestron solution that manages control systems, user interfaces, audio distribution and processing as well as cabling and wiring throughout the entire Lab. The Crestron system enables collaboration between individuals and is seamlessly easy to use.

In August 2015, the doors of the Telstra Gurrowa Innovation Lab opened to much interest and anticipation. Inside held a world of technological possibility – a space dedicated to fostering innovation and next-generation ideas.

Based at Telstra's headquarters in Melbourne, The Gurrowa Innovation Lab was designed with Crestron ANZ and created for Telstra enterprise customers, partners, incubators and research institutes to experience the efficiency and productivity gains through collaborative working.

World-class facility

Peter Black, Gurrowa Facilities Chief Technology Office, Technology Innovation and Strategy, had a vision that the Lab would be an inspiring and flexible collaboration space at the forefront of technology for Telstra.

"We knew the Lab had to be intelligent, attractive to entrepreneurs and built for optimum collaboration. Plus, with a high rotation of guests and staff we had to ensure the technology could be operated easily, and without IT support," said Peter.

Defined as interchange in the Wurung language, Gurrowa was chosen as the Lab's title due to the connectivity features offered throughout the facility. With multiple meeting rooms, boardrooms, huddle spaces and work areas, the space offers a variety of collaboration-focused innovations powered by Crestron.

Creating an experience for users

Peter and his colleague Peh Khaw, Strategic Technology Expert, knew they needed to identify a technology partner that could deliver an integrated solution to meet this vision.

"We began discussions with the big three vendors: Crestron, AMX and Extron. I spent a lot of time looking at the products and shaping the design. We went to all three vendors for quotes and an understanding of how we will be supported for the project. We were managing the implementation in-house, so building a relationship was key.

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"Crestron's commitment to the partnership, openness about the technology and sharing of our vision was impressive. Coupled with a very comprehensive portfolio, Crestron stood out from our early discussions," said Peh.

The facility needed to be highly innovative, to complement the initiatives spearheaded by Telstra. As the primary working space for several Telstra executives, including the CEO and CTO, the Lab had to be state-of-the-art.

"When we met with Crestron we explained what we were trying to do, and they understood our goal immediately. We were able to discuss our concept and determine exactly how we were going to work together. We went through designing our vision with Creston's team, utilising some very innovative technology. That commitment to us was highly valuable," said Peh.





An integrated approach

"The integration of AV and the broader technology landscape is highly important. We focused on the reuse of technology, with elements such as screens, to maximise our investment. We have a team of experts across a number of specialist areas, and when we have the team together talking about how we will build and control the Lab, we set requirements that see us push the boundaries of what is the norm. Seamless integration with AV was part of the plan from day one," said Peh.

The implementation was managed by the Lab's in-house technology experts, led by Peh. For Peh, easy installation was crucial.

"Crestron's technology worked out of the box, on day one, which was very much a relief. As we were doing the switching manually, it made our implementation very smooth. This was great from an end user perspective – you unwrap it, plug it in and it works!" said Peh.

Presenting a winning solution

Among the requirements was a centrepiece presentation area featuring a raised stage with an HD video wall (4k capability) displaying seamless content connections for users.

"We host numerous events at the Lab, many with guest speakers. The stage is a central focus point, it is guests' first impression of the Lab and it sets the scene. We invested time in what this area should look like and designing technology to make it easy for people to use," said Peter.

Key to this area is a Microsoft Surface tablet that controls the environment for presenters on the stage. With a simple user interface, the tablet is programmed to control music, audio, lighting and the screens.

Simplifies the technology

"The stage area is highly equipped with automation that simplifies the technology for users. Many of our presenters are not typically tech-savvy, and are reliant on tech support. Now we can hand them this tablet that allows them to route the audio to create a mood with background music, change the lighting and input for the screens. They easily understand how it all works and can execute it on their own. This has been a great productivity saving for our IT team," said Peh.

From small lunchtime talks to much larger events like Hackathons for more than 100 people, the technology had to be easy to operate and multi-operational.

"When we host a Hackathon, we often take over the whole floor. There are many breakout areas and meeting rooms filled with people. We needed to maximise the investment in technology and adapt the software to our needs, so we worked with Crestron to utilise the screens and develop a countdown clock that was displayed on every screen in the lab – including meeting rooms. We could also post alerts and updates on the screens. This saved staff from monitoring and updating each area manually," said Peh.



Meeting expectations

An integrated Cresnet lighting system underpins the solution in the Lab. Operating in zones, the lighting sensors were custom painted black to blend into the Lab's roof. For ease of use, Telstra has programmed the lighting system to operate in zones based on presence, illuminating certain areas when people are detected in the space.

"Lighting was very important to the overall design, and we were one of the first Australian customers to implement the Crestron lighting sensors," said Peh.

The Marie Curie Boardroom, and many meeting rooms within the Lab are also controlled by the Crestron lighting system. Within each room is a Crestron TSW touchscreen built into the table for space-saving. Retractable cables and an input area are enclosed below the screen to make set up easy for users.



"We wanted to ensure clean surfaces wherever possible, so we were drawn to Crestron's screens that could be embedded within the table. Users simply select presentation or conference mode, and are guided through the set up. The User Interface is intuitive and when conference mode is selected, a Cisco SX-80 conference system and tracking camera come to life. All this is made possible by Crestron, designed for meetings and collaboration to happen easily, and without IT support," said Peh.

Many hours were spent on the design of the user interface, in partnership with Keynote Controls, to ensure each touch panel was intuitive so that user experience was superior. Visitors to the centre are able to walk in, connect any chosen device and seamlessly control the technology around them.

