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What is a Huddle Room?

Discover how huddle rooms can transform your business, increasing productivity, enhancing decision making and providing the ultimate space for teams to collaborate.

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Chapter 1:-

What is a huddle space?

The huddle room has been much talked about across the corporate sector in recent years, but people's idea of what a huddle room is – and what it should be used for – can still vary quite widely.

1.1 So what is s huddle space?

The most accepted definition of a huddle room is a small, private and comfortable meeting area designed to accommodate 2-6 people and equipped with teleconferencing and collaborative tools. Some people believe that these spaces can be slightly larger, holding up to 8 people, and the truth is that this number isn't too important, it's more about what's done in these rooms.



Simply designating your smaller meeting spaces as huddle rooms won't make them more useful and productive spaces. Huddle rooms are all about collaboration and communication, and the technologies within must be geared towards making this quick, simple and efficient. The size of huddle rooms limits the number of attendees meaning only those people who need to be there will be present. Not only does this make meetings – or huddles – more effective, it also means time is not wasted sitting in unnecessary meetings.

Effective huddle rooms should feature an array of AV and IT equipment, and central to the room will be the videoconferencing setup. However, according to [Frost & Sullivan](#), although there are more than 32 million huddle rooms worldwide, fewer than 2% of rooms are currently video-enabled so, despite being called huddle rooms, they don't enable the communication and collaboration that makes these spaces so useful.

Other [technologies to consider](#) includes a display, a whiteboard and an audio system, and a wide angle camera, all of which will make it easier to communicate both internally and externally.

50%

of employees in the UK work from home 2.5 days or more.

Source [Regus](#)

[Furniture is also central to the huddle room](#), with options including a central desk around which users can collaborate and which enables everyone to see the main display easily. Other options include informal lounge seating, with sofas or stools and standing desks that can encourage the quick decision making huddle spaces are known for.

This combination of technology and design helps to make the room a truly flexible space, making it suitable for internal collaboration, conversations with remote workers or external stakeholders, as well as being an ideal place for quiet work, which can be elusive in modern open plan offices.

1.2 Meetings are changing

So why do we need huddle rooms? The simple fact is that the workplace and the workforce inhabiting it has changed significantly in recent years – largely enabled by technology – and this evolution is likely to continue.

Just a few years ago, the average office would consist of individual, defined workspaces with large fixed computers to work from. Meeting rooms were much more formal, board-room-style affairs, designed for numerous participants to sit around a table and discuss their business, often with little more than a paper and pen or whiteboard on which to record happenings.

Fast forward to 2020, however, and the scene in the vast majority of corporate workspaces has altered dramatically. Employees rarely have their own desk and certainly won't have a fixed computer from which to work, instead choosing to use devices such as laptops, tablets and phones to carry out their tasks.

Much of this development has been driven by the massive changes seen in working practices. Whereas in the past working a 9-5 day with an hour for lunch would have been standard, now flexible working practices are commonplace and the workplace is no longer simply an office, it's any location that people choose to work from, be that home, hotel rooms, convention centres or on the move. Office design has also changed, with open plan spaces increasingly the norm.

This increase in flexibility has occurred at the same time as the value of collaboration, both internally and with external stakeholders, has been recognised more and more by business-

64%

of businesses had video systems set up in huddle rooms in 2017
Source [Biz Tech](#)

es. Despite colleagues not always working from the same location, or even in the same time zone, teams are encouraged to come together to share ideas and solve problems, something that has been shown to lead to more effective decision making and greater employee satisfaction. In addition, younger people coming into the workplace have brought with them a much more open culture, believing that it isn't only senior employees who should be making business decisions but those people who are actively involved in a project.

However, the idea of sitting in meeting after meeting while getting very little actual work done is unappealing across the workforce and has shown to be an [incredibly costly and ineffective way to operate](#). Instead the aim is to only include people in a meeting who genuinely need to be there, streamlining the meeting process and freeing up other people's time to enable them to focus on areas that need their attention.

To aid these changing working practices, technology has rapidly evolved, with video communication bringing disparate teams closer together, cloud storage enabling files to be accessed no matter where the user is located or which device they choose to use, and collaboration tools making the sharing and annotation of documents by groups as simple as the touch of a button.

However, neither open plan offices nor formal boardrooms provide the best environment for these smaller team collaboration sessions and [incredibly only 35% of companies globally provide employees with basics such as access to video conferencing technology](#).

It is because of this that the huddle room phenomenon has emerged as a major trend in the enterprise AV market in recent years. The huddle room provides an informal place to hold quick meetings, keep in touch with teams, measure progress and make decisions, without the added complexity of boardroom technology and room booking systems

1.3 Size matters

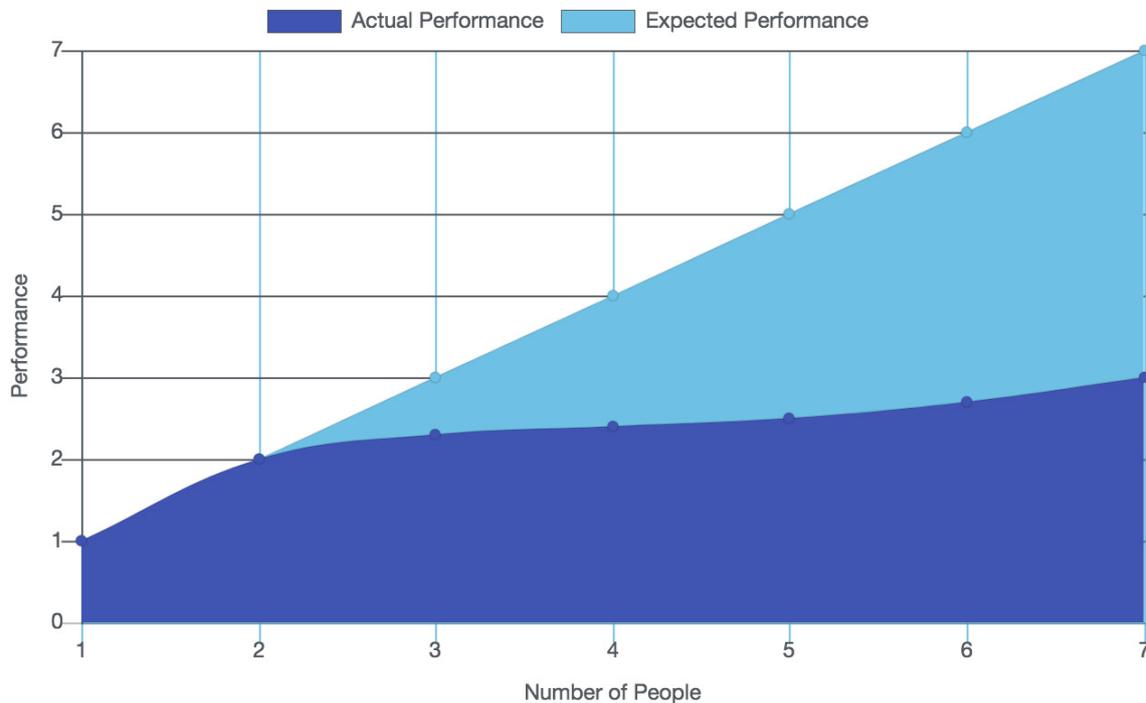
When it comes to meeting spaces, bigger isn't always better. In fact, the opposite can often be the case. While boardrooms are great for meetings involving larger numbers of people, [the average meeting only includes 2-4 people](#). In this scenario, going through the process of finding a free room, arranging a time that works for everyone, inviting attendees, booking the room and then figuring out the technology within it seems an unnecessary use of time and resource.

