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Come Together
Technologies Collaborate for Control

by Karen Mitchell

This season, it’s all about seamlessness. Control has assumed a new shape, one that allows it to be accessed, managed, and monitored from anyplace, anytime. The functions of control devices, once separate pieces of the system pie, are increasingly built into advanced signal management devices. So how are these new products unifying the control and monitoring of audiovisual data in enterprise and multi-site campus applications?

“Quite simply, as an industry, we are building more universal functionality into fewer boxes in direct response to our customers’ demands,” said John Bailey, vice president of technology, Whitlock. “Customers do not wish to have to maintain multiple devices from multiple suppliers in order to support singular streamlined applications.”

In the past, he added, because suppliers in our industry served narrow and niche functions, this was unavoidable. “Manufacturers have now realized that this does not serve customers’ needs. Additionally, customers consistently say they do not want devices connected to their networks if they cannot be remotely monitored and managed. So we’re not just unifying audiovisual data; we’re unifying data.”

This year has brought acceleration in corporate and educational institutions interfacing scheduling with AV control systems, said David Thorson, senior manager of programming architecture, AVI-SPL. “This ranges from room reservation systems, remote AV support control, system usage and utilization reporting, and integrated helpdesk support.”

With control systems manufacturers taking on audio and video transportation, it’s easier to gather great data, such as source detection, resolutions of BYOD, and the monitoring of system faults. “Remote monitoring, room reservation, and helpdesk integration are becoming must-haves,” Thorson stressed.

Although anyone can create a standalone system, being able to connect your systems together on corporate networks allows rooms to communicate with rooms, said Michael Flink, systems programmer, Logic Integration. “It allows buildings to communicate with buildings and entire campuses to communicate with each other. Now that this control data can be put onto a large, shared network, it can be monitored and controlled in numerous locations. Helpdesk operations can be halfway across the globe, and within a single application, that helpdesk operator can see the entire status of a room.”
NEW SYSTEMS, NEW SOURCES
Commercial spaces are now being managed by several points of input, said Flink, who prefers to call these management, rather than control, systems. “Some of the new touchpanels allow not only for room scheduling, but can also detect the occupied status of a room. Imagine booking a room but using it for 30 minutes, instead of the two-hour scheduled block, or not showing up at all. These new user interfaces will detect that the room is vacant after a certain period of time and can then shut the room down and release its reserved status. This is very cool stuff when you think about how much energy a projector lamp can use.”

In addition to an increase in streaming video solutions and scheduling applications integrated with the technology, there is more adoption of remote monitoring and control solutions, media recording and lecture capture, and wireless presentation input devices for BYOD meetings, Thorson said. “There are unique ways to interface with room activities, such as connecting a BYOD device that starts a scheduled meeting.”

This topic extends beyond content sources to data sources, Bailey explained. “With the explosion of IoT and of myriad devices that are being connected to networks, there is a rapidly growing demand for unified control, monitoring, and management of the customer’s entire technology estate.”

LET’S SHARE
The goal of collaboration is to empower people to work within the time of a scheduled meeting or class, Thorson noted. “The flipped learning style is one example of technology enabling collaboration. The success relies on dynamic routing of content that is easy to use.”

Technical advancements also help drive collaboration. “Improvements with security integration, such as 802.1x, LDAP, JITC, and user authentication are permitting more devices to integrate to end-user networks,” he added. “As more applications and users migrate to the cloud, we’ll see collaboration move to the next level.”

And since control processors have allowed us to create more complicated code, integrators can do much more behind the scenes, performing functions that the end user doesn’t have to worry about. Rather than being constrained by a series of canned macros, we have endless options and opportunities to generate a truly one-touch solution for our clients.”
UTELOGY AV-AS-A-SERVICE PORTAL

Utology’s AV-as-a-Service (AVaaS) Portal gives integrators the ability to white label and provide AV managed services contracts. It allows integrators to offer complete solutions, including maintenance to build long-term client relationships with recurring revenue. The AVaaS Portal enables proactive maintenance to address and fix issues before they happen. The Instant Video Help Desk with remote support delivers diagnostics for fast and cost-effective problem resolution, so integrators provide an enhanced customer experience at higher margins.

