Panasonic CONNECT

Fit for purpose:

RESHAPING THE MODERN BUSINESS MEETING ROOM

WHITEPAPER

In cooperation with
Chris Fitzsimmons

This whitepaper is a collaborative effort between **Chris Fitzsimmons** and **Panasonic Visual Systems**, drawing on his expertise as the Microsoft Enterprise UC Architect at AVI-SPL, to highlight key areas for consideration when designing a new meeting room.

Introduction

A fundamental change in the way we work - moving from office-based to hybrid working practices – has transformed the way that we communicate in business. Hybrid meetings, where team members join both in person and remotely, are now the norm, but they come with their own set of challenges.

There is a rising feeling of frustration. Those attending virtual meetings remotely feel there is a lack of meeting equity with their in-person colleagues. Those in the room are increasingly frustrated with the tools available. Setting-up and connecting to hybrid meetings can be a headache, sharing ideas and content can be laborious and there is an over-riding sense that time is being wasted and productivity dragged down.

The rapidly emerging conclusion is that traditional meeting rooms are no longer fit for purpose. Understanding and addressing these challenges is not just about minor adjustments; it's about a fundamental rethinking of the meeting room's architecture—both physical and digital. The traditional meeting room, once a symbol of corporate collaboration, now demands a transformation to accommodate the fluidity and dynamism of hybrid working.

This whitepaper is designed to help you understand the pain points of traditional setups and embrace the transformative solutions that promise to redefine collaborative business in the modern era. Welcome to the future of business meetings, where every room is fit for purpose, every voice is heard, and every meeting is an opportunity to inspire, innovate, and lead.

Challenges of the traditional meeting room set-up

The move to hybrid working has spotlighted significant challenges within traditional meeting room set-ups. The primary issue is achieving meeting equity – ensuring that every participant, whether onsite or joining remotely, can contribute effectively and feel equally involved.

68% *of people say they participate less in hybrid meetings...*

For those joining hybrid meetings remotely there can be feelings of isolation and frustration and an inability to participate equally - in the same way as those attending in-person. Worryingly, this lack of meeting equity can also lead to people not fully contributing - with **68%** saying they participate less. **33%** of those said that they may participate up to **50%** less and **13%** up to **75%** less[1].

For those in the meeting room, there are the frustrations of not always being able to see and hear participants fully, the technology challenges of setting up virtual meetings and the ability to easily share, see and collaborate on content.

58% *of people say they find it difficult to brainstorm in a virtual meeting...*

People report[2] that the number one productivity disruptor in this new world of working is inefficient meetings, followed closely by having too many meetings. Most people say it's difficult to brainstorm in a virtual meeting (**58%**) or catch up if they joined a meeting late (**57%**), and that next steps at the end of a meeting are often unclear (**55%**). And since February 2020, people are spending **3x** more time in hybrid meetings and calls per week.

Reviewing the digital and physical design of the meeting room and moving away from the traditional one size fits all boardroom to a more people-focused solution is integral to building meeting rooms fit for today's business world.

1 Panasonic Connect Europe LinkedIn poll
2 Microsoft 2023 Work Trend Index: Annual Report

The essential components of a modern business meeting room

To create a modern business meeting room for hybrid work environments, a number of components have become essential.

Effective Hybrid Meeting Solutions

Hybrid meeting solutions are the cornerstone of a functional meeting space that accommodates both remote and in-person participants. These solutions encompass a range of technologies designed to bridge the gap between physical and virtual meeting spaces. Key features include high-quality video conferencing systems with advanced cameras that can track and focus on the speaker, ensuring remote participants are not just passive observers but active contributors. Equally important is superior audio technology, which can isolate and enhance speech while minimizing background noise, ensuring every word is heard clearly. Additionally, these solutions often integrate seamlessly with popular communication platforms, providing a consistent and user-friendly experience for all participants.