Basically, [one size room doesn't fit all](#) so instead of having only a small number of high-spec spaces, consider how your rooms are used and opt for what is actually needed. Very often this will include smaller purpose-built collaboration spaces with intuitive technology, and these can be a much wiser investment.

Huddle rooms, for example, tend to be around 10x10ft-12x12ft in size and accommodate 4-6 people. Interestingly this also corresponds with research that suggests the [ideal size of a team is 4-7 people](#).

When it comes to smaller spaces such as huddle rooms, the key is to create an environment in which teams can quickly catch up, share ideas and solve problems, whether participants are in the room or remote. Huddle rooms should offer a quiet space with communication and collaboration technology that doesn't require vast amounts of training and multiple

The Ringleman Effect



logins and passwords. The focus should always be on ease of use if these spaces are to be utilised properly. And remember, size doesn't just matter when it comes to your actual room, it is also an important consideration for the technology within it, particularly the screen. People need to be able to see the screen comfortably wherever they are in the room. The simplest way to do this is to measure the distance to the furthest viewer and divide this by six. This will give you the minimum screen height needed to ensure readability for all.

98%

Of people think video conferencing helps with relationship building inside and outside a business **Source Polycom**

1.4 Global trends

As well as changes in the way local teams work, with increases in remote workers and collaboration more central to many roles, global trends are also driving the adoption of huddle rooms across enterprises. A key trend that has been visible across the enterprise sector in recent years is the push towards [standardising organisations' AV/IT estate](#).

[Major corporates operating on a global level have been quick to see the benefit of AV standardisation](#), particularly when it comes to user experience – a key measure of success in any project.

By investing in the same technology for every meeting space in every office users won't have to spend time working out the system for each room they enter. By taking away this learning curve, not only are meetings more productive as less time is wasted preparing for the meeting, but user uptake will also increase as people begin to trust that they will have a consistent and reliable experience each time they host a meeting.

When standardising an estate [beginning the process with smaller meeting and huddle spaces makes good sense](#) as it is these spaces that are used most often and for quicker meetings, meaning no setup is even more valuable.

1.5 Maximising under-utilised spaces

In many cities across the world, the cost of renting office space is a major outgoing for businesses of all sizes. While there is clear value in investing in an office that is in the right location for your needs and is appealing to prospective employees, there is no value in not making the most of the space you're paying for. And that's where the [huddle room can help to transform your workplace](#).

While meeting rooms of all shapes and sizes have long been a part of working life, often the emphasis has been on kitting out large boardrooms and leaving smaller spaces with little more than a desk and chairs. The belief has been that investing in technology for a larger number of spaces will prove expensive, especially when so much time and money is likely to have been spent on the boardroom.

However, the truth is that boardrooms and larger meeting spaces are often massively underutilised, hosting only a handful of guests for short catch-ups, or rarely used as they're seen as too exclusive for the informal chats that teams need to have on a daily basis. Huddle rooms, therefore, are able to strike the balance between a formal meeting space and a

tech-free room. And, as they're only designed to host a small number of guests, they are a great way to repurpose spaces that are rarely used, whether that's existing meeting rooms, breakout areas or [creating new huddle rooms in an otherwise open-plan environment](#).

Before deciding on where to install your huddle room, however, it's first important to know what they are, why they're needed and the problems that they help to overcome.

1.6 What problem does a huddle room solve?

Huddle rooms can solve a number of problems currently faced by businesses and employees. For example, in many organisations, employees are encouraged to regularly come up with new ideas, suggest new products or services or extend offerings. However, innovating in this way can be difficult if people tend to work independently, especially if they also do so away from the main office location. Significant amounts of research have highlighted the fact that [collaboration is central to innovation](#) yet [many corporate environments simply are not conducive to effective collaboration](#).

Consider the average open plan office. There's likely to be conversations taking place, people making phone calls or passing through the space, music playing and numerous other potential distractions taking place at any one time. Not only that, but as space is at a premium in many offices, finding a meeting room can itself be a challenge.

The huddle space can help to overcome all of these challenges. As small spaces they can be created in under-utilised areas such as breakout spaces, kitchens and corridors. The technology within them is designed to be easy to use and to enable quick and effective conversations with all team members no matter where they are located, helping remote workers to feel part of the team and able to share their expertise. Not only that, but they can also provide a quiet space for ideas sharing and planning away from the hustle and bustle of the main office. Unlike the more formal atmosphere of a boardroom, huddle spaces are more flexible and informal, making them appealing to [millennials in the workplace](#) who have been shown to respond well to collaborative, team-focused working environments. [With this cohort set to dominate the workforce very soon](#), it clearly makes good business sense to ensure you cater to their expectations if you want to attract and retain the best staff.

