

January 2022

White Paper

Simplifying Meeting Room Scheduling

Making the most of your enterprise video conferencing & AV estate.



Created by:

RECON
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Introduction

Whether your company has 100 employees or 100,000, it's the same old story --- there are never enough meeting rooms to go around.

The meeting room shortage is not a new problem. We've heard end-users complain about finding the right space to meet at the right time since the late 1990s. Since then, the industry has solved many meeting room reliability, quality of experience, and cost-related issues. Yet, the meeting room scheduling problem remains.

The Meeting Room Scheduling Problem

Meeting room scheduling should be easy. People book millions of flights, hotels, doctor's visits, and business meetings every day. But somehow, meeting rooms are different.

In most companies, meeting rooms are in very high demand for several reasons.

- **Popularity of Open Office Plans** - Open-office workers use meeting rooms to concentrate, meet with colleagues, take phone calls, etc.
- **Reduction in Executive Offices** – Many executives who previously had offices now use meeting rooms as a private workspace.
- **Growth in Team-Based, Project-Based Work** - Work teams use meetings rooms to ideate, collaborate, and solve problems.
- **The Need to Impress** - Executives and sales teams use meeting rooms to meet with clients, prospects, and partners.
- **The Distributed Workforce** - Hybrid workers use meeting rooms as offices and places to meet with dispersed colleagues.

The demand for meeting rooms will likely increase as these trends grow over time.



Figure 1: Typical Video Conferencing Room

The first step toward solving the scheduling problem is understanding some of the critical issues.

Meeting Room Space is Expensive

Although AV and video conferencing equipment costs have plummeted in recent years, meeting room real-estate is still very expensive. For example, the floor space for a small 12 x 15-foot meeting room might cost upwards of \$20,000 per month! ¹

Private Meeting Rooms

Many meeting rooms are private and available to specific users only. For example:

- Meeting rooms on the executive floor might be reserved for C-level staff only
- Meeting rooms near the HR or legal departments might be reserved for those teams only

Scheduling System Limitations

Many feature-rich meeting room scheduling systems are available, but most companies use groupware (e.g., Office 365, Google Calendar, etc.) for scheduling.

Groupware systems let users reserve meeting rooms within the same user interface they use to book their meetings. However, this approach to meeting room scheduling has limitations, including:

- In many companies, not all meeting rooms are included in the calendaring system.
- These systems do not help users find the booked meeting room in the office space.
- These systems do not make it easy for mobile users to search for and book rooms while on the go.



Figure 2: Typical Meeting Calendaring Application

¹ <https://www.squarefoot.com/office-space/ny/new-york/manhattan>

Ghost Meetings

It's common for people to book a meeting room and forget to cancel the reservation when their meeting is rescheduled or canceled. So, the room stays empty but unavailable to others.

Recurring ghost meetings and meetings booked by employees who have since left the firm can take up a significant portion of a company's meeting room capacity.

Some companies have systems that automatically cancel meeting room reservations if nobody shows up for 10 or 15 minutes after the scheduled start time. However, these last-minute cancellations make little difference because nobody knows these rooms are now available.

Ad-Hoc Meetings / Meeting Room Squatters

Some of the most valuable meetings happen on the fly, with no advanced planning or preparation. And many such meetings require a meeting space.

Also, some meetings require a meeting room unexpectedly. For example, a quick chat between two workers might escalate into an ideation session requiring an AV-equipped meeting room.

These users typically walk around the building, find an empty meeting room, and squat.

Ironically, even though these users are standing in front of or in the actual meeting room, they have no idea whether that room is available or already reserved.

Users near or even standing in a meeting room typically have no idea whether that room is available or already booked.

Often, users must vacate and find another room when those who booked the room arrive. We call the act of moving from room to room every few minutes the meeting room crawl.

Summary

Between the strong demand for meeting rooms, meeting room scarcity, groupware calendaring limitations, rampant no-shows and ghost meetings, and the army of meeting room squatters, it's no wonder meeting room scheduling plagues companies around the world.

The Power & Peril of Scheduling Panels

Scheduling panels are touch-capable displays installed outside meeting room doors that connect to a back-end server, scheduling solution, or space management service (e.g., Microsoft Exchange / Office 365, Microsoft Teams, Google Calendar, Zoom, Robin, etc.).

Scheduling panels can be dedicated devices or off-the-shelf tablets (e.g., iPads, Android tablets, etc.) and provide three core functions:

Function	Description	Offered By
Availability Indicator (Green / Red LED)	Makes it quick and easy for users to find an available room	Many scheduling panel solutions
View of Room's Schedule and Information	Allows users to see the schedule and information (e.g., room size, occupancy, etc.) and find available time slots	Almost all scheduling panel solutions
Ability to Book the Room	Allows users to reserve rooms quickly and easily	Almost all scheduling panel solutions

Figure 3: Key Features of Scheduling Panel Solutions

Each of these functions addresses one or more of the previously outlined difficulties. For example, the availability indicators keep users from squatting in booked rooms or disturbing those using rooms.