One major hurdle in hybrid meetings is the difficulty in interpreting non-verbal cues. In a traditional setting,

nuances such as body language and facial expressions play a crucial role in communication. However, these subtleties often get lost in hybrid meetings. It can be challenging to gauge the thoughts or reactions of individuals in larger groups.

This is an area where technology is developing rapidly, striving to bridge the gap between the physical and virtual realms of meeting spaces. When this high level of communication is essential, Panasonic PTZ cameras with speaker auto-tracking functionality is an adept solution for executive level meeting spaces.

For those requiring a more cost effective but practical and more mobile solution, Panasonic **PressIT360 video conferencing solutions** provides a plug and play and easy to use video meeting tool.

Collaboration Tools

The essence of a meeting, be it virtual or physical, lies in collaboration. In traditional setups, participants often grapple with technical issues, from finding the right cable to plug in their devices to sharing content with both onsite and remote participants. This not only disrupts the flow of meetings but also places an additional burden on IT support teams, who frequently handle queries not about broken systems, but about how to use them effectively

Modern meeting rooms should be equipped with a suite of collaboration tools designed to foster a dynamic and interactive environment. These tools include interactive displays and digital whiteboards that allow real-time brainstorming and ideation, accessible to both onsite and remote participants.

File sharing and co-editing functionalities are also integral, enabling team members to work together on documents or projects in real time, regardless of their location. Transitioning from physical cables to wireless solutions, and from dongle-based to software-based systems, is a way forward. Solutions like Panasonic PressIT, Wolfvision's Cynap presentation systems and Open Cast solutions can make collaboration much more intuitive and instant.

In addition, the ability to make parallel communication visible – such as chat, participant lists, polls, meeting notes, and whiteboards – is essential. Platforms like Microsoft Teams Rooms include in-meeting layout options for users such as Front Row. This, in particular, is gaining traction for its ability to maintain

a comprehensive view of both the presentation and remote participants, enhancing the overall meeting experience.

Finally, features like meeting recording and transcription not only aid in maintaining a record of the discussions but also ensure that the insights and action points from the meeting are preserved and accessible for future reference.

The value of such features is further enhanced thanks to development of smart meeting devices, such as Intelligent Cameras and Intelligent Speakers that can identify individual users in a meeting room and identify who said what.

The Ideal Visual Display – Moving to 21:9 Screen size

The visual component of a meeting room has a profound impact on the engagement and effectiveness of a meeting. The shift towards a 21:9 widescreen size marks a significant evolution in meeting room design. This widescreen format offers a panoramic view, making it conducive for presentations, data visualization, and video conferencing with multiple remote participants.

The 21:9 aspect ratio is increasingly recognized for its ergonomic benefits in meeting rooms, primarily because it mirrors the natural field of vision of the human eye more closely than the traditional 16:9 ratio. The human eye perceives the world in a wide panorama, and a 21:9 display capitalizes on this by extending the peripheral vision range. This wider field allows meeting participants to absorb and interact with content more naturally, without the need to constantly shift focus as would be the case

with narrower screens. For those seated in a meeting room, the expansive display means information can be spread out more comfortably, reducing the need to zoom in and out or scroll sideways, resulting in a more immersive, inclusive setting that mimics natural sight.

Recognizing the natural fit of the 21:9 aspect ratio with the human field of vision, Microsoft has optimized its Microsoft Teams Rooms software, particularly the Front Row layout, to fully utilize the wider display area. For meeting participants, this means a more seamless integration of communication and content-sharing features, where video feeds and collaborative documents, as well as meeting chat can be displayed simultaneously without compromising on quality or size. In addition, this enables remote participants to still be seen while information is shared and worked upon.