70%

huddle-room meetings will grow exponentially to represent almost 70% percent of all video conferencing room meetings by 2022.

Source [Frost and Sullivan](#)

1.7 Huddle Room vs. Board Room

Boardroom vs Huddle Space Setup		
<p>Boardrooms and huddle rooms fulfil different meeting and collaboration needs. Knowing how to set up both can go a long way to creating a productive meeting space. Check out our chart below to discover the major differences.</p>		
Boardroom		Huddle Room
		
-	All in one video conferencing hardware	x
x	Conference table or work surface	x
x	Comfortable chairs	x
x	AV Faceplate /Controls	x
x	Dual Displays	-
x	Microphones	-
x	Power Outlet	x
-	Small Room (4-8 people)	x
x	Large Room (10-12 people)	-
-	Share Software and display	x
x	Speakers	-
x	Video Camera	-
x	Interactive Flat Panel / Whiteboard (digital)	x
x	Wi-Fi	x

Privacy

Chapter 2:- *A brief history of the huddle room*

When a new buzzphrase enters the language it's easy to dismiss whatever concept it's introducing as just another fad that will soon pass, and it would be easy to apply this thinking to the huddle room. However, delve into the huddle room a bit deeper and there's a lot more heritage and history of success than might first be realised.

2.1 Are huddle spaces a new concept?

Let's begin by looking at what huddle rooms actually are. Small spaces designed for teams to meet informally, huddle rooms are often the most productive space in any office. And while the term huddle rooms was only coined in the past decade or so, the truth is that quiet spaces for meetings became a necessity at pretty much the same time [the open plan office became the most common corporate working environment](#).

In the past they may have been known as war rooms or simply meeting rooms, but they were designed as a space in which to escape the distractions of office life. What has changed is the technology within these spaces, and that's what makes the huddle space truly effective.

While just a few years ago the corporate workplace was a formal environment with strict management hierarchies and meetings that were carefully planned and scheduled, there's been a rapid change in the nature of the workplace in the past decade. While a boardroom was the most suitable environment for these formal meetings, offices have become more relaxed in pretty much every way and this has led to a change in the way teams work together and to the spaces they do it in. Informal chats, group decision-making and brainstorming are much more common practices and it is for this type of activity that huddle rooms excel.

[Collaboration is at the heart of a true huddle room experience](#) and this is becoming ever-more important to the workplace experience, including the ability to collaborate over distance as remote working grows.

This has made collaboration and team messaging software essential as colleagues want to share ideas quickly, efficiently and using whatever method and platform that is most suited to each specific scenario. This makes it important to look for open standards for device interoperability, so any device can connect to the system and to support [BYOD](#), or [Bring Your Own Device](#). Remember, [employees expect to be able to work from personal devices as easily as from those supplied by the business](#) so it's important to cater for this. So, while

the term ‘huddle room’ may be a relatively recent invention, the idea of creating a space that best responds to the needs of its users and the environment in which they operate certainly is not.

2.2 How big is the huddle space market?

Estimates vary regarding the actual size and scope of the huddle room market with various research efforts painting both a picture of millions of businesses embracing the concept while also highlighting the size of the remaining huddle room opportunity. For example, a recent paper from Research & Markets found that [globally there are 32.4 million huddle rooms but fewer than 2 percent are video enabled](#). Huddle room meetings are also predicted to represent almost 70 percent of all [video conferencing meetings by 2022](#).

However, in their current state, many huddle rooms will be unused or underutilised as they lack the necessary equipment to make them truly useful and enable users to reach out to remote colleagues, global clients and other external stakeholders. In these poorly equipped rooms, the main form of communication is likely to be a simple telephone, which doesn’t encourage the true collaboration and relationship building that comes from being able to see those on the far end of a call, and so doesn’t allow participants to respond to others’ body language and non-verbal communication.

By investing in modern communication and collaboration technology it becomes much more likely that rooms will be used more often. [In a recent report from Cisco, 93% of respondents stated that open office environments require more huddle rooms and 65% said half or more of the existing huddle spaces need to have videoconferencing capabilities](#). This shows there’s clear demand from users for these spaces and for them to have communication technology installed within them.

Huddle rooms are also cost-effective spaces as there is no need to have high-spec, expensive equipment to drive video communications. However, [52% of huddle room users experience software issues such as being unable to hear conversations and other technical issues](#), so remember these spaces aren’t just about the video; audio is equally, if not more, important when it comes to enabling communication.

32m

number of huddle rooms worldwide

Source [Frost and Sullivan](#)

2.3 What to expect from huddle spaces

When creating a huddle room the key focus should be on user experience as this is how you will ensure uptake once the room goes live. So, when it comes to what to expect from a huddle space, the answer is an intuitive, reliable, comfortable space that requires little to no training, is quick and easy to use, and provides access to the tools users need to do their jobs.

When it comes to the technology within a huddle space, top of the list is a screen and file sharing tools, alongside the ability to annotate and sketch out ideas on whiteboards. These are common to most collaboration apps for laptops and mobile devices. But, for ease of physical collaboration in the huddle space, many businesses opt for large interactive whiteboards or smart screens to plug into these apps. Smaller rooms such as huddle spaces often benefit from the inclusion of interactivity, with touchscreens proving particularly popular, especially in creative environments, enabling groups to get hands on with sharing and developing ideas on a large, communal screen, while changes made on individual devices are easily shared in real time.

Video conferencing also forms the basis of many successful huddle spaces, providing the essential face-to-face experience that messaging apps and the like simply can't compete with, so expect screens, cameras and conferencing endpoints to form part of your huddle room experience. When it comes to the camera, [a wide angle lens will be necessary to ensure all participants can be seen comfortably while in the room](#). [Desk mounted mics are also an option](#), enabling participants to be heard clearly. Audio technology for spaces such as huddle rooms has advanced significantly in recent years with beamforming and steerable technology ensuring excellent pick up and sound quality for all participants.

A good huddle room should also include additional components such as whiteboards, flip-charts and boards to enhance the ways in which ideas can be captured and shared.

Looking to the future and expect [artificial intelligence](#) to play a role in the videoconferencing experience, something which will undoubtedly further enhance the user experience with better framing of participants, auto recognition of speakers and voice control of devices.

