

ROBOTS IN THE ROOM: WHAT IS CONFERENCE ROOM AUTOMATION?

To properly define conference room automation, it's good to start by envisioning a universal remote control for all the equipment in a conference room. On this remote you could press buttons to make your system take specific actions like show content from a laptop on a certain display, change the volume, or dial a number for a video conference. Such a remote control is valuable because it provides a simple way for a meeting participant to take command of all the room's technology.



In the AV world, the universal remote is typically in the form of a touch panel or keypad that sits on the conference room table. For example, a typical conference room touch panel might include specific icons for turning on the projector, switching between a laptop computer and room PC, and a button (or sequence of buttons) for activating and controlling the video conference system. By providing an intuitive interface for controlling the meeting, you're reducing the number of IT support calls and dramatically improving user satisfaction.



What we've described so far is wonderful, but isn't really conference room automation – it's conference room *control*. Conference room *automation* is the next logical step that wraps a layer of intelligence around the control system by combining multiple tasks into a single automated action. It's also where you add the valuable concepts of *scheduling* and *macros* to your control system. With automated scheduling, you can book a room and integrate its overall schedule with the schedules of meeting participants. You can also pre-configure a room so that the system is ready to use

when attendees arrive so that there's no time wasted on waiting for a device to warm up.

With macros, you can combine several tasks into a single push of a button or scheduled command, as seen in the table below.

Desired Action	Series of Commands	Automated System
Prepare the room's lighting for a typical meeting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dim lights to medium 2. Close window shades 3. Turn on table lighting 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare lighting (Single action that encompasses steps 1-3)
Start Video Conference with West Region	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Raise light level to all on 2. Turn off table lighting 3. Power on VTC system 4. Power on LCD display 5. VTC audio volume to loud 6. Move camera view to center of table 7. Display phone keypad 8. Dial 1-800-555-5555. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Video Conference: West Region (Single action that encompasses steps 1 – 8)
Shut Down the Room	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Power off display 2. Power off projector 3. Reduce VTC audio volume to low 4. Power off VTC system 5. Power off DVD player 6. Turn off lights 7. Raise blinds 8. Display "Room Available" on panel outside door 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Perform Room Shutdown (Single action that encompasses steps 1 – 8)

An automated conference room gives users the absolute best meeting experience, and eliminates most of the problems that result in support calls. It helps meetings start on time, and provides an easy way for participants to check room availability and book rooms. And it gives users confidence to use technologies like video conferencing that will provide immediate benefits to the bottom line.

From the AMX White Paper "Ending the AV Tech Support Nightmare: All About AV Control and Room Automation" (www.amx.com)