"It has been interesting to see people's perceptions of technology, and AV in particular, change. With the boardroom for example, new users often say they need to check the technology works before their meeting. When we get there, I show them how you just plug in and go. They're not used to technology working seamlessly, and Crestron changes that.

"People have been burnt by bad AV in the past – then they come here and say 'this is how all technology should work'. That is a great compliment to what we have achieved," said Peter.

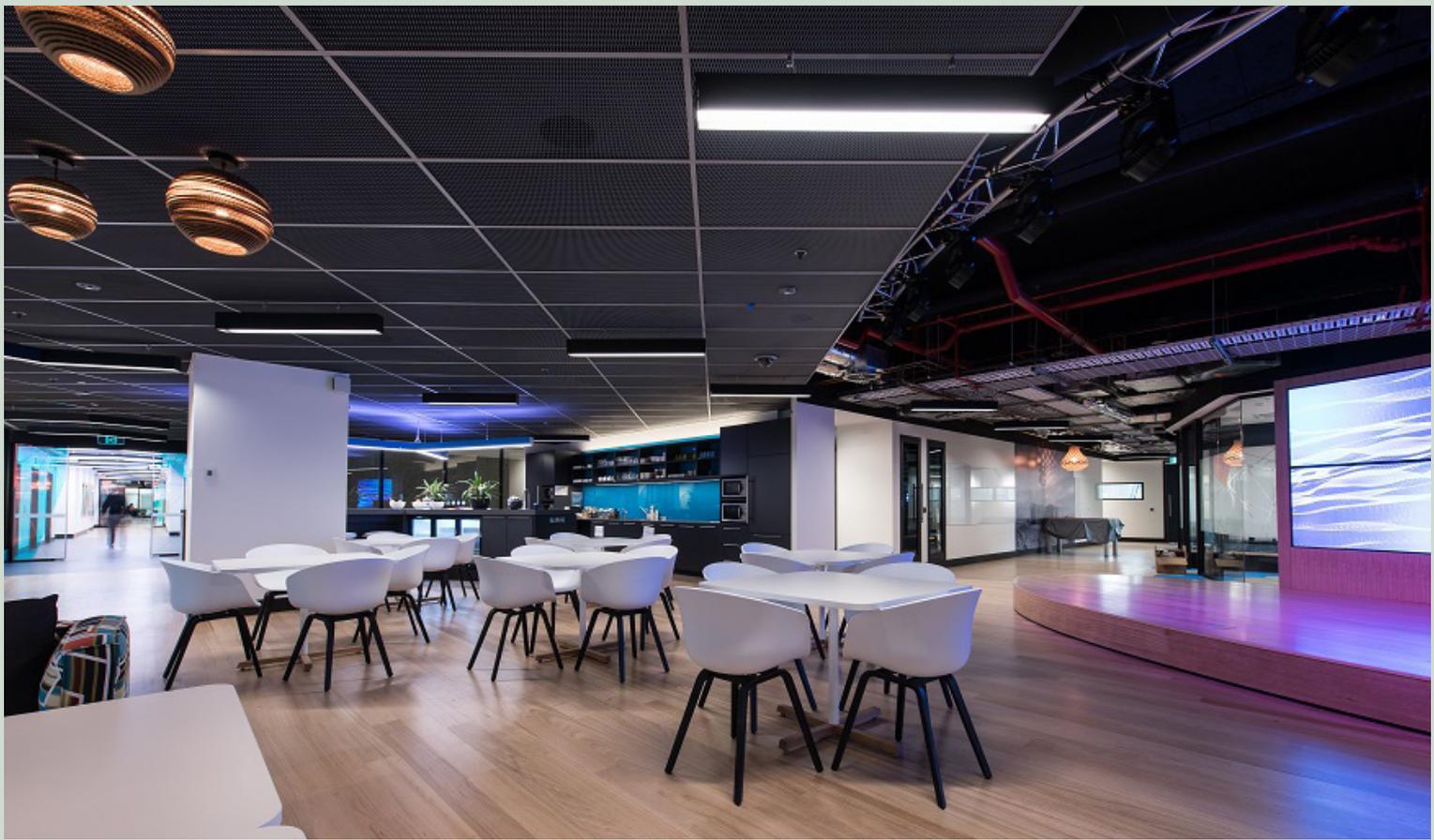
Transforming Telstra's offering

The Gurrowa Innovation Lab is home to some of the brightest minds in technology, working towards evolving Telstra's digital offering. The integrated solution from Crestron has allowed Telstra to deliver a world-class facility with technology at its core.

"Some of what we do is provide insights into future ways of working, and the art of the possible. We need to be on the leading edge and drive this conversation within Telstra, and part of this is harnessing automation to make it simple for our users," said Peh.

"People come into the centre and are blown away by the "wow" factor, and we feel we have an outstanding facility here. People say it's a wonderful space to encourage thinking differently, taking them away from business-as-usual and pushing them to be creative," added Peter.

Looking ahead, both Peter and Peh are planning to evolve the Lab even further.



"We are technology hungry and Crestron understands this. We work together to drive the relationship to where we think the technology is moving. We talk about Gurrowa being the interchange of ideas and Telstra is doing this with our customers, but also with our partners like Crestron. We are trying to push that boundary," said Peh.

"Part of our future is setting up capabilities for innovation projects that come into the space. This includes a drive for more automation, to make it simpler and bring in new pieces of technology. We also need to consider how this technology can integrate with the home, and continue to foster innovation in that environment.

"We are always thinking, what's the next big thing we could trial in this environment that could enhance the offering from Telstra," said Peter.

The Gurrowa Innovation Lab is a world-class facility based at Telstra's headquarters in Melbourne where research institutes experience the efficiency and productivity gains through collaborative working.