64%

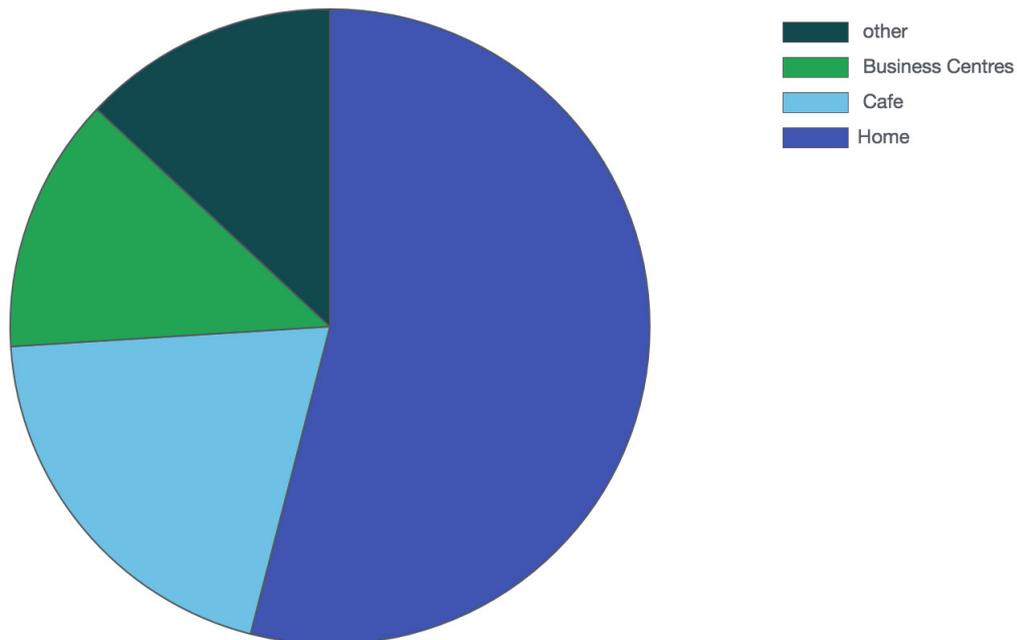
Of companies globally give employees access to video conferencing **Source [Cisco](#)**

2.4 The remote worker revolution

Remote and flexible working are becoming ever more common across the UK and globally, and the practice has been shown to bring numerous benefits to both employees, employers and the wider economy. Remote working can take a number of forms, from individuals who work one or two days a week from home while spending the remaining time in a set office location, all the way through to fully remote teams spread across different countries and time zones. Each of these brings its own rewards and challenges, but none of them would be possible without the incredible advances in technology we've seen in recent years.

As flexible working has increased in popularity, so its contribution to the economy has grown; in fact it has been suggested that [by 2030 flexible working will contribute £148 billion to the UK economy](#). The same study, commissioned by Regus and carried out by independent economists, found that greater levels of flexible working will save businesses money, with flexible workspace solutions being up to 75% cheaper than traditional fixed real-estate alternatives. Likewise, it can reduce operating costs and boost productivity – ultimately causing a ripple effect across the economy from core businesses through to supply chains. Not only that, but by no longer restricting employees to having to work in a specific location, employers have a much wider pool of talent from which to choose. In addition, [69% of millennials reported that they would opt for flexible hours and remote working over other benefits, making those businesses that embrace the remote working revolution a popular choice with this important segment](#).

Remote Working, where people work



Source: Regus

However, the benefits of remote working aren't just economic. Individuals also benefit, particularly in terms of time. The average commute time in the UK is around one hour, meaning remote workers will save two hours a day by working from home, not to mention the financial benefit of not having to pay for trains or petrol. As well as increasing flexibility for workers, this also enhances productivity with workers often claiming to work better remotely where they aren't distracted by other employees, exhausted by the commute or struggling with the pains of an open plan office.

Of benefit to both sides of the equation is that remote workers often feel more loyal to their employer. They understand the value of remote working and appreciate the trust placed on them by being enabled to do so. Not only does this make them less likely to look for a new job, they are also more likely to recommend their employer to others.

One often cited concern about remote working, however, is that individuals can feel isolated, overlooked or no longer part of the team. It's therefore important to remember that just because a team is disparate it doesn't mean they don't need to be able to work well together and communicate effectively. There are numerous tools available to help with this, including messaging apps and collaboration software, and again the huddle room has a role to play here.

A correctly kitted out huddle room will be the perfect space for teams to come together to engage with one another, no matter where members are located, on a regular basis without having to book an entire conference room.

Despite these clear benefits, implementing remote working at scale continues to be a challenge and few companies of any significant size are fully remote. As knowledge of the technology available increases and as organisations learn to look for scalable, adaptable solutions that can change and grow with their business rather than just meet their current needs however, it is inevitable that this will change.

98%

Of people think video conferencing helps with relationship building inside and outside a business **Source [Polycom](#)**

Chapter 3:-

How to make a huddle room productive

As a huddle room is such a great way of taking under-utilised areas and making them into productive work spaces, it's easy to think that designating any small area as a huddle room will immediately make them more attractive to users and more beneficial to the business. Unfortunately, that's simply not the case. In order to [make huddle rooms truly effective](#) spaces it's important to consider what they'll be used for, what technology will be needed to enable this and the overall environment of the space.

3.1 huddle space arrangement and set-up

How you arrange your huddle space will depend on what it is set to be used for. Remember, huddle rooms are designed for informal, ad hoc meetings where ideas will be shared and decisions made. Expect remote workers to play a big part in these meetings, or 'huddles', and cater for them accordingly.

Typically, a huddle room will be designed around a central desk space, with 4-6 chairs depending on the size. Huddles work best when they only have a small number of participants so make sure there are enough seats for a small group and that they have enough space for their own devices and other tools they'll need to do their work effectively. Trying to cram 6 people into a tiny space will be a false economy as they'll simply work elsewhere if the room isn't conducive to their needs. Don't go too big, however, or meetings are likely to grow in size too, taking away the efficiency of a small huddle. For more informal or creative businesses, relaxed seating such as sofas or more flexible arrangements such as [standing desks](#) and stools could be a good choice.

