



# FLAWLESS AUDIO FOR EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION IN A HYBRID WORLD—4 WAYS TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

*Using Audio Ecosystems to Enhance Employee Engagement and Success In and Outside the Office*

FROST & SULLIVAN VISUAL WHITEPAPER

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As organizations design their policies and draw up plans for the new hybrid work and learning paradigm, they need to consider everyone’s well-being and ensure an equitable experience. A starting point is to create a positive environment and community where no one feels excluded, notably by providing the right technology and support. This paper focuses on audio as a tool for creating a collaborative and people-centric working environment for all team members, wherever they are and however they choose to or need to work.

## Creating Participative Collaboration Experiences

Businesses are settling into the new paradigm of hybrid work as employees return to the office. The resulting teams that blend people working from home and the office introduce challenges for audiovisual (AV) and IT leaders. Specifically, **work from anywhere experiences are often riddled with unexpected audio disruptions** that lead to lost productivity and frustrated employees.

Going forward, users will be less accepting of **communications disruptions** that derail their meeting or training agenda, make them less productive or able to fully participate in meetings, or make them appear unprofessional.

What technologies should you invest in to **seamlessly connect employees and give everyone equal opportunity to contribute**? How can you outfit workspaces that accommodate hybrid work and ensure flawless audio wherever your people work on a given day?

This paper offers four practical steps to guide AV and IT leaders looking to leverage audio as a foundational tool for employee engagement and success—empowering everyone to hear and communicate effectively.

### HYBRID WORK IS HERE TO STAY; YOU MUST PREPARE FOR THE LONG TERM



**66%** of IT decision-makers rank the rise in remote work as a top challenge



**65%** of IT decision-makers rank customer and employee safety among their top challenges



**4%** of organizations do not plan to allow remote work in the future



**98%** of employees believe future meetings will include remote participants



**97%** of employees want changes to make the office safer before they return



**57%** of employees expect to be in the office 10 days or less each month

Sources: Frost & Sullivan 2021, Cisco Systems 2021

STEP 1

## Think Beyond Video to Embrace Flawless Audio

Video conferencing has kept businesses running throughout the prolonged period of pervasive home-based working by supporting rich collaboration across distributed teams. Still, **video conferencing alone does not solve the challenges associated with the new hybrid work model.**

The exponential growth of people working from home during the global pandemic showed how **poor audio quality leads to frustration and disengagement** during video meetings and online training.



Per Frost & Sullivan research, **56% of employees reported low morale and engagement with increased remote work.** The

effect of poor audio experiences on staff well-being also negatively impacts productivity, which has significant cost repercussions on the organization.

The solution is an audio ecosystem comprised of hardware, software, and accessories that boost engagement and productivity by enhancing the AV conferencing services that employees now use extensively.



Now is your opportunity to prevent avoidable disruptions. It's critical to ensure resources are appropriated to technologies that make the most impact. Successful hybrid work initiatives require businesses to **PRIORITIZE SOLVING THE MANY AUDIO CHALLENGES EMPLOYEES FACE TODAY.**

STEP 2

## Deploy Technology that Strengthens Collaboration

Hybrid work is reshaping the way we interact—it’s time to holistically evaluate how and where work is done. The **in-office experience can no longer be the only one prioritized.**

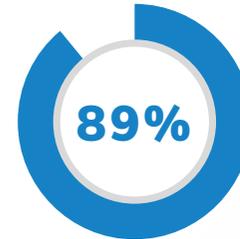
Conference room and desktop (at home and in the office) communication technologies must **equally serve in-person and remote participants.** Audio solutions should seamlessly integrate with modern conferencing and collaboration platforms that are high quality, reliable, and user friendly, such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Webex by Cisco, and Google Meet.

Deploying video conferencing at scale empowers the collaborative enterprise to:

- remove obstacles to employee participation
- ensure all employees can fully contribute, regardless of their location
- harness the different insights, opinions, and expertise of all meeting and training participants

**FLAWLESS AUDIO IS INTEGRAL TO THE COLLABORATION TOOLKIT** because all participants need to clearly hear and be heard to be part of the conversation.

