USI HEADQUARTERS
ENTERPRISE-WIDE AV UPGRADE

Photo: Atlona

The HDVS-300-KIT provides the solution when a prominent insurance brokerage and consulting firm challenged AV integrator 1 Touch AVS to eliminate as much cabling, wiring and visible componentry as possible to ensure a clean look and feel in their Microsoft Surface Hub-equipped conference rooms.

Connectivity and collaboration are without a doubt the two most important touchstones for corporate presentations. Whether identified as boardrooms, meeting rooms or huddle spaces, productivity in these environments hinges on how quickly, easily and reliably a presenter is off and running.

AV technology continues to evolve to meet the changing connectivity needs and collaboration options on corporate campuses. The rise of such platforms as Microsoft® Surface Hub™ enhance collaboration through centralized management of meeting schedules and initiation (via Skype® for Business), white board integration, and customizable apps networked between the main screen and user devices.

These were exactly the kind of capabilities that USI Insurance Services, a leading insurance brokerage and consulting firm with more than 140 locations nationwide, was seeking as they explored upgrades for their varied meeting rooms. The insurance giant recently hired 1 Touch AVS, a technology integration company that designs, installs and supports technology systems across audio/video, energy management, security and CCTV.

With all branches scheduled for upgrades, 1 Touch AVS commenced its work at the most sensible stating point: USI's large corporate headquarters in Valhalla, NY.

> ## "[THE HDVS-300] CAME OUT AT THE PERFECT TIME BASED ON TRENDS IN CORPORATE AV, AND IT REALLY WORKS FLAWLESSLY."
>
> –Thomas Duffany, president, 1 Touch AVS

Creating a Presentation Hub

"The trend we see with all of our corporate customers these days is BYOD," said Thomas Duffany, president, 1 Touch AVS. "As these businesses welcome outside presenters into their buildings, they typically bring their own devices as a presentation tool. They need a simple way to connect to a TV or display in the room. The fact is that the BYOD trend has accelerated quicker than corporate campuses have adopted presenter devices into AV systems, and many are now launching initiatives to catch up."

Microsoft® Surface Hub is one such tool that brings corporate AV environments up to speed. Microsoft Surface Hub incorporates a Windows 10 PC within a high-resolution touch display, laying the foundation for a simple and intuitive means of in-room collaboration.

USI recently made the decision to install Microsoft Surface Hub in the main boardrooms at all its locations (the initial 125 sites were completed in December 2016, with the remaining sites in progress installed in the first quarter of 2017. To take full advantage of the presentation capabilities afforded through Microsoft Surface Hub, including the ability to display a user's laptop and deliver USB mouse and keyboard control from the touch screen, Duffany explored various AV switching and distribution solutions to enhance connectivity for meeting participants.

"With Microsoft Surface Hub, most presenters will connect to the system via Display Port and USB to use the touchback feature of Microsoft Hub," said Duffany. "To take full advantage of that

flexibility, we needed AV solutions that could switch multiple sources into the Surface Hub and accommodate a variety of connections. On top of that, USI wanted each room to look as clean as possible, with minimal components in eyesight."

While larger than most of its other offices, the Valhalla location served as an ideal blueprint for the enterprise-wide upgrades.

"The project in Valhalla, which is similar to their other offices, is really based on four distinct elements," said Duffany. "The crown jewels for each location are the boardrooms with Microsoft Surface Hub. Additionally, we were tasked with the design and integration of conferencing systems in large conference rooms, divisible training rooms and small huddle spaces. Each of these spaces demands a tailored solution, and there are few suppliers out there that have products ideal for each environment."

"What we didn't want to do is cherry-pick from different vendors to build the right solution for each space," he continued.

Duffany found Atlona to be the best-equipped supplier to offer tailored solutions that would suit a wide variety of needs.

Room by Room

While the Atlona systems are the heartbeat of each space, the 1 Touch AVS team was also responsible for all audio and networking solutions. Somewhat humorously, the integration team identified and installed some decidedly non-AV solutions in the main boardrooms to keep audiences focused on the presenter.