A huddle room should also contain at least one display/monitor, along with a wide-angle video camera that can capture all participants, even if they're sitting close to the camera. A central display will allow teams to share documents, brainstorm ideas, view presentations and conduct video conferences. In terms of display size, bigger is often better – it's important that everyone can feel involved with any content that's being shown – but don't go over the top in what is likely to be a small space; around 50in should be sufficient. Also when it comes to the display, don't forget to consider where it is mounted. Eye level is generally recommended in a huddle room. For particularly creative environments, consider an interactive screen, some of which also have videoconferencing built in.

[Whiteboards can also be a useful tool in the huddle room.](#) With ideas flowing and conver-

sations moving at pace, it can be difficult to keep track of what's going on when in these meetings. The whiteboard can solve this problem, offering a cost-effective way to capture and share ideas. Digital whiteboards also allow content to be shared at the touch of a button, even with those not in the meeting. Again, be careful to position this in a way that can be seen by all, whether in the room or remote.

Although often overlooked, good audio is integral to the effectiveness of a huddle room. Conference speaker phones can be an effective solution here, offering clarity and intelligibility in a cost-effective package. For rooms that will host meetings with external clients, consider a [ceiling array system](#) that will ensure the best possible experience for those at the far end as well as your own team.

Also a definite advantage for any room, a wireless presentation system makes it easy to share work, boosting collaboration and productivity. It also takes away the fuss of having to connect devices directly to a display and minimises the mess and confusion that a mass of wires can cause. As an added benefit, it also means that guests can connect with ease, increasing professionalism and making meetings run more efficiently.

Finally, connectivity is key. Users expect to be connected wherever they are, and the huddle room is no different, so make sure power sockets and charging points are accessible, WiFi or network access is seamless and users can work from any device in any location without having to reconnect or log in. Remember, user experience is crucial if you want to encourage people to embrace a new space, so aim for seamless interoperability and ensure everything works together with no hurdles for the user.

3.2 The perfect environment for a huddle space

Technology and connectivity are undoubtedly crucial to creating a successful huddle room but the environment of the room itself and the surrounding area should also be taken into account. For example, sound and lighting can make a huge difference to the overall feel of a room and how comfortable occupants feel when using it.

Let's start with sound. With today's preference for [open plan offices](#), being able to find a quiet space to focus on tasks is essential. So, if your huddle space is in the middle of a bustling office floor be aware that more may need to be done to ensure the space is as quiet

64%

of businesses had video systems set up in huddle rooms in 2017
Source [Biz Tech](#)

as possible. [while a high-quality professional microphone setup can significantly increase the audio quality](#) of a meeting.

If your huddle space is in a public area or is open to the rest of the office, there are more tools at your disposal to ensure employees in the space can communicate effectively without disturbing their colleagues, and vice versa. Acoustic panels, thick wall coverings, carpets and curtains, opting for soft furnishings rather than those with hard surfaces, and even adding plants can all help to absorb sound in a huddle space.

A number of these can also help to enhance the overall environment. For example, [plants have been shown to improve air quality and productivity](#), while curtains can help with the other major environmental factor in a huddle space – light. [Natural lighting has also been connected to better health and increased engagement in employees](#), however it can also cause problems when it comes to seeing screens and being seen on video calls. Rooms in direct sunlight can look washed out on video, while a light source directly behind a participant can create a harsh silhouette. Conversely, if a room is too dark it will be difficult for remote participants to make out facial expressions and body language, both of which are key for a successful video conference.

Depending on the space, a flexible lighting scheme along with an intuitive control system can enable lighting that meets the needs of all users – offering clarity for detailed tasks and good visibility for those on the far end of a call no matter the time of day or season.

Another trick to help with this is to choose the colour of the walls more carefully. [Many offices still opt for largely white walls but adding a more vibrant colour can encourage creativity](#) and increase energy all while being a warmer background for a video call.

Finally, consider accessibility. The main purpose of huddle rooms is to facilitate quick, ad-hoc meetings so your huddle space needs to be in a sensible location that teams can quickly access. There also needs to be enough of them, kitted out in a standardised manner, so that users feel comfortable jumping into any available space and immediately knowing how it operates.

3.3 Choosing the right furniture for a huddle room

The final aspect to creating [the ultimate huddle room](#) is to [choose the right furniture](#). The majority of huddles will take place around a central table. However, unlike a standard boardroom, huddle rooms provide the opportunity to tailor the furniture more closely to how the room is being used. For example, do teams prefer to collaborate while seated, standing or both? Sit-stand desks can be a great choice in a huddle room, offering the flexibility to cater

for more teams and more tasks at the touch of a button.

When it comes to the table, it's important to make sure there's enough room for all participants and all their devices; these spaces need to be comfortable if they're going to be utilised fully. Also, all those devices will need to be charged somewhere so look for desks that have integrated connectivity units which can make the huddle room an extension of the user's normal workspace. Chairs also need to be considered. Comfort and safety are important, of course, but for quick meetings don't go too comfortable. Also opt for chairs that are easily moveable to enhance the flexibility of the space. If you've invested in a standing or sit-stand desk, make sure there is seating appropriate for this. Stools can be a good option here.

For huddle spaces within an open plan office, soft fabric huddle chairs and sofas can be a sensible choice for their sound absorbing qualities.

54%

of users have issues with huddle room software, such as unable to hear and other technical issues **Source [Wainhouse](#)**

Chapter 4:-

Video Conferencing vendors – how to choose the right one

Central to the effectiveness of any huddle space is having the right technology to enable communication and collaboration, and the [videoconferencing system](#) will be at the heart of this. It may seem like all VC systems are created equally but this isn't necessarily the case, so choose wisely, both hardware and software, if you want users to have the best experience once in the huddle room.

4.1 Benefits of video conferencing

Videoconferencing refers to the process of conducting meetings using telecommunication technologies and involves a real-time, two-way transmission of audio and video content. A videoconferencing system will consist of both hardware and software working together to create a communication and collaboration tool that is essential to many businesses. So why is videoconferencing so important within the huddle room? The answer is that it enables the communication and collaboration that is central to the purpose of a huddle space. Without the addition of videoconferencing a huddle room would simply be a quiet room in which to make a phone call, and while that would be useful to a certain extent, the benefits associated with video communication way outweigh those associated with a simple voice call.