### RICH MEDIA COLLABORATION TOOLS PROMOTE ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT AND PRODUCTIVITY



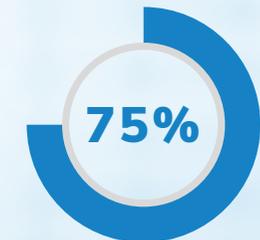
of users say **video conferencing** helps them feel connected



of employees use **video collaboration** to work remotely, and



of those not physically present for a meeting report **feeling better engaged with colleagues through video**



of those **increased productivity**

Source: Lifesize 2019 and 2020

STEP 3

## Integrate Remote and In-room Meeting Participants with Flawless Audio

Video calls have become the de-facto communications mode for many people, workgroups, and companies, and this experience is broken when audio quality is compromised.

Remote and in-room meeting participants must be integrated into a single, seamless connected experience.

In making the business case for new audio technology, you should emphasize the detriments of poor audio, including:

- remote users may be unable to contribute if they cannot clearly hear meeting participants throughout the meeting room
- remote users may introduce background noise into the meeting
- in-room participants may be unable to determine which remote user is speaking
- participants may be unable to mute/unmute audio in a timely fashion
- users may have meeting platform and feature access issues due to outdated AV endpoint software

User experience impacts many aspects of job performance. By integrating remote and in-room meeting participants, you **UNLOCK EMPLOYEES' FULL POTENTIAL FOR INNOVATION AND GROWTH.**

### BUILD YOUR BUSINESS CASE ON THE VALUE OF ENSURING USERS HAVE ACCESS TO THE AV TECHNOLOGY THEY NEED TO:



STEP 4

## Choose a Flexible Product Portfolio that Works Together

Deploying flawless audio requires integrated solutions, not point products. AV technologies should work together to deliver a unified experience for both users and administrators.

Hybrid work initiatives that pivot on cloud video conferencing require powerful audio and video devices that enhance those services. Further, outfitting diverse hybrid environments requires the ability to **mix and match audio devices to complete the business-class video conferencing experience.**

To obtain the most productive and natural collaboration experiences your users need audio and video devices with the following attributes:



