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Designing AV Interfaces to Support Classroom Instruction

User-friendly, Consistent and Reliable Technology Facilitates Active Learning Environments

As institution leaders plan out campus-wide AV projects, what are the top strategies for a successful implementation of maintainable systems?

At my institution, we strive to meet three design principles when completing all AV projects:

Simplicity: We want a user interface that is easy for faculty and end users to operate with little to no learning curve.

Consistency: We have installed the same interface in over 190 classrooms so once a user knows how to operate the system in one space, he or she can use it in every space. My personnel support the same interface across the 190 classrooms.

Reliability: We want to ensure the technology does not cause any disruption to instruction. We want the equipment to always be working, and if there are problems, we want to find them before the faculty do.

How do you address the diversity of configuration and programming needs for different facilities on campus?

We actually have the same baseline configuration in each space: There is a display interface (projector or LCD), local display for the user, ports for hooking up devices, amplification for sound, and a document camera. We also equip each space with a computer, making it unnecessary for an instructor to bring their own. However, depending on the type of space, the controls may differ. A basic classroom requires fewer controls than a large lecture hall, where controls for additional microphones, multiple displays, shades or window treatments and lighting may be desired.

What are some innovative things Stockton University and other colleges are doing with learning spaces?

Our focus has been on increasing opportunities for collaborative learning. Multiple displays allow students to share their own work; our AMX interfaces enable the instructor to change the display from student to student with advanced switching capabilities. We are also exploring wireless technology options so a student or instructor is not tethered to a place in the classroom. For example, we use AirPlay for Apple devices to connect wirelessly to an Apple TV. At any point, any student in the classroom can become the presenter. This encourages an active and enthusiastic learning environment.

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As you make plans for AV investments, what are the key things non-IT administrators need to understand?

The reason why it's important to make these expenditures is to continue to provide service based on our design principles. Embracing the AMX Enova DVX line allows us to have a consistent baseline of equipment across the board. Our equipment has to support network-based control. If not, there can be a serious support burden on departments responsible for AV.

How has AV changed in the past few years, and how do you expect to see it evolve in the near future?

Everything has become so affordable in the past three to four years. For example, devices like our AMX Enova DVX All-In-One Presentation Switcher have replaced the racks of many individual devices that were once required.

In the future, I expect to see increasingly larger LCD displays, which will then start to replace ceiling-mounted projectors. I also expect to see an increased use of untethered wireless devices.

One of the things that has been very helpful for us is the relationship we have had with AMX, which we expect to continue in the future. They have shared their knowledge and expertise with us, and their strong focus on the education market is something we really appreciate.

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