For example, as huddle rooms are a great tool in the battle to [keep remote employees engaged](#) and feeling part of the team, having video conferencing capabilities in this room are essential. By choosing to collaborate over video participants will be more engaged than on a voice call. As all participants are visible they are less likely to multitask and instead will engage fully with the conversation. Not only that but the visual cues that would be missed on a phone call will also be clearly seen over video, so if someone is frowning or their body language is negative other participants will be able to pick up on this and immediately resolve any concerns. It has been suggested that up to [93% of communication is non-verbal, suggesting a lot is being missed on an audio-only call.](#)

For remote workers, simply seeing the team can also be of benefit, building those relationships that can suffer if people aren't regularly working together and reducing the chances of miscommunication or conversations being misunderstood. Similarly, if the huddle room is used for meetings with external stakeholders such as clients, being able to see each other face to face is a great way to develop a deeper relationship while being able to see what

your client truly thinks of your proposition, all without the time and costs associated with travelling to see them physically. In addition, 66% of candidates prefer to use video conferencing as part of the recruitment process. Not only does this make the hiring process more effective and efficient it is likely to [make the company more appealing to prospective hires if it is shown to have a comprehensive technology offering.](#)

Another benefit of the huddle rooms is that it encourages quicker conversations by only including those who really need to be involved. Once again, adding video into the mix can help with this. Simply improving the quality of communication will in itself save time – if conversations are clear and there is no confusion in what is discussed, meetings will automatically be shorter, in turn leading to improvements in productivity. In fact, [video conferencing users report saving a minimum of two hours a week](#) with the technology. And don't forget, videoconferencing isn't just about seeing people, it also provides the opportunity to share documents and view them as a team. For example, whiteboards or other visual tools that you would expect to see in a huddle room can be great tools for brainstorming ideas or finalising designs. As these will be visible to the entire team, no matter where they are located, these tasks will be able to be completed much more efficiently than if people were working in silos. Similarly, creating environments that also support BYOD will add to the ease of communication.

Video conferencing is, therefore, a valuable business communications tool that has a positive effect not only on the bottom line by reducing travel expenses, but also by improving productivity and team morale through more concise and more effective communication. However, the success of any video conferencing system will depend on the quality of the tools themselves so make sure you opt for a reliable, intuitive and responsive system that is designed for professional use to ensure a secure setup that is fit for purpose.

6.7b

Video conferencing market worth \$6.7billion by 2025

Source [Bloomberg](#)

4.2 Market size

Not surprisingly given the clear cost and productivity benefits, organisations across the global have invested in video conferencing tools in their droves and it continues to be one of the fastest growing niches in the technology market. Not only does investing in the right technology offer clear cost and efficiency benefits, it also creates a competitive advantage, helping your business stand out among clients, employees and prospective employees as one that invests in its workforce to enable them to work more effectively. And it's not only large companies that are investing in the technology. Companies of all sizes will benefit from this technology and can implement it in a way that is cost-effective to their needs.

With companies today looking to integrate a dispersed workforce and encourage global communication, video and web conferencing has become the collaborative tool of choice for many, and it is likely that this will only continue. Grand View Research, for example, has forecast that [the global video conferencing market size is expected to reach \\$6.7 billion by 2025, expanding at a CAGR of 9.2% from 2018 to 2025.](#)

Within this, software will grow at a faster pace than hardware within the sector as organisations look to continuously update their systems with the latest advancements available. In addition, the cloud segment is expected to expand at the highest CAGR of 10.8% over the same period as employees increasingly demand to be able to work wherever and whenever they choose. As security concerns are addressed cloud will become ever more central to a number of sectors, especially when it comes to start-ups where the low cost and flexibility are clear attractions.

The corporate sector is the biggest market for videoconferencing globally, and this is expected to remain the case although the technology is also being adopted in other sectors such as education, government, healthcare and media.

4.3 The market players and how they stack up

Across both hardware and software offerings, there are numerous market players that have a stake in the videoconferencing sector. Manufacturers such as Cisco, Polycom, Lifesize and Barco now all provide cutting-edge video conferencing endpoints and professional VC cameras designed specifically for huddle rooms. For example, [Poly's RealPresence Group 310 solution](#) is designed for huddle rooms, and features simple setup and configuration, while the [Lifesize Icon 450](#) is a simple, scalable, plug-and-play conference room system with seamless integration into the Lifesize Cloud. [Barco](#) is just one manufacturer who has embraced platform-agnostic tools with its Clickshare Conference, allowing systems within the huddle room to talk to each and in turn creating a more seamless experience for users, even when they're working from their own devices.

When it comes to the cloud, [leading the software charge are companies such as Zoom, BlueJeans, PGI, StarLeaf, Cisco, Google and Microsoft.](#) Zoom, for example, is a widely used tool that is particularly beneficial to teams that frequently group message and conduct regular web conferences, while [Cisco WebEx](#) facilitates online events and functions as a workspace for project teams.

What's important on the software side is to ensure that your solution of choice is suitable for the needs of your organisation and is both reliable and scalable. Indeed, on a wider level you will need to determine if investing in hardware-based solutions or relying on software, and therefore creating a BYOD environment, is best for your needs.

To do this it is worth considering a number of factors such as what level of image and audio clarity users will expect – remember that if employees have to work with consumer-grade systems and the associated lower audio and video quality, they are unlikely to truly engage in video conferencing. Similarly, if video conferences will often include remote participants will they be able to understand what's being said if audio and video quality is poor. If they can't this removes a major benefit of huddle rooms and video conferencing – that of engaging remote workers.

Security should also be considered and managed, especially when it comes to BYOD – for example, is it secure for employees' mobile devices to join the network, and is meeting content safe to be discussed off the network?

And, of course, all of this ties in to the ever-important user experience. Remember, the huddle space should be simple to use and feature reliable, intuitive technology if it is to be truly effective, so keep this front of mind when making technology choices.

