Avoid the Bowling Alley Effect
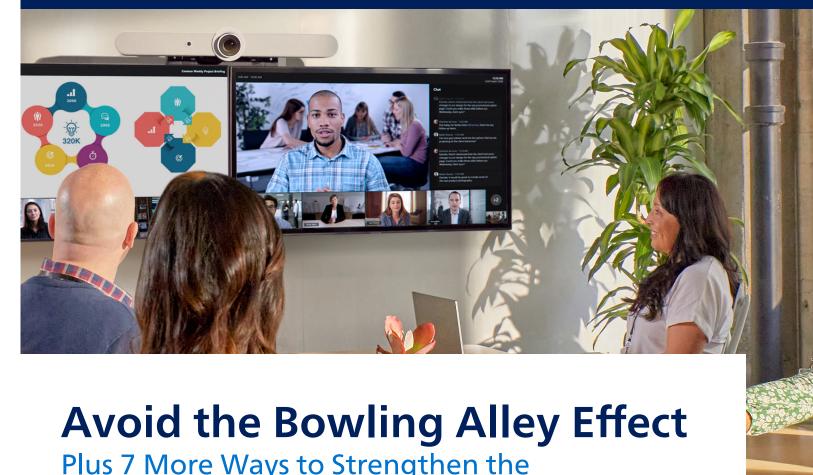
Plus 7 More Ways to Strengthen the
Hybrid Work Human Experience

Anywhere Work is Here to Stay

Many organizations are settled into a hybrid, or "anywhere work", environment. In a recent Forrester Consulting study commissioned by AVI-SPL, **60% of leaders** said their organization plans to operate in an anywhere-work model in the future.

Employees like having a flexible schedule and avoiding commutes. Anywhere work comes with challenges, too, though. An essential goal is maintaining the human experience while using technology to connect your on-site and remote team members. In fact, the Forrester Consulting study also indicated that leaders fear **both in-office and remote employees may feel like second-class citizens** in an anywhere-work environment.

- **65%** of leaders said they're afraid remote or anywhere-work employees will feel like second-class citizens compared to those who are in the office.

- **59%** of leaders said they're afraid that in-office employees will feel like second-class citizens when in the office.

In contrast, however, there are ways that **technology can strengthen the human experience** in your modern workplace. Tech can make video meetings feel more natural and keep everyone engaged. Let's explore tools that empower all employees to have more inclusive meetings and richer collaboration, no matter where they work.

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1. Avoid the Bowling Alley Effect

In a traditional conference room, cameras often display a long "bowling alley" view of the space. The camera view is rightfully designed to show the entire room with every seat filled. But today, we see more online meetings with fewer people. In this scenario, the table and empty chairs become the focus rather than the people. This view hardly fosters human connections in video meetings.

Give everyone a front row seat to keep team members from feeling like second-class citizens or completely left out of the meeting. In Signature Microsoft Teams Rooms, you can utilize Microsoft's Front Row view to ensure everyone is on the same footing.

With Signature Microsoft Teams Rooms with Front Row view, the gallery shows on the bottom of the screen, so everyone meets face-to-face. People in the room see remote participants at eye level, and remote attendees feel like they are part of the same space. This view also makes content, gestures, reactions, and chat easier for all to see and respond to, increasing engagement and productivity.

Challenge	Tech Solutions	Benefits
Traditional conference room views are not optimized for anywhere-work teams	Signature Microsoft Teams Rooms (with Front Row view)	• Allows everyone to meet face-to-face in a video meeting • Gallery is displayed at eye level, making content and reactions easier to see

2. Offer Different Types of Spaces

What about even smaller meetings? It's likely that sessions with just a few people will include a remote attendee. These participants can get lost in a large room. Video-enabling huddle rooms and small conference rooms provide a better environment for smaller groups to maintain a human connection.

Offer more collaboration spaces in different sizes to allow team members to choose which space works for them for scheduled and impromptu meetings. Consider:

- Huddle rooms

- Open collaboration spaces

- Phone booths

- Flexible-use spaces

- Personal space

It's important to choose technology that fits the room too. Signature Microsoft Teams Rooms bring quality audio, video, and sharing to meeting spaces of all sizes, making it easy to upgrade your collaboration spaces at scale. Some rooms may accommodate Front Row view, while others need a different view to connect people one-on-one.

Signature Microsoft Teams Rooms with Certified Devices

Providers, such as Logitech and Poly, offer Microsoft Teams Rooms certified devices to enable rooms of virtually any size with high-quality hybrid Microsoft Teams meetings. Certified devices deliver the true Microsoft Teams native experience versus a BYOD environment, which doesn't allow for several key Microsoft Teams Rooms features and workflows.

Logitech offers room kits with Microsoft Teams Rooms certified devices to help outfit rooms for video meetings quickly. For large rooms, the Logitech Rally Plus provides cinema-quality video, outstanding color, and exceptional optical accuracy.