21:9

21:9 widescreen format in meeting rooms is a big change, perfect for presentations and video calls...
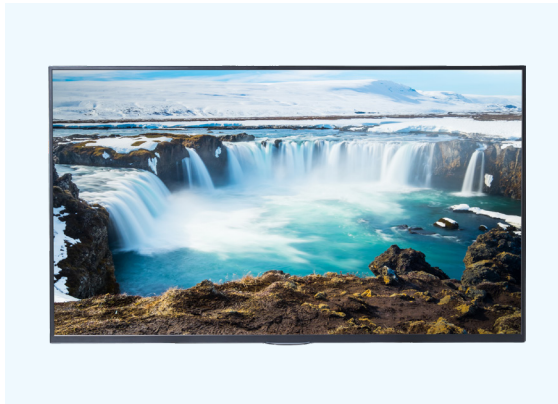
Technologies for 21:9

Adopting the 21:9 aspect ratio for meeting rooms involves selecting the right technology to match the space's needs and constraints.
Here we explore the pros and cons of three primary technologies that can support the 21:9 format:

1. Flat Panel Displays

2. LED Displays

3. Projectors

1. Flat Panel Displays

Flat panel displays offer sleek aesthetics and ease of use, with installation being straightforward and swift, often requiring no specialized calibration. Interactive models enhance engagement by enabling participants to interact directly with the content on the screen. However, these displays come with drawbacks; they often come with a high price tag and limited availability in the 21:9 format. Additionally, their significant weight can pose challenges in mounting and may require reinforcement of walls or stands.

Pros:

+ Quick installation with minimal setup requirements.
+ Interactive models available for engaging presentations.
+ No need for calibration, offering immediate use post-installation.

Cons:

− Higher cost can be a barrier for budget-conscious businesses.
− Limited availability in the 21:9 format restricts options.
− The considerable weight can complicate installation and placement.

2. LED Displays

LED displays shine through in brightly lit environments and are not limited by size or aspect ratio, offering great flexibility in terms of installation. Their adaptability allows them to fit various room shapes and sizes, making them an attractive option for custom set-ups. However, they can emit a significant amount of heat, making small rooms uncomfortably warm. They are also energy-intensive and may require more complex installation, especially if a seamless image is needed across multiple screens. Eye fatigue can be a concern when viewed up close for extended periods, and the high cost is something that needs to be factored into the decision.

Pros:

- ⊕ Perform well in brightly lit rooms, offering clear visibility.
- ⊕ Customizable size and aspect ratio for tailored solutions.
- ⊕ Flexible installation possibilities to suit different room layouts.

Cons:

- ⊖ Can significantly increase room temperature, especially in smaller spaces.
- ⊖ High power consumption could lead to increased energy bills.
- ⊖ Potential for eye fatigue and complex installation with multi-display configurations.
- ⊖ Significantly higher upfront investment compared to other display technologies.

3. Projectors

Projectors offer a cost-effective alternative for 21:9 displays, with a variety of technologies such as DLP and LCD to suit different needs. Ultra Short Throw projectors are particularly suited for smaller rooms, while models that can project up to 3 meters wide cater to larger spaces. They offer the versatility to switch between 16:9 and 21:9, and even wider formats such as 32:9, without the need for physical screen changes. However, installation can be more complex if multiple projectors are required to create a single image, as edge blending becomes necessary. They also perform best in controlled lighting environments, and the projection surface must be flat to avoid image distortion.

Pros:

➕ A more budget-friendly and flexible option for achieving a 21:9 display.

➕ Various technologies available make them suitable for different room conditions

➕ Flexibility in display size, with the ability to easily switch aspect ratios.

➕ Wide models cater to large rooms, and Ultra Short Throw options suit smaller spaces.

Cons:

➖ More complex installations when using multiple projectors due to the need for edge blending.

➖ Requires adequate room darkening.

➖ The projection surface must be stable to ensure image quality.

Conclusion

Each technology offers different advantages and challenges. The choice between flat panel displays, LED displays, and projectors will depend on the specific requirements of the meeting space, budget considerations, and the desired balance between functionality and aesthetics.