The corporate sector is the biggest market for videoconferencing globally, and this is expected to remain the case although the technology is also being adopted in other sectors such as education, government, healthcare and media.

65%

of companies indicate half or more of huddle spaces need video conferencing abilities **Source [Cisco](#)**

4.4 What does the future hold?

As in so many areas of technology, evolution in the field of videoconferencing is pretty much continuous. One key area to watch in the next year or so is the integration of [AI into VC](#). This is something that's already beginning to happen with computer vision delivering a better visual experience by identifying and framing the speaker during a call. In the future expect improved meeting room analytics, automatic information on speakers, such as name and job title thanks to [natural language processing](#), and automatic transcription and translation.

Huddle room technology is also expected to go beyond integrating [collaboration solutions](#) and video tools into solutions integrated into project management, enterprise resource planning, or CRM platforms, further helping teams to boost their efficiency and productivity. By enabling users to access a wide range of business information quickly and easily, and share and annotate these documents, [the huddle room will become an even more critical part of the workplace](#).

Of course no discussion about emerging and future technologies is complete without looking at possible use cases for augmented and virtual reality. AR/VR has been a talking point for some years but it has perhaps been difficult to see genuine use cases for the technology. According to Gartner, however, AR has moved into a mature state of development and is no longer in the 'hype' stage of the Hype Cycle. This means there are now hardware and software solutions that will actually be beneficial to the enterprise, and this could include in the huddle room. This could take the form of software that creates avatars so that everyone can be in the room or using walls to display and manipulate documents. Price constraints will make this unlikely to be adopted quickly by many organisations, but as uptake increases so costs will decrease meaning it's perhaps only a matter of time until [AR technology is common place in the huddle room](#).

64%

Of companies globally give employees access to video conferencing **Source [Cisco](#)**

Chapter 5:- *huddle space etiquette*

By definition, huddle rooms are small spaces that will often be occupied by teams of people. Unlike large meetings spaces where it will be possible to come in, sit down and spread out all your papers and devices with little regard for those around you, working in a relatively confined space requires a bit more consideration.

5.1 For teams

Huddle rooms are fantastic spaces for team collaboration. They are purpose-designed for quick, informal team catchups and intended to aid decision making and the creative process. However, simply taking your team into a small room doesn't mean they'll reap the benefits of the huddle room. Instead, it's important to be aware of your surroundings and of your fellow meeting participants and [follow some basic etiquette guidelines](#) to make sure everyone gets the most out of these incredibly useful spaces.

Firstly, remember huddle rooms are compact spaces designed for quick meetings, so you don't need to bring multiple tools, drinks, snacks, pen, paper, etc with you. Take only what you need for a short time to ensure there is room for other participants to join in in comfort. [Also, as huddle rooms are designed for quick decision making, only invite those people who are actively part of the discussion to join the huddle.](#) Not only will inviting extraneous people make the huddle room too cramped, it is also likely to lead to longer meetings with fewer positive outcomes.

Once in the room, be attentive and don't interrupt. Huddles are meant to be short while enhancing communication, interrupting will hinder conversations and often leads to things having to be repeated. Many huddle rooms are equipped with wireless content sharing systems, so if you're planning on using this technology be prepared. Have the relevant documents to hand but also be aware of what other files you have open if you opt for screen sharing. If you're using a huddle room for the first time, it may be worth scheduling in a test run to make sure you know how the technology in the room operates.

[Video is a key element](#) of the huddle room and introducing this element adds a whole new swathe of guidelines and considerations. The first of these is to actually use video when you're on a call. Some participants can be wary of doing this, but the more video becomes a natural part of the call, the more the entire team will benefit so always encourage people to turn on video.

Once everyone is comfortable using video, remember that this means everyone can see what you're doing so make sure you're engaged, be aware of body language and don't hold your own side conversations with team members or check emails during the call. Behaviour such as this will make it much more difficult for participants genuinely interested in the call to follow what's going on, while making you look disinterested. It is also likely to make meetings last longer if there is the need to repeat elements that have been missed by participants 'multitasking'.

When it comes to speaking into the camera aim to be as natural as possible and try to look into the camera rather than the screen. This will enable participants to more clearly pick up on the non-verbal cues that form such a huge part of relationship building. More advanced videoconferencing systems will enable users to maintain eye contact through cameras that unobtrusively track talkers, allowing them to act naturally.

While always keeping your camera on is advised, conversely it's good practice to turn off microphones when you're not speaking. If you leave your mic on any background noise will be picked up and heard by all participants, potentially making it more difficult to hear what's actually being said, especially if your huddle space is in an open plan or group setting. Equally important is remembering to turn the mic back on when you have something to say, of course.

And finally when it comes to a huddle or any other meeting, always leave the room in the way you'd wish to find it. Recycle any rubbish, remove used cups and glasses, and leave any communal devices in a sensible place. You wouldn't want to spend the first five minutes of your next huddle cleaning up after the previous occupants and nor does anyone else.

5.2 Stop the meeting madness

We've all had one of those days that has been so full of meetings that it's been impossible to get any 'real' work done. Often these meetings feel like they're being held for the sake of it with little done in the way of prep and no real leadership or direction forthcoming. Not only are these a drain on resource but they can also demotivate employees and cause unnecessary stress due to the time they take up.

According to the Harvard Business Review, which has carried out extensive research into this topic, '[those who resent and dread meetings the most also defend them as a "necessary evil"](#)—sometimes with great passion'. It seems the meeting has become so ingrained in the business psyche that it's impossible to imagine a world in which they don't happen – or can happen in a more constructive and less pressured way.

Part of this is because meetings are seen as 'free'. They don't cost anything to host and they can be a good way to catch up with colleagues you don't often get to see. Unfortunately, this is far from the truth. Research from the Office for National Statistics in the UK found that, on average, time spent on a meeting adds up to two hours and 27 minutes (one hour and eight minutes preparing for the meeting and one hour and 19 minutes in attendance), making the cost per employee £38.50. With 6.8 attendees at an average meeting, annual staff costs per business work out to £35,395.36 per business per year, climbing to £191 billion a year for 5.4 million UK businesses.

