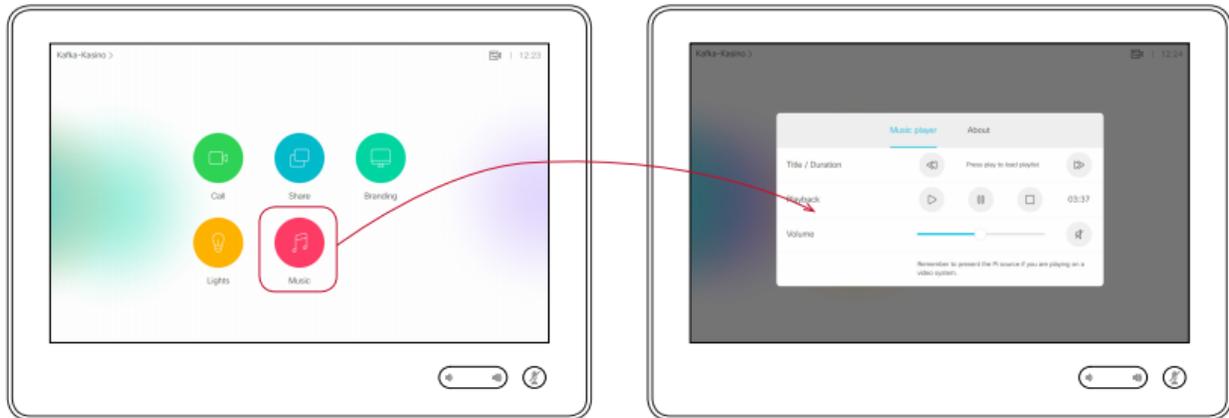# InfoComm 2018 Recap

By Mike Sugrue

The roles of AV in the workplace are evolving, and there is no better place to observe this change than InfoComm. Manufacturers aren't just looking at products to perform specific functions anymore. The focus is on providing solutions based on the way we communicate, entertain, and learn. AV is attaching itself to the process of these experiences more closely than ever before. This recap will explore the trends and important finds from the show.

Trends

Manufacturers of video-over-IP products were increasing, with new members joining alliances such as SDVoE and the SRT Alliance. This field is also seeing growth in integration with established network audio platforms. Audinate and SDVoE were showing a partnership for likely future integration, and many new video-over-IP platforms were including AES67 interop capabilities. As new possibilities arise for applying these solutions, so does new ways we must approach design and specifications. Education in this field increased heavily with a major growth in classes offered by Avixa in the field. This education is necessary as we all learn together about the new possibilities.

Coinciding with this growth is the importance of facilitating the needs of IT departments to maintain them. Central monitoring, remote management, redundancy, and mass updates are all important needs when applying these devices in an enterprise setting. New solutions like Crestron XIO Cloud and Biamp SageVue are beginning to address these needs.

The quality of digital video itself is now reaching the current limitations of bandwidth. 8K60 4:4:4 video requires 80 Gbps alone without compression! As consumers become more aware of what higher quality video looks like, the expectation to provide this level of quality will increase (especially in digital signage applications). The industry must not only address this in displays but in transport and distribution. HDR and Dolby Vision are elements that will increasingly become important to preserve.

With so much buzz around video-over-IP, it's easy to overlook some very interesting changes happening with HDBaseT solutions. On one side, HDBaseT is downsizing to simple HDMI extension, primarily to help provide HDMI wall/floor plates for video-over-IP solutions (Encoders and Decoders are still usually too large to fit in wall plates or floor boxes). However, in other cases, HDBaseT is providing superior in-room solutions for meeting spaces. Products like AMX's CT series allows for not just in-room video switching and extension, but also USB switching to allow for BYOD connectivity and PC-based codecs within the same room.

Important Finds

Cisco has expanded its capabilities to communicate with 3rd party control systems. There are now further customizable options for their control interfaces, boosting the possibilities of utilizing Cisco touch panels to communicate with complex control systems such as Crestron, AMX, and Extron. Simple to use Control Editor software lets users research the potential for control before making the decision to adopt.

A new Scandinavian company called Huddly made a big splash at the show with their Huddly GO camera. A small and simple, 720p30 camera with a wide 120degree horizontal field of view and a $499 price tag. This camera was present at many booths as it lends itself well to small huddle rooms with tables butt against the wall.

Konftel showcased their 300iPX conference phone solution that not only provides SIP and USB connectivity for web conferencing, but a unique smartphone app to simplify initiating meetings from your phone or tablet.

Plantronics is offering an innovative approach to sound masking in the workspace with their Habitat Soundscaping solution. Instead of fixed noise, they are utilizing natural sounds combined with visual elements with the intention to increase focus.

New speaker solutions are providing a fine balance of performance and aesthetics for commercial 70V applications. Sonance has expanded their commercial line of speakers to include bezel-less speakers with round or square grilles, and in low profile back cans. AtlasIED unveiled their SHS speaker, which takes the quality of their Strategy line, but provides it in a very small form factor that mimics that of a sprinkler head.

Interactive display options expanded at the show with Samsung showcasing the Flip, Avocor showing their line of products natively integrating with specific platforms (such as Quicklaunch), and Leyard released a MultiTouch LED solution paired with T1V's collaboration solution.

Supporting a single conferencing platform in meeting spaces has been the traditional approach. A company decides which single platform shall be their standard for communication. But when companies need to join meetings hosted from outside of their organizations on different platforms, they are usually confined to use their own workstations or mobile devices that can accept these outside invitations. This need for multi-platform support within a meeting space is beginning to be solved using one-click-to-join that everyone expects from a meeting space. UC Workspace's Quicklaunch application provides multi-platform support from a multitude of interfaces. Videxio is finding ways to support multiple platforms using traditional codec platforms.

Final Thoughts

The software applications we use in the workplace are continually increasing. InfoComm 18 has shown that the industry is paying attention. The responsibility of AV is moving past simply routing audio and video back and forth, and is begging to support larger communication concepts. Collaboration needs to be intuitive and ready for people to participate. Conferencing needs to be painless and ready to serve. The primary goal is to make meeting spaces a seamless extension of a person's technology world.

As meeting spaces get smarter, so must be the maintenance and support for these rooms. The IT Director is emerging as a new user that AV must accommodate. Solutions can be chosen strictly on their abilities to maintain and service.

For more information on any products mentioned above, see the links below:

Crestron XIO Cloud – https://www.crestron.com/en-US/Products/Featured-Solutions/XiO-Cloud

Biamp SageVue – https://www.biamp.com/products/tesira-software

AMX CT Series – https://www.amx.com/en/product_families/ct-series

Cisco Room Devices – http://cs.com/roomdevices

Huddly GO – https://www.huddly.com/

Konftel 300IPx – https://www.konftel.com/en/products/konftel-300ipx

Plantronics Habitat Soundscaping – https://habitat.plantronics.com/

Sonance Professional Series – http://www.sonance.com/professionalseries

AtlasIED SHS – https://www.atlasied.com/shs-series-overview

Samsung Flip – https://www.samsung.com/us/business/products/displays/interactive/wm-series/flip-55-lh55wmhptwc-go/

Avocor Software – https://www.avocor.com/software/

Leyard LED Multitouch – http://www.leyard.com/en/products/led-video-walls/led-multitouch/

UC Workspace Quicklaunch – https://www.ucworkspace.com/

Videxio Meeting Room Mode – https://videxio.com/service-plans/videxio-meeting-room-mode-overview