However, many scheduling panel solutions also introduce new issues and challenges.

"Off the Shelf" Scheduling Panels

Some scheduling panel solutions depend on commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) devices (e.g., iPads or Android tablets) that are easily broken or stolen, require bulky external power adapters and external network dongles, and need frequent updating.

Also, such devices are not designed to be on and plugged in 24/7/365. Stories abound of such devices shorting out or breaking as their internal batteries expand or overheat.

Lack of Flexibility

Some scheduling panel solutions use proprietary hardware or support one scheduling or calling platform only. Such solutions limit the customer's ability to change platforms in the future.

While they're better than nothing, many scheduling panel solutions introduce feature, performance, reliability, security, or cost compromises.

Unprofessional Design and Form Factor

In addition, some scheduling panels require bulky, make-shift, consumer-style mounts and enclosures that are unattractive and difficult to install. And some solutions depend on unreliable wi-fi connections.

Need for Additional Software and Systems

Furthermore, some scheduling panel solutions require additional server software or cloud platforms to operate, which can complicate both the deployment and management of the scheduling environment.

No Connection to Meeting Room AV Equipment

Also, some scheduling panel solutions operate in an information vacuum, meaning they don't know if the meeting room (or AV equipment in the room) is actually in use.

Too Expensive for Mass Deployment

And finally, some solutions are prohibitively expensive, which causes the customer to deploy scheduling panels for only some meeting rooms. These partial deployments are pretty common in the enterprise.

Summary

Organizations needing to address common room booking issues should look for easy-to-use and well-designed scheduling panel solutions that support numerous back-end platforms. Additionally, customers should seek solutions that are easy to install, durable, and cost-effective to deploy at scale.

Solution Spotlight

The sponsor of this study, Logitech, has announced a scheduling panel for meeting rooms called Tap Scheduler that addresses many of the challenges described above.

Tap Scheduler is a purpose-built scheduling panel designed for 24/7/365 operation in small, medium, or large-scale meeting room environments.



Figure 4: Logitech Tap Scheduler – Installed on Door Frame

Tap Scheduler sports a 10.1" capacitive touch screen with an oleophobic (anti-fingerprint) coating and can be glass mounted, mullion mounted (e.g., on a door or window frames), or wall-mounted. All of these mounts are included in the package at no additional cost.

Tap Scheduler's integrated side color LEDs allow users to quickly find available meetings rooms at a distance (see image below).



Figure 5: Logitech Tap Scheduler – Hallway Showing Available (Green LEDs) and Booked Meeting Rooms (Red LEDs)

To simplify and expedite installations, Tap Scheduler requires only a single PoE network cable (provides both power and IP network connectivity),² contributing to a clean and tidy finished look.

Tap Scheduler runs room scheduling apps from Microsoft Teams, Zoom Rooms, Robin, Meetio, and others (see image below).³



Figure 6: Logitech Tap Scheduler – Displaying Meeting Room Schedule in Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Robin, and Meetio (L to R)

Through software integrations, Tap Scheduler makes the scheduling and booking functionality of these solutions available on the go. Depending on the provider, users can make an instant room reservation, check-in for a meeting, and book a space in advance, all on Tap Scheduler.

Finally, IT admins can manage Tap Scheduler centrally using Logitech Sync device management and the video conferencing provider's portal.

Conclusion

Companies worldwide depend on their AV-enabled meeting rooms to connect and collaborate with remote colleagues and those working at home. However, finding and quickly reserving meeting rooms remains a challenge for organizations large and small.

Scheduling panel solutions address many common meeting room scheduling difficulties.

Logitech Tap Scheduler is an attractive, easy-to-install, multi-platform-capable room scheduling panel designed to stand up to the most demanding office environments.

² Tap Scheduler can use wired (Ethernet) or Wi-Fi network connections.

³ Visit [Logitech's website](https://www.logitech.com) for the latest availability, certification, and compatibility information.

About Logitech



(Information below provided by Logitech)

Logitech designs products that have an everyday place in people's lives, connecting them to the digital experiences they care about. More than 35 years ago, Logitech started connecting people through computers, and now it's a multi-brand company designing products that bring people together through video, music, gaming, and computing.

The Logitech Video Collaboration group supports a lasting shift to working from anywhere by helping people across organizations connect face-to-face, wherever they are - without compromising on the quality, productivity or the creativity that comes from collaboration. Learn more about Logitech Video Collaboration products at www.logitech.com/vc, www.linkedin.com/showcase/logitech-video-collaboration or [@LogitechVC](https://twitter.com/LogitechVC).

About Recon Research



Recon Research (RR) is an analyst/market research firm focused on the enterprise communications space. Our company's coverage areas include unified communications, video conferencing, collaboration and ideation, audiovisual AV solutions, wireless presentation, and more.

RR provides enterprise customers, vendors, channel partners, and investment professionals with the information and insight needed to make fact-based decisions.

What makes RR different is the depth of knowledge and experience we bring from our 15+ years of company briefings, market analysis, and hands-on testing of products and services in the space.

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