A meeting checklist to identify your business meeting room needs

When planning to set-up or revamp a business meeting room for hybrid working, it's crucial to consider various factors to ensure the space meets the needs of both in-person and remote participants. Below is a comprehensive checklist to guide building managers through this process:

Room purpose and layout

- ☑ What will be the primary uses for the room?
- ☑ Is the room size adequate for the number of in-person participants while ensuring compliance with any current health and safety regulations?
- ☑ Is the layout conducive to hybrid meetings, allowing for clear sightlines to screens and speakers for all participants?

Technology Infrastructure

- ☑ Is the existing network infrastructure (Wi-Fi and wired connections) robust and reliable enough to support high-bandwidth applications like video conferencing?
- ☑ Are there enough power outlets conveniently located throughout the room to accommodate various devices?
- ☑ Are there cable pathways present or needed for device connections to the conference room table?

Signal Management

- ☑ What are the needs for visualization of content? Single screen, multiple screens?
- ☑ Will the signal be confined to the room or will there be a need for breakout rooms?
- ☑ Is the signal going to be recorded or will it be streamed to online platforms?
- ☑ Can existing IP infrastructure handle a (future) upgrade to IP-based signal management?

Panasonic product recommendation:

Intel® SDM Displays and Projectors that offer flexible content and signal management through SDM options.

Video Conferencing System

- ☑ Does the room have a high-quality video conferencing system compatible with various platforms (Zoom, Teams, etc.)?
- ☑ Are the camera and microphone setup capable of capturing high-quality audio and video from all areas of the room?

Panasonic product recommendation:

PressIT360 video conferencing solution.

A meeting checklist to identify your business meeting room needs

Audio System

☑ Is the audio system equipped with noise-cancelling and echo reduction features to ensure clear communication?

☑ Are there options for both ceiling-mounted and portable microphones to accommodate different meeting setups?

Visual Display

☑ Does the room have a large, high-resolution screen suitable for all participants to view content clearly?

☑ Is the room equipped or ready to be equipped with a 21:9 widescreen for an immersive viewing experience?

Panasonic product recommendation:

A wide variety of Panasonic 4K resolution Displays and Projectors are available. As well as 4K, resolutions are also available in XGA, WUXGA or Full HD to meet any requirement.

Collaboration Tools

☑ Are there integrated systems for real-time content sharing and collaboration, accessible both to in-person and remote participants?

☑ Is there a digital whiteboard feature for brainstorming sessions and interactive discussions?

Panasonic product recommendation:

The PressIT Wireless Presentation System for effective collaboration and content sharing. Touchscreen displays to meet every requirement. As well as PressIT360 to ensure meeting equity in hybrid meetings.

Furniture and Acoustics

☑ Is the furniture appropriate and flexible for both formal presentations and collaborative work?

☑ Are the room's acoustics optimized to minimize external noise and prevent sound from echoing?

Lighting and Visibility

- ☑ Is the room lighting adjustable to prevent glare on screens and ensure participants are well-lit for video calls?

- ☑ Are there window shades or treatments to control natural light during meetings?

Accessibility and Inclusivity

- ☑ Is the meeting room accessible to everyone, including those with disabilities?

- ☑ Are the technology and set-up intuitive and user-friendly, ensuring inclusivity for individuals with varying levels of technical knowledge?

Support and Maintenance

- ☑ Is there a plan in place for regular maintenance and updates of the technological systems?

- ☑ Is there readily available support for troubleshooting technical issues during meetings?

> By thoroughly addressing these questions, facility managers can ensure that the modern business meeting room is well-equipped for effective and inclusive hybrid working.
>
> **Chris Fitzsimmons**

One size doesn't fit all – Typical designs for a modern business meeting room

The modern business meeting room is no longer a one-size-fits-all solution. Instead, the landscape of corporate collaboration has evolved to include a diverse array of room designs, each tailored to meet specific needs and enhance the hybrid meeting experience.