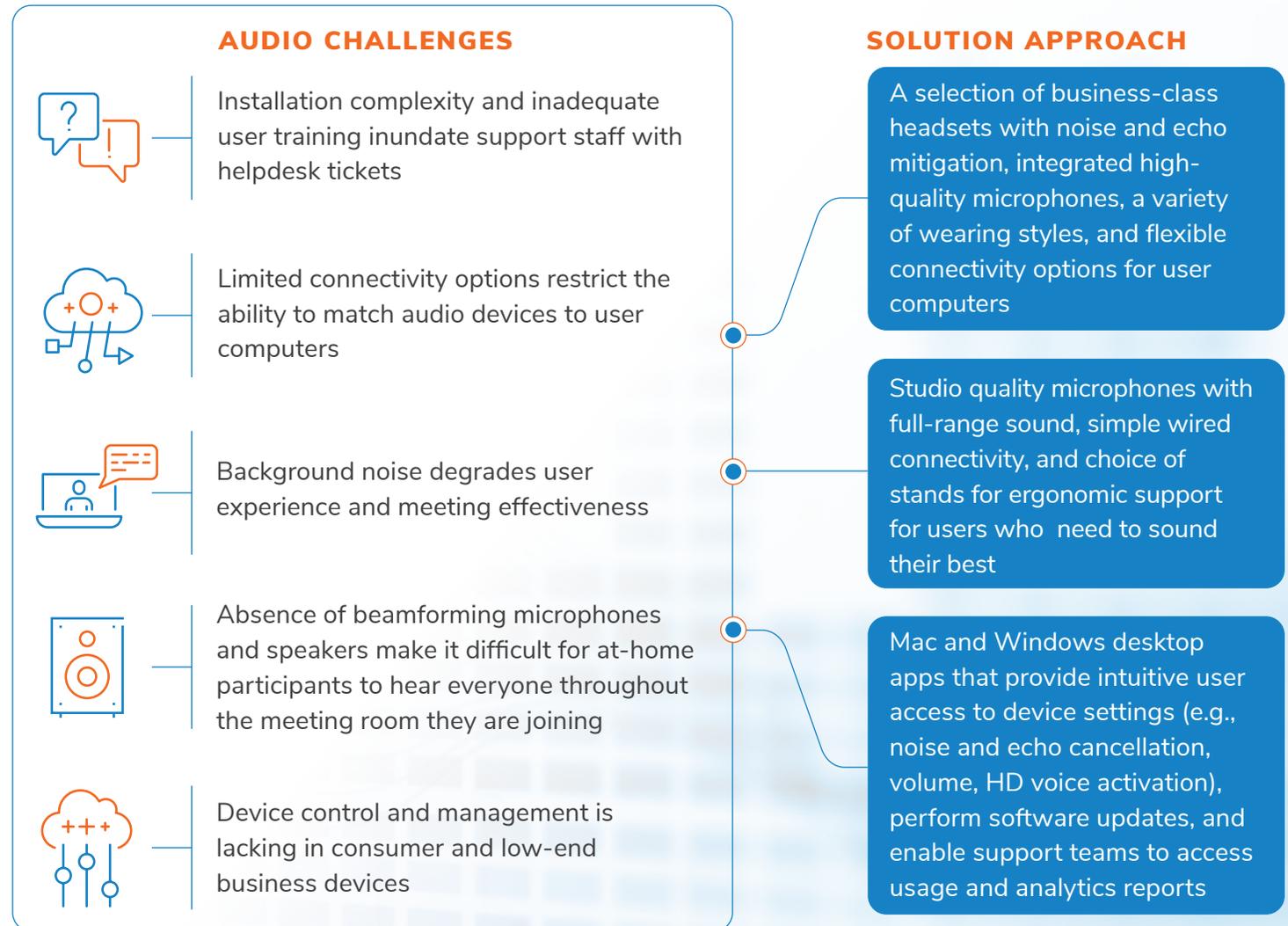
Every collaboration scenario is different. The **ABILITY TO MIX AND MATCH COMPONENTS FROM A BROAD AUDIO ECOSYSTEM** that seamlessly work together to deliver high-performance audio across a range of environments is not a nice to have, it's a must have.

# One Size Does Not Fit All—Leverage a Comprehensive Ecosystem of Solutions to Right-fit Your Collaboration Spaces

The question is not whether video conferencing will be pervasively used going forward—the question is how and where it will be used. Solutions must address specific challenges for each use case.

## Equipping Remote Workspaces and In-office Workstations

When outfitting home workspaces and office workstations, consider the physical environment where personal collaboration takes place, as well as the user’s tasks and preferences. Each environment needs a tailored solution to filter out background noise, limit audio distractions to nearby workers, and deliver clear, high-quality audio.



## Designing Huddle and Small Meeting Rooms

Audio devices with straightforward connectivity can efficiently equip and tightly integrate typical small meeting rooms for better video conferencing experiences for in-room and remote participants.

### AUDIO CHALLENGES

Inability to intuitively connect and use audio devices in typical small meeting rooms increases deployment cost and complexity

Complexity impedes adoption and usage, which lengthens ROI time frames

Inferior audio diminishes the ability for all in-room participants to hear others who join from other rooms or from home, and for room-based users to hear remote participants

Lack of remote monitoring and administration tools negatively impacts technology performance, diminishing the user experience and meeting effectiveness

### SOLUTION APPROACH



Use all-in-one tabletop audio devices with minimal cabling requirements (power and network) to unclutter meeting tables



Cover everyone at the table with speakers, microphones, and intuitive audio device controls (volume and mute, indicator lights)



Use network-connected tabletop meeting room controllers with touch displays to offer seamless access to video conference controls (e.g., lock, invite participants, record) and audio controls



Utilize centralized management, monitoring, analytics, and troubleshooting for all components from anywhere to streamline employee support at scale

## Enabling Mid-size and Large Meeting Rooms

Standard-size rooms can be configured with a broad selection of networked tabletop-, wall-, and ceiling-mounted audio devices and control systems to tightly integrate your meeting and training rooms to enhance the performance of cloud video conferencing platforms.