"These rooms have spectacular views, and they also can get very hot with sun

exposure," said Duffany. "Since Microsoft Surface Hub features two ambient light sensors, we opted to integrate Lutron® Serena® motorized shades into the project for comfort and to keep people focused on the presenters. These can be controlled to 0, 25, 50, 75 and 100 percent open to align with the environmental factors at that moment, and we added Lutron lighting that can be set for the same five levels. There is also an energy-saving benefit by reducing the need for electric light, but it really all circles back to creating a better user experience."

The user experience is exactly what Duffany had in mind upon choosing Atlona. For the main conference rooms, Duffany went with Atlona's AT-UHD-HDVS-300-KIT to integrate with the Surface Hubs, which provides AV switching, plus USB and HDMI extension. The kit provides a transmitter and receiver with video inputs to support HDMI, DisplayPort and analog video signals. Additionally, built-in USB hubs support connectivity with a keyboard and mouse, as well as the Surface Hub and a presenter's laptop.
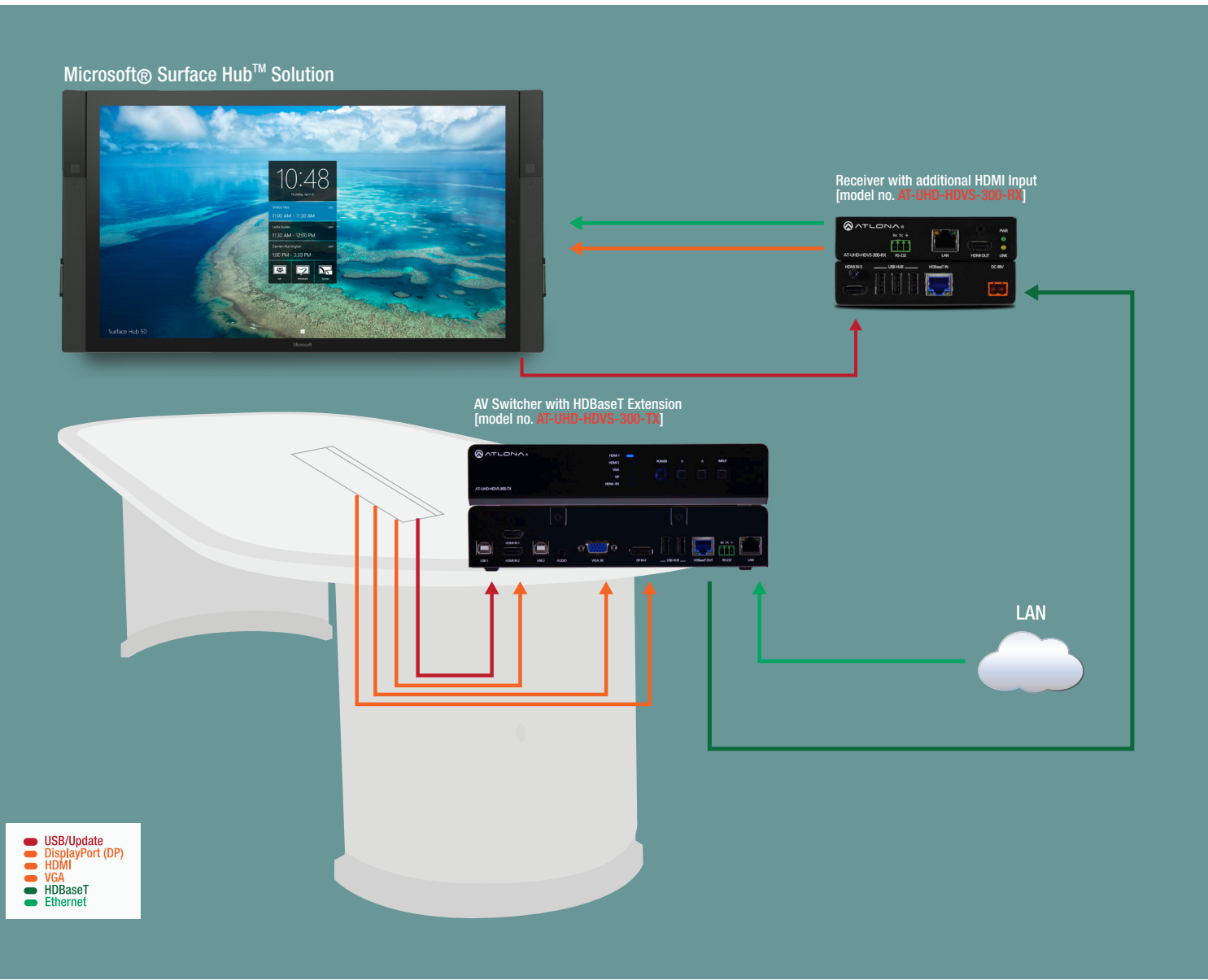
"Atlona simply makes it easy for the presenter to connect and immediately get to work," he said. "With the HDVS-300, we have two ports on the conferencing