Best practices in room design now acknowledge that the type of meeting, the number of participants, and the nature of collaboration required are key factors in determining the most effective setup.

Traditional Focus Room, for instance, are designed for agility, catering to small groups that require a space for quick, impromptu sessions. These spaces typically feature integrated systems with a single display, often a flat panel or an ultra-short-throw projector, to conserve space while still providing high-quality digital interaction.

The **Microsoft Signature Room**, demands a balance between intimacy and functionality. Here, the focus is on providing clear lines of sight to a central display, ensuring that each participant, whether remote or in-person, has an unobstructed view. These rooms may benefit from wider 21:9 screens, allowing for a more expansive and engaging visual experience.
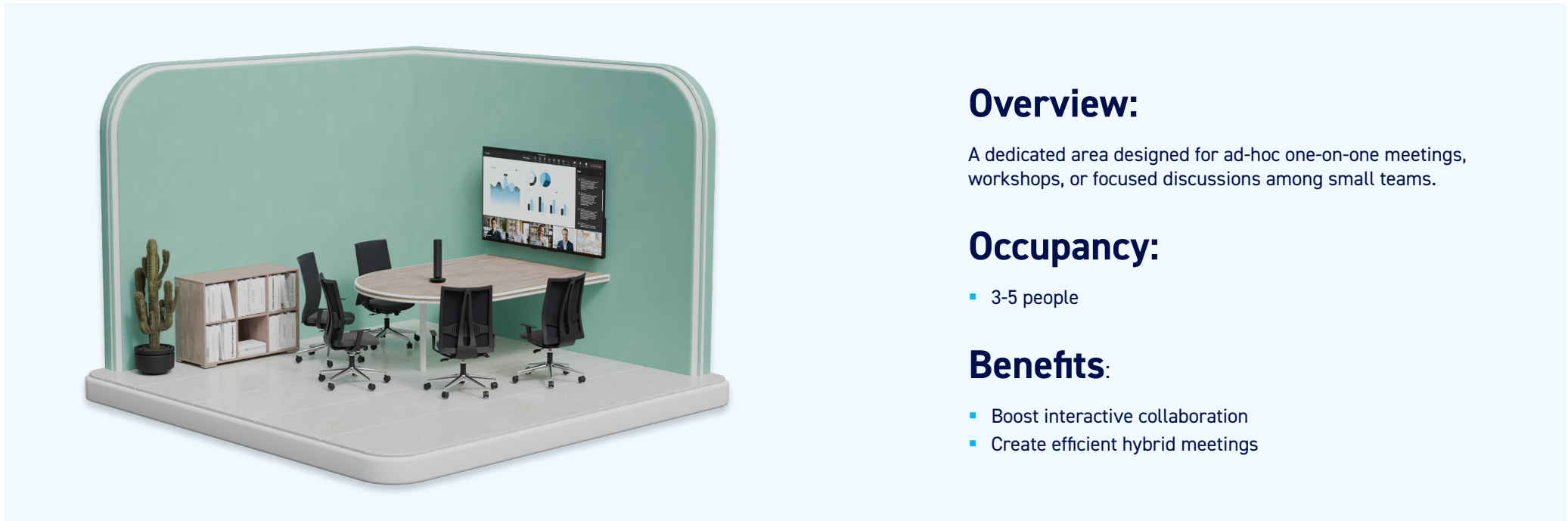
Large boardrooms and training rooms are where the 21:9 aspect ratio truly shines. These spaces are often equipped with advanced audio-visual systems, including multiple cameras and microphones, to capture and broadcast every aspect of the meeting. Large LED displays or wide-format projectors provide the canvas for detailed presentations and facilitate an immersive experience for all attendees.