When explained like this it becomes clear that unnecessary meetings costs businesses a significant amount of money and to continue holding meetings for the sake of it would be madness. Instead the whole approach to holding and scheduling meetings needs a rethink and the huddle room should be at the centre of this. Designed to host only 4-6 attendees, huddle rooms immediately place a restriction on the number of people who can be in any one meeting. This will make organisers think twice about who really needs to be in each session. There'll be no more scheduling of weekly catch ups between huge numbers of people; instead huddles will be unplanned and will focus on a particular matter or problem that needs solving. Wider team catch ups can still happen, of course, but with decisions being made and problems being solved much more effectively on a regular basis, these formal, scheduled meetings will become much shorter and much less of a strain on resource.

5.3 Tips

So [how do you use a huddle room to create an environment in which teams collaborate regularly](#) but with each huddle having clear aims, objectives and outcomes to keep it short yet effective?

Central to this is investing in the right technology. Think about what the room will be used for and opt for technology that will make this easier but keep the user experience front of mind at all times. This means focusing on simplicity and deploying AV/IT devices that offer plug-and-play operation alongside wired and wireless content sharing options. [Huddle spaces are meant to be cost-effective to deploy](#) so don't feel like you need to create a miniature boardroom. A huddle room shouldn't be cluttered up with remotes, cables or devices that require complex logins and registration. Focus on creating a space that anyone can walk into and intuitively understand how to use everything in it to suit their needs, and [aim for standardisation across your huddle spaces for even higher productivity rates](#).

For example, if brainstorming and ideas sharing is going to be the main focus of your huddle room opt for an interactive whiteboard allowing you to capture and share your ideas at the

touch of a button – something that is much more efficient than taking notes that need to be deciphered and reworked after the meeting.

If keeping in touch with remote workers is more important, audio and videoconferencing tools will be central to the room, enabling quick communication that isn't hindered by poor audio and intermittent video.

Whatever the major use case for your huddle room, make it inviting. This could include varying furniture such as sofas or sit-stand desks, opting for a warmer colour on the walls, or introducing art onto the walls. Huddle rooms are meant to be used by everyone and are a great tool when it comes to breaking down hierarchies and encouraging everyone to work towards a common goal. This can be a new way of working for some, so making the space more welcoming can remove any uncertainty that may be brewing among team members. And, of course, don't forget connectivity. Make sure the room is set up to cope with a multitude of devices with access to the internet and networks even from personal devices.

5.4 BYOD ready

Central to the goal of achieving improved collaboration and communication among teams is ensuring that they are able to use their preferred device at their preferred time to share information and ideas. Often this will change over the course of a meeting with laptops, tablets and smartphones all coming into play at different times, especially when some meeting participants are likely to be on the move while others will be in the huddle room itself.

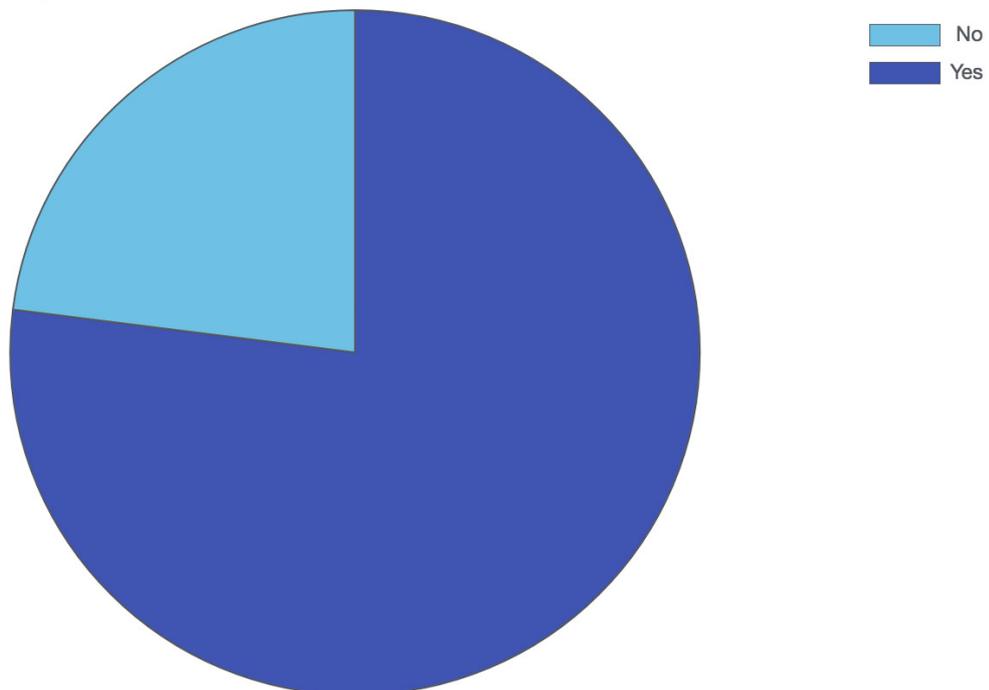
To enable this it is crucial that your huddle room supports Bring Your Own Device (BYOD). Participants won't put up with delays to meetings and every meeting participant expects to bring their own content to the table and share it with the other attendees in a quick and easy way.

To achieve this, the ability for multiple participants to be able to display their screen on a shared monitor quickly and easily, either through the connection of a single wire or the push of a button, is increasingly becoming the norm in businesses that wish to promote collaboration and productivity. Similarly sharing screens is important when it comes to brainstorming and making decisions – again this should be simple enough that it doesn't interrupt the flow of the meeting. Here [wireless collaboration solutions](#) can enable this to happen regardless of operating system and without having to sort through a tangle of cables to decipher what needs to be plugged into where.

Interactive collaboration platforms will take this a step further enabling attendees to share

documents, images and videos rapidly and from any digital device – laptops, smartphones and tablets, and also document cameras, networked sources and IP cameras. When opting for new technology, always consider scalability – having the flexibility to add new devices and rooms in the future will increase the flexibility of current spaces while creating a solution that grows with the business and as technology develops.

Respondants said they expect personal smartphone use for work purposes to increase in the next six to twelve months



Source: Syntonic

40%

of employees say they waste half an hour a day on average looking for meeting spaces abilities **Source [WSJ](#)**

Conclusion

While still a relatively new