Digital Infrastructure Helps Future-Proof Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association Meeting Space
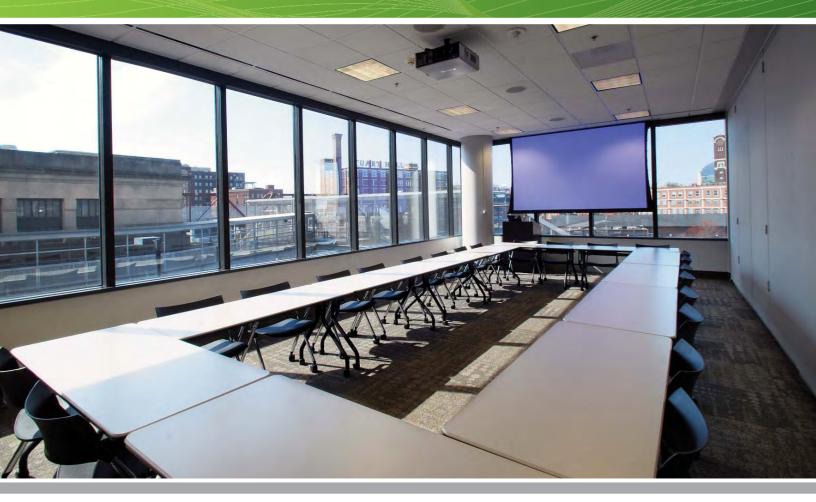
Background

Over a year ago, the Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association (KCMBA) board finalized their decision to move their offices, leasing space in the Two Pershing Square building behind the historic Kansas City Union Station.

"This is the place we need to be," said KCMBA Executive Director Vickie Schatz.

The new headquarters, with its advanced technology and clean, open spaces reflected the association's renewed commitment to their members and vision for the future. The location provided ample space for staff and members to do the work they needed to do.

The facility includes offices, a conference center with boardroom, videoconferencing room and a smaller meeting room, an A-B-C divisible meeting space that the association makes available to members and to other tenants of the building, plus temporary offices and working space for member attorneys who are in court or visiting clients downtown.

The Challenge

"Our most important consideration on this job was to be future proof," said Steve Martin, Design Consultant for St. Louis-based Conference Technologies, Inc.

Conference Technologies had two overriding goals in designing the system. First, they wanted to be sure that when KCMBA members, building tenants and guest speakers walked into a room, they could plug in any laptop or video player, and it

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would work. Even if something new was brought in, the system would be ready. Second, the system had to be easy to use. Conference Technologies put a lot of work into designing a control interface that would make sense to the users, could plug into a new laptop and seamlessly communicate with the system. DigitalMedia™ allowed the integrator to achieve their goals.

The Solution

Aiming for this kind of longevity is not an easy task. With technology changing so rapidly, the addition of components is typical.

"The key is to build an infrastructure that will hold up," Martin explained.

"That infrastructure must handle both analog and digital signals in any format and have, at minimum, enough bandwidth to carry 1080p video and multi-channel audio without

compression. It also needs to handle EDID, HDCP copy protection and other new standards." For all of these reasons, Martin and the CTI engineering staff decided to install an all-digital infrastructure at KCMBA using a complete Crestron DigitalMedia platform in the facility's most complex and demanding rooms. The single-platform digital solution includes a DigitalMedia 16X16 Switcher, DM input cards and certified DM Cable.

As a true single-wire platform, DigitalMedia simplifies the complexities of delivering uncompressed digital audio and video content throughout multi-room environments. The high-output AV network can distribute all analog and pure high-definition digital content long distances over a single shielded twisted pair wire or CresFiber®. It can support and distribute 1080p with Deep Color, HD/3D video and 1920x1200 computer signals, plus HD digital audio, control, data, and Ethernet over the same STP wire.

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Systems at a Glance

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An even more important factor is DigitalMedia's ability to collect EDID information from the displays and supply it to the source devices, even though the sources and displays might be separated by switchers and other components. "EDID has become a big issue in the industry," Martin said. "Many of the newer laptop video drivers are insistent on seeing EDID information before they will output any signal, even analog VGA." DigitalMedia allows the installer to specify the best resolution for each display, then makes sure that laptops, Blu-ray players and other devices always see the correct EDID information. It's the difference between a system that always works and one where the screens may go blank any time you plug in a new device.

"The boardroom is gorgeous," said Schatz. "We have seating for 30 with everything we need for meetings, presentations or large conference calls." The A-B-C divisible room includes a full balance of presentation gear plus HD videoconferencing— all integrated on the single-platform DigitalMedia solution.

Crestron TPMC-8X wireless touch screens provide an intuitive user interface with one-touch presets that enable effortless control of all AV devices.

The divisible room is especially crucial because of the nature of the meetings that go on there, in particular continuing legal education classes (CLEs) and the recording of video depositions when witnesses or attorneys are in other cities. In the near future, KCMBA plans to add a webcasting system, which will allow members to attend the classes for CLE credit from any Internet-connected PC, either live or via a video-on-demand server.

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Benefits

"We were looking for systems that would handle our communications needs for the foreseeable future," added KCMBA Officer and Project Manager Rod L. Richardson. "At the end of the day, we were all satisfied that what we put in place would be good for the next ten years at least." "Everything in this facility is first class," Richardson noted. "We wanted to take advantage of all the technology that's available to help make learning possible, and we have done so. I can't think of anything that these rooms aren't able to do."

The KCMBA Conference Center and meeting rooms offer members, law firms, law-related organizations and other businesses a contemporary workspace combined with comfortable atmosphere. The technology and accommodations available are unmatched by area hotels or convention facilities, making KCMBA's new location the perfect setting for visitor meetings.

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