Poly provides Microsoft Teams Rooms certified devices equipped with a Poly conference camera, a collaboration PC, and an easy-touch controller. Poly MeetingAI is built into Poly Studio Room kits for Microsoft Teams to help workers in-office, remote, and on the go to experience more engaging meetings.

From Microsoft, mobile devices, like Microsoft Surface Hub 2S, let teams move from one space to another, and are another way to video-enable different rooms on the fly.

Challenge	Tech Solutions	Benefits
Large conference rooms and boardrooms are not always ideal for anywhere-work environments	Microsoft Teams Rooms Signature Microsoft Teams Rooms with native certified Logitech devices, including Rally Plus Signature Microsoft Teams Rooms with native certified Poly devices Microsoft Surface Hub 2S	• Easy to scale solutions bring quality audio and video to rooms of any size • More support and faster issue resolution with certified devices • All-in-one video conferencing solutions make it easy to upgrade technology in smaller spaces quickly • Optional rolling stand and battery make it easy to move

3. Enable Everyone to See, Hear, and Share Equally

To support human connections, ensure your workspaces leverage tools that ensure everyone can engage with voices, faces, and ideas. Whether you leverage Front Row or different views in online meetings, quality video, audio, and content-sharing tools are essential for making everyone feel connected. Without vivid images and clear sound, team members can feel disconnected and miss visual cues and important information.

Speakers should fill the room with sound. Cameras and microphones should focus on the person speaking, whether they are in the room or joining remotely. And all team members should have equal access to the same content sharing and annotation tools.

The transition from using Microsoft Teams in a conference room to joining a session from a laptop should be seamless. Make sure remote team members have access to quality mics, headphones, and cameras, too.

Microsoft Surface Hub 2S using Teams enables flexibility and helps employees collaborate and co-create with on-screen content sharing and Microsoft Whiteboard software. Users can digitally ink on the Surface Hub 2S or from their PC while working offsite.

Challenge	Tech Solutions	Benefits
Without quality video and sound for everyone, people can miss visual cues and essential information	Microsoft Teams and Microsoft Whiteboard	• Easy to join a meeting in the office and from a remote location • Support collaboration anywhere, any time • File sharing and content annotation tools • Easily annotate content in the room or from your remote connection
	Microsoft Surface Hub 2S	• AI-powered Smart Camera auto frames the video feed for remote participants • Integrated far-field mics and crystal-clear speakers ensure every idea is heard • 85" model allows more room to show content and speakers
	Logitech room kits and webcams	• Cameras with Ultra HD video • Front-of-room alignment of voice and video supports natural conversations • Beamforming mic arrays capture speech and suppress noise
	Logitech headsets	• High-definition audio ensures remote participants hear the conversation in the room.
	Poly Studio Focus room kits + Poly Room PC	• Poly DirectorAI smart camera technology has fast and accurate people, group, or speaker framing modes that deliver an unrivaled video experience. • Poly NoiseBlockAI and Acoustic Fence technology blocks distractions and prevents noise from interrupting the flow of your team's discussions. • Powerful HP Mini Conferencing PC with Windows IoT and Intel® Core™ i7. • Microsoft Teams Devices Certification ensures all devices meet the performance standards and quality metrics across the entire user experience—audio, video, and interface.
	Poly headsets	• Audio clarity, background noise suppression, and wireless connectivity let users communicate and collaborate with anyone from anywhere

4. Let Tech Play a Supporting Role

When collaboration tech works as it should, you don't think about it. You want teams to focus on their meeting objectives, not the hardware or software. Launching meetings must be simple and fast. When technology plays this supporting role, teams can spend more time working on goals and letting their creativity flourish.

Continuity in your meeting spaces plays a big role here. When teams all worked remotely, many chose different meeting platforms and tools. But now it's time to reel your tech back into the corporate fold to help create a better human experience. Why? There are a few reasons:

- Keeping tech consistent in each meeting space keeps the experience simple. People will know how to start a meeting quickly in any room when the tools are familiar. Consider one-touch join solutions too.

- Unchecked software installs can overburden your IT teams. Limiting choices makes it easier for IT support. Fewer options helps meeting participants too. There's no wondering, "which app do I use when?"

Creating and adhering to technology standards can create a consistent experience. AVI-SPL's design and planning team can help create technology standards that work for your teams and utilize leading meeting platforms like Microsoft Teams, Logitech Tap IP controller, and hardware like Microsoft Surface Hub 2S. Options are kept to a minimum, making it more manageable for end users to learn new tools and for IT to support them.