table, and the presenter can plug into the Surface Hub using HDMI or Display Port plus USB connectivity. The presenter can interact with the touch screen and control everything on his or her laptop or mobile device. This product came out at the perfect time based on trends in corporate AV, and it really works flawlessly."

From an integration perspective, the AT-UHD-HDVS-300-KIT – as well as Atlona switching solutions in other rooms–provided another important benefit: a clutter-free installation. USI challenged the 1 Touch team to eliminate as much cabling, wiring and visible componentry as possible to ensure a clean look and feel in each space.

For similar reasons, Duffany chose a Symetrix Radius AEC DSP to support all teleconferencing needs.

"The Symetrix unit, integrated in an AV closet in the IT room, supports all voice over IP needs in alignment with USI's Cisco® teleconferencing system, and provides the flexibility to dial separately into two different boardrooms," said Duffany. "The GUI is basically the dialing system, and it connects the VoIP line to microphones and amplifiers, and straight down the line to the AtlasIED in-ceiling speakers. What was especially attractive is that the design eliminated the need for a tabletop dialing system. It's very clean and intuitive."

Microsoft® Surface Hub™ Solution

Receiver with additional HDMI Input
[model no. AT-UHD-HDVS-300-RX]

AV Switcher with HDBaseT Extension
[model no. AT-UHD-HDVS-300-TX]

LAN

- USB/Update
- DisplayPort (DP)
- HDMI
- VGA
- HDBaseT
- Ethernet

The Atlona components are mounted under the conference tables, and tabletops are clear in most rooms outside of iPad tabletop conductive charging stations. The main conference rooms also feature iPort® conductive wall stations; the presenter can use iPads in any of these rooms to mute or decrease microphone and loudspeaker volume at any time.

"The beautiful thing about the HDVS-300 is that you can plug in your webcam, your keyboard and more right there at the headend – and it leads out with the CAT6 shielded cable to the HDVS-300 receiver at the Surface Hub," said Duffany. "Since there is less cabling to deal with, the team at USI doesn't have to worry about fiddling with connections behind the screen. And since we can use a single product, we don't have to integrate a bunch of other components to make the touchback work on the Surface Hub.

"It's a very clean look overall inside the room, and I have a single point of failure if some thing's not working,"

he continued, stressing the benefits from an integration point of view. "You can imagine the headaches if we had Product A, B, C and D in the mix to make the touchback work for multiple users. Atlona eliminates those headaches, and the LAN connectivity allows me to do any troubleshooting remotely."

Clean Networking

1 Touch AVS opted to install a network to support all LAN connectivity building-wide. Duffany chose an Araknis Networks® router with OvrC capability, which simplifies remote support.

"Araknis allows us to access our routers, switches and wireless access points remotely, which I can even accomplish from my phone," he said. "The embedded OvrC capability also provides automated hand-offs across the network, upon

recognition of a stronger signal presence from a neighboring wireless point. This is useful if someone is walking around with an iPad. It's a seamless hand-off to the next access point as they move from room to room and floor to floor without having to fool with Wi-Fi settings."