Blueprints for Seamless Hybrid Meeting Rooms:

Over the next few pages are plans for some of the most popular modern business meeting rooms. Each design aims to foster a seamless hybrid meeting experience, integrating the best of digital and physical elements to support effective communication and collaboration. The physical layout, furniture, acoustics, technology, and even decor are thoughtfully chosen to create an inclusive atmosphere where every participant, no matter where they are, feels like they're in the centre of the action.

Traditional Focus Room

Overview:

A dedicated area designed for ad-hoc one-on-one meetings, workshops, or focused discussions among small teams.

Occupancy:

- 3-5 people

Benefits:

- Boost interactive collaboration
- Create efficient hybrid meetings

Products & Features

Display

- 65''-75'' 16:9 4K LED Display
- High Visibility

PressIT360

- 360° hybrid meeting camera
- Active noise-canceling
- Different camera modes
- Plug&Play

Solution certified for
Microsoft Teams

Small Multi-Purpose Room

Overview:

An adaptable space for small team discussions, hybrid work and planning sessions, and collaborative brainstorming activities.

Occupancy:

- 6-8 people

Benefits:

- Boost interactive collaboration
- Create efficient hybrid meetings
- Lot of flexibility of the room stucture and it's technology

Products & Features

Display
- 86''-98'' 16:9 4K LED Display
- High Visibility

PressIT360
- 360° hybrid meeting camera
- Active noise-canceling
- Different camera modes
- Plug&Play

Solution certified for
Microsoft Teams

Multi-touch Display
- 55''-65'' 16:9 4K LED Multi-Touch Display
- Easy annotations and Brainstorm sessions with an interactive Whiteboard
- Edit and change notes in real time

Microsoft Signature Room

Overview:

This room is dedicated for hybrid meetings with more remote participants as well as sharing content and collaborating online.

Occupancy:

- 6-8 people

Benefits:

- Create efficient hybrid meetings
- On site participants are on eye-level with remote participants
- Enhance collaboration

Products & Features

PT-CMZ50
- Ultra Short Throw Projector
- 21:9 resolution to be on eye-level with remote participants when using Microsoft Teams Front Row
- No waste of space, no shadows and a clean look

Multi-touch Display
- 65"-86" 16:9 4K LED Multi-Touch Display
- Easy annotations and Brainstorm sessions with an interactive Whiteboard
- Edit and change notes in real time

PressIT360
- 360° hybrid meeting camera
- Active noise-canceling
- Different camera modes
- Plug&Play

Solution certified for
Microsoft Teams

Traditional Medium Room

Overview:

A space for formal meetings and presentations with numerous participants, focusing on seamless content sharing and achieving a balanced in-room and hybrid experience.

Occupancy:

- 9-11 people

Benefits:

- Create efficient hybrid meetings
- On site participants are on eye-level with remote participants
- Enhance collaboration
- Possibility of 21:9 projection using Microsoft Teams front row or 16:9 resolution if preferred

Products & Features

PT-REQ12
- Deep, smooth and dimensional 4K images
- Intel® SDM-enabled Projector for maximum flexibility in connectivity
- Up to 12.000lm brightness & low noise level
- 21:9 resolution to use Microsoft Teams Front Row

Multi-touch Display
- 55''-65'' 16:9 4K LED Multi-Touch Display
- Easy annotations and Brainstorm sessions with an interactive Whiteboard
- Edit and change notes in real time

PressIT360
- 360° hybrid meeting camera
- Active noise-canceling
- Different camera modes
- Plug&Play

Solution certified for
Microsoft Teams

Ready to support

We hope this whitepaper has helped you to identify the challenges of traditional meeting spaces, highlight the essential components for a modern set-up, and understand the technological considerations for future meeting room design.

There is clearly no single design solution. Let's reshape business meeting rooms to be not just fit for purpose, but exemplary spaces that empower teams, foster innovation, and drive business forward in the hybrid era.

Contact us today for help in customising your ideal meeting space solutions.

CONTACT US

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