

Studies in Control

Case studies of recent deployments

By Cindy Davis

UBER'S CLOUD

Anyone responsible for deploying and managing AV/IT for a company with a global presence has firsthand experience with the pitfalls of exporting and importing equipment. Not only can product licensing, standards, and compatibility be an issue, but basic infrastructure such as power prove unreliable.

Global AV growing pains haven't eluded Uber. In 2017, the company reported a presence in 65 countries and more than 600 cities, with 16,000 employees, and it hasn't stopped expanding.

"We used USB cameras and microphones to stay agnostic and build with speed at good price points," said Mohammad Sigari, Uber's senior AV engineer. "In a limited test environment, we even tried our own version of Endpoint Management Team to manage all the conference rooms via our PC endpoint."

Using hardware solutions from specific manufacturers proved problematic. "If we need something in India, South Korea, or even in Brazil, and if the manufacturers are having supply issues or that product doesn't have the right licensing, it becomes an issue," Sigari said. "We can't build at the pace that our company is looking to build, so now we have to look beyond that manufacturer."

TESTING THE CLOUD

Uber has standardized on Zoom's cloud-based videoconferencing. "One of the biggest pain



Uber's Austin Reisman, AV systems engineer and Mohammad Sigari, senior AV engineer, have deployed videoconferencing and cloud-based AV control in offices on every continent.

points was how to deploy and manage the system," said Austin Reisman, AV systems engineer at Uber. "The way the system was set up, it needed a lot of signing in, a lot of credentials, a lot of downloading applications and configuring, which all needed to be done onsite with a person."

More than a year ago, Sigari and Reisman tested Crestron's XiO Cloud before its official release. "We needed an enterprise management tool, and XiO was able to check off a lot of boxes."

One of the most attractive features of XiO was its ability to remotely deploy and manage Uber's Crestron Mercury and Crestron touchpanels to 40 Zoom Rooms in primary locations around the world. "XiO Cloud allows us to connect a Mercury device or touchpanel without us needing to be there," Reisman said. "It has allowed for a close to touchless deployment."

XiO pushes down the profile and configuration to the Mercury, and the device is automatical-

Data Drives Decision Making

Uber's AV/IT team utilizes analytics from Zoom dashboards and Crestron XiO Cloud interactive dashboards. "Zoom reports on the peripherals that are attached to it, and provides uptime meeting reports," Reisman said. "We use the XiO dashboard as a monitoring tool and for understanding how heavily the room is being used, which helps for space planning and workplace teams."

Crestron's XiO
Cloud dashboard

Name	Device Model	Firmware Version	Serial	MAC Address	Online Status	Pending Settings Delivery
12 Midway Way	MERCURY	1.3705.00005			Online	No
Andy Havel	MERCURY	1.3705.00005			Online	No
Control Park	MERCURY	1.3705.00005			Online	No
Clayton	MERCURY	1.3705.00005			Online	No
Clinton Park	MERCURY	1.3705.00005			Online	No
Deborah's Chair	MERCURY	1.3705.00005			Online	No
High Gate	MERCURY	1.3705.00005			Online	No
Howard's Camp	MERCURY	1.3705.00005			Online	No
Travis	MERCURY	1.3705.00005			Online	No
Goldville	MERCURY	1.3705.00005			Online	No
Garhan	MERCURY	1.3705.00005			Online	No
Hogarth	MERCURY	1.3705.00005			Online	No
Home Alone	MERCURY	1.3705.00005			Online	No

ly provisioned. It also allows the team to see and monitor device status and health, pushes firmware upgrades, and provides interactive reporting dashboards to help make decisions based on usage.

"XiO has allowed us to standardize a configuration across multiple offices, which is a top priority when you're dealing with every corner of the world," Reisman said. Once you have a configuration set, you can deploy it to as many devices as you want at the same time.

"There should not be more than two steps," Sigari said. "You should be able to either log something onto an account, or you should be able to plug it in, and then it should start auto-provisioning itself."

Sigari looks back to when manufacturers sug-

gested it take only 10 minutes to provision a device. "Multiply that by 40 conference rooms around the world, and that's a long time," he said. "But that's in our past."

LOOKING AHEAD

Sigari and Reisman look toward XiO Cloud to be an inclusive solution. "During conversations with Crestron, we told them we are looking to integrate third-party peripherals as well," Reisman said.

Currently, Crestron's XiO Cloud does not integrate with third-party devices, but that is soon to change. "We are working with some partners to integrate XiO functionality into their devices," said Brian Donlan, technology manager, enterprise software at Crestron. "Some companies are

using an SDK we've built to allow third-party devices to connect directly for monitoring and configuration like a Crestron device."

There's more than one way to unity in the cloud. "Our other path for third-party devices is to leverage new functionality we're building for Virtual Control that will allow it to monitor and send up data on third-party devices, even if they're not built to connect to XiO Cloud," Donlan said. "In either case, we don't intend for XiO Cloud to be exclusive to Crestron devices for very long."

For Sigari and Reisman, XiO Cloud has passed the litmus test. "In the year-and-a-half we've been using it, we haven't had any issues and we're definitely at a point where we are going to invest."