Challenge	Tech Solutions	Benefits
Tech must support the meeting, not be the focus	Microsoft Teams Microsoft Surface Hub 2S Logitech TAP IP Controller Poly RealPresence Touch	• Easy to meet and collaborate through video meetings, chat, and content sharing • Natively runs Microsoft Teams • Integrates with Office 365 to easily access content • Join meetings with one touch • Easily share content • Sleek, unobtrusive design with a single cable connection • Connect easily though home screen calendar easy to access speed dials, and more • Familiar touchscreen interface

5. Empower Anywhere, Anytime, Work

Embracing a hybrid workplace means no one has to commute every day, and some employees may be fully remote. This opens up your talent pool; however, anywhere work will also change your team's geography and time zones. Maintaining communication and corporate culture can be challenging.

With team members potentially located across the globe, you must allow teams to share ideas from anywhere and at any time. That means delivering **synchronous and asynchronous communication tools**.

Microsoft Teams provides file sharing and persistent chat that users can use anytime. Microsoft Whiteboard also supports synchronous and asynchronous communication. Users can save and share sessions, so collaboration can continue long after the meeting ends.

In-office collaboration is still an essential consideration, too, however. Sometimes teams want to connect in person.

A PwC return to office survey noted that **87% of employees say the office is important for collaborating with team members and building relationships**. While opening offices everywhere teams live may not be feasible, consider regional hubs outfitted with the same technology your team members use daily.

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Challenge	Tech Solutions	Benefits
Enable communication anytime across different time zones	Microsoft Teams Microsoft Whiteboard	• See when team members are online • Persistent chat • Share content and ideation in Teams channels • Save and share ideation sessions • Allow team members to annotate whiteboards any time, from anywhere

6. Test the Experience Before You Build

Keeping the human experience in mind while designing your workplace can be time consuming. Meanwhile, customers are telling us they need to build more rooms faster. So, our engineers found a way to accommodate both needs. Imagine you can design meeting rooms in real-time using virtual reality, move furniture around, and choose different options and hardware. AVI-SPL VR reference designs make this possible.

AVI-SPL virtual reality (VR) design services help you envision, validate, and get feedback on room designs and technology integrations before you invest in and build them. VR accelerates the design process while building buy-in for the finished results. This service allows multiple stakeholders to be engaged in human-centric design thinking, including the often-overlooked end user.

With VR, we can show you if a room can accommodate Microsoft Front Row, and design flex spaces that support different layouts and meeting needs. All while your stakeholders watch the design process and make real-time changes.

7. Track the End-User Experience

Now, it's time to put your new rooms to use. How can you ensure tools are always up and running and know if end users are truly connecting and having a positive Microsoft Teams experience? You can let AV-SPL monitor and manage your Microsoft Teams environment. With managed services, AVI-SPL will continually analyze, optimize, and improve your anywhere-work environment.

AVI-SPL can also track the end-user experience for you. Some key integration and monitoring items include:

- Integration with and/or migration to SharePoint Online, Exchange Online, One Drive for Business, Office 365 Groups, and Stream

- Monitor and track voice quality and service availability to ensure positive end-to-end experiences

- Video bandwidth planning, availability, and performance

- Configuration and control for third-party external apps

AVI-SPL's software and services portfolio will help you ensure Microsoft Teams Rooms reliability and a high-quality user experience. These solutions make teamwork easier and reduce strain on your IT resources.

Global deployment with your tech standards

Meeting, environment, and user analytics

IT and user tech support End-user training

Design and planning workshops

Challenge	Tech Solutions	Benefits
Resources needed to keep rooms up and running, justifying technology expenses	AVI-SPL User Experience and Managed Services	- Take the burden off of your IT teams - Save money with a single provider - Get insights into the end-user experience - Ensure tech is always ready when needed

8. Future-Proof Your Anywhere Workplace

Upgrading your collaboration technology can mean a large upfront investment. But it doesn't have to. Just like you lease computers and cars, you can lease meeting technology. Think of it as an extended warranty on your human workplace.

We call this bundled solution Collaboration as a Service. We designed it to help you finance your anywhere-work technology while giving you the flexibility to change. If you need more collaboration spaces, you can add services to your program. You can also change your solutions and hardware at the end of the term.

Based on your AV and UC technology roadmap and end-user needs, your Collaboration as a Service program may include any or all of the following:

- **Hardware** such as video conferencing endpoints and devices, displays, audio systems, microphones, content distribution, and control interfaces

- **Software licensing** fees for Microsoft Teams

- Deployment, managed services, and maintenance and support

Challenge	Tech Solutions	Benefits
Upfront costs to outfit more collaboration spaces, locked-in to solutions	AVI-SPL Collaboration as a Service	• Conserve capital with predictable payments over time • Flexible terms • Add technology when needed • Provide a consistent collaboration experience

AVI-SPL, together with Microsoft, Logitech, and Poly, can help you foster a human-centric experience in the modern workplace.

Our team can help you design, deploy, operate, and optimize your anywhere work environments.

Contact us to get started today.
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