### AUDIO CHALLENGES



Inability to intuitively connect and use audio devices in typical meeting rooms increases deployment cost and complexity



Complexity impedes adoption and usage, which lengthens ROI time frames



Inferior audio diminishes the ability for all in-room participants to hear others who join from other rooms or from home, and for room-based users to hear remote participants.



Absence of tabletop control over the meeting impedes efficiency and productivity of sessions



Lack of remote monitoring and administration tools negatively impacts technology performance, user experience, and meeting effectiveness

### SOLUTION APPROACH

Tabletop audio devices with minimal cabling requirements (power and network) offer an uncluttered meeting table

Integrate a range of devices with mix and match installation flexibility for full room coverage

Use a catalog of manageable, networked wall- and ceiling-mount speakers and microphones with the intelligence to identify speakers' location in the room, capture the audio, and deliver it with flawlessly quality to and from remote participants

Use network-connected tabletop meeting room controllers with touch displays that offer intuitive access to video conference controls (e.g., start/end, lock, invite participants, record) and audio controls for the room and remote participants

Centralized management, monitoring, analytics, and troubleshooting of all components from anywhere to streamline support at scale

Select components that are certified and approved for compatibility with top conferencing devices and platforms

## Outfitting Demanding or Challenging Collaboration Spaces

Demanding or challenging spaces may be irregularly shaped, heavily used, multi-purpose, constructed with acoustically challenging materials, or have high visibility (e.g., customer briefing rooms) that require thoughtful design components to assure consistently high-quality reliable audio. Because these spaces are often used for training or team meetings, they require the ability to fully engage all in-room and remote participants.

### AUDIO CHALLENGES



Full audio coverage of irregularly shaped and large meeting spaces is difficult to achieve with DIY solutions



Remote participants cannot hear everyone in the room and everyone in the room cannot hear remote participants



Preset audio coverage is disrupted when room seating and furniture is re-arranged



Rooms located close to high traffic areas (e.g., lobbies, break rooms) or that incorporate acoustically challenging elements (e.g., large windows, glass walls) are difficult to setup



USB- and AC-powered (non- PoE) audio device and system component installation is cumbersome in large meeting spaces



Multi-vendor component management traditionally required in demanding spaces is complex

### SOLUTION APPROACH

Integrated and networked wall- and ceiling-mount, tabletop, wired, and wireless microphones enable the most effective audio pickup and easy creation of precise audio coverage in spaces of various sizes, shapes, and configurations

Integrate a mix of networked tabletop and networked speakers to deliver HD audio throughout challenging meeting spaces

Use a well-rounded catalog of software applications to support room system configuration, audio digital signal processing and distribution, anywhere/anytime management, monitoring, alerts, analytics, and reporting to easily tune collaboration spaces to different use cases in the space

## Ensure Flawless and Collaborative Audio Experiences

The workplace has been upended. [The tools provide to your users must evolve](#) to support hybrid work.

### TAKE THE NEXT STEPS TO INCREASE THE VALUE OF YOUR AV CONFERENCING INVESTMENTS:



Rethink traditional centralized workflows and meetings to design personal and group workspaces for your distributed teams.



Deploy collaboration technologies that strengthen everyone's engagement in meetings, whether participants join from home, office workstations, or meeting rooms.



Choose a flexible product portfolio that works together to address your organization's diverse collaboration spaces.



Invest in a solution that offers a single tool set for ease of management and data-driven insights.



Assess your environment to continually optimize scale and performance.

[Click here](#) to learn how to ensure your workforce fully benefits from an ecosystem of audio products designed for anyone and any room.



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