RGB MEDIAWALL V

The new MediaWall V is true 4K/UHD video wall processor, offering up to 4K resolution I/O, single-wire connectivity, and fully scalable windows. The MediaWall V display processor features an architecture that combines the real-time processing and reliability of a hardware-based processor with the flexibility of a separate processor to run applications. Add in video over IP decoding, enhanced security, and an intuitive, easy-to-operate control interface, and the result is a 4K wall processing system with premium power, security, and versatility.

ALTINEX SHARETIME

The Altinex ShareTime collaboration products include the ShareTime HDMI Cable (CB300-101), the ShareTime 4x1 HDMI switcher (UT260-041), and the ShareTime Collaboration Package (UT100-041). The ShareTime Collaboration Package

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(UT100-041) is a complete system that includes four CB300-101 HDMI ShareTime Cables and one UT260-041 HDMI 4x1 switcher. The system offers full HDMI and HDCP compliance, provides CEC-enabled control, and automatically powers the display on and off when used with CEC-compliant video display monitors.

LIGHTWARE MMX6X2-HT SERIES
Lightware’s new MMX6x2-HT matrix switcher family was created in response to the need for practical matrix switchers designed for smaller meeting room and classroom environments. The compact MMX6x2-HT220 has six video inputs and two video outputs—four HDMI 1.4 and two TPS (HDBaseT) inputs and two independent HDMI outputs, which both have mirrored TPS (HDBaseT) outputs. 4K at 30Hz, 3D capabilities, and HDCP are fully supported. The device also has four audio connectors for audio insertion and two audio outputs for de-embedding purposes.

CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH
ICC1-IRX IR
The new Contemporary Research ICC1-IRX IR TV Controller delivers economical one-way control for TV power, volume, and channels, receiving iCC-Net network commands over the same broadband coax that carries the CATV channels. Compact in size and price, the ICC1-IRX now features power current sensing using the optional CSM1 sensor from Xantech.

Video Wall Solutions from RGB Spectrum

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AT ISSUE

What AV business opportunities are opened up by remote management and control?

JACK GERSHFELD
PRESIDENT, ALTINEX, INC.
“The world is changing and the likes of DropCam, Nest, and WeMo are populating the residential market. This trend will continue to expand into commercial installations of audiovisual equipment. Users want the ability to monitor the condition of their equipment and make remote adjustments to system operation. From a development point of view, the opportunity to bring to the market a unified monitoring and control platform would create an echo system to help users take control of their installation. From an AV integrator’s perspective, it would allow them to offer customers upgraded services to manage their AV systems and boost revenues. The bottom line: make remote monitoring and control services a part of every proposal.”

JOHN HENKEL
DIRECTOR OF PRODUCT MARKETING, RGB
“We see many operations centers that need to connect multiple locations together. Our secure, encrypted solution gives people access to remote systems and allows people to work remotely when needed. Additionally, across a college campus, the need to connect classrooms and security operation centers securely is a growing opportunity.”

JIM KOSMERICK
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING, LIGHTWARE USA
“Opportunities are multiple, and there is the advantage of faster, expanded support with real-time response time. Cost-cutting becomes more efficient by limiting downtown versus onsite support. In addition, there is the advantage of documenting and tracking operational aspects of the customer’s environment. Other positives include automation on firmware and software updates, real-time monitoring and notifications, initial problem discovery, basic troubleshooting and coordination, and management of other resources. Lastly, proactive device monitoring and device management and the ability to set up and manage system redundancies are benefits.”

SCOTT MCGARRIGLE
CTO, UTELOGY CORPORATION
“As the AV industry embraces the network and integrates soft technologies into their solutions, this opens a whole set of opportunities beyond project-based work. Integrators can work with their customers on a strategic and enterprise scale because the nature of IT networks brings a whole new world of capabilities and services to be offered.

With the right AV platform and tools, integrators can add a service-based component to their business, delivering new value, such as providing support contracts, remote helpdesk, asset and warranty management, remote system monitoring and reporting, and even remote configuration and deployment. And because the AV platform gives integrators complete visibility and access into their customers’ environment, a lot of work can be done remotely, saving costly on-site visits. There is a big movement in IT to outsource applications, hosting, and other business services, and this same model is now possible as the AV industry embraces IT. These service offerings create long-term customer relationships and recurring revenue streams.”

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—Jack Gershfeld, President, Altinex, Inc.
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