The Araknis network is powerful enough to support the conferencing systems in the other conference and training rooms. While these rooms are not equipped with Microsoft Surface Hub, they offer plenty of high-end AV equipment to support presentations. All divisible training rooms feature an Atlona AT-UHD-CLSO-824, which provides eight sources to four screens. The CLSO-824 is integrated alongside a Symetrix Radius AEC DSP with AEC for VoIP support, along with CTG Audio microphones and AtlasIED in-ceiling speakers.

The conference rooms, both large and small, are even more minimalist. The larger rooms use the Atlona AT-UHD-CLSO-612ED to support six sources to a single output, with mirrored content shown on a projection screen and an LCD display. The smaller huddle spaces leverage the Atlona AT-HDVS-150-TX transmitter (two HDMI and one VGA input) and AT-HDVS-150-RX receiver.

CLSO-612ED Multi-format presentation switcher

CLSO-824 Multi-format matrix switcher

"The CLSO-824 is a product we use often; it's very useful as it mirrors content to two screens," said Duffany. "In a divisible training room, USI can display the same content in both rooms, or hold two different training classes with each projecting different content. And we can integrate this cleanly with the Symetrix Radius AEC DSP to bring it all together."

"The HDVS-150 is a very useful little system in that it supports auto-switching between digital and analog signals, and link status LEDs that confirm the two units are communicating," said Duffany. "We immediately know if there's an issue with the transmitter, the receiver or the cabling in-between. The CLSO-612ED is a very versatile product that we expect to integrate with Microsoft Hub moving forward. For audio needs, it also integrates with the Atlona amplifier (AT-PA100-G2) that we can control via IR. That allows us to pull audio from the presentation and project it over the Bogen® in-ceiling speakers in these rooms."

For Duffany, the most valuable feedback he has received to date is ease of use. This is especially important considering the ever-present BYOD element at USI.

"We recently rolled out a replica of this system at USI's Houston office," said Duffany. "An executive there approached me noting that many of the presenters and other staff members were not tech-savvy. Yet, they were able to plug right in, and the system automatically worked. That is the best compliment you can have in corporate AV, both from a technology and integration perspective."

> **"THE BEAUTIFUL THING ABOUT THE HDVS-300 IS THAT YOU CAN PLUG IN YOUR WEBCAM, YOUR KEYBOARD AND MORE RIGHT THERE AT THE HEADEND – AND IT LEADS OUT WITH THE CAT6 SHIELDED CABLE TO THE HDVS-300 RECEIVER AT THE SURFACE HUB."**
>
> —Duffany

Thomas Duffany, president, 1 Touch AVS with the Atlona HDVS-300 at USI Headquarters, Valhalla, NY

PRODUCTS FEATURED

Model	Description	More Information
AT-UHD-HDVS-300-KIT Read within study (See pg. 3)	Soft Codec Conferencing System	 https://atlona.com/product/at-uhd-hdvs-300-kit/
AT-UHD-CLSO-824 Read within study (See pg. 6)	4K/UHD 8×2 Multi-Format Matrix Switcher with Dual, HDBaseT and Mirrored HDMI Outputs	 https://atlona.com/product/at-uhd-clso-824/
AT-UHD-CLSO-612ED Read within study (See pg. 6)	4K/UHD Six-Input Multi-Format Switcher with Two HDBaseT Inputs and Mirrored HDMI / HDBaseT Outputs	 https://atlona.com/product/at-uhd-clso-612ed/
AT-HDVS-150-TX Read within study (See pg. 7)	Three-Input Switcher for HDMI and VGA Sources with HDBaseT Output	 https://atlona.com/product/at-hdvs-150-tx/
AT-HDVS-150-RX Read within study (See pg. 7)	HDBaseT Scaler with HDMI and Analog Audio Outputs	 https://atlona.com/product/at-hdvs-150-rx/
AT-PA100-G2 Read within study (See pg. 7)	Atlona Stereo/Mono Audio Amplifier	 https://atlona.com/product/at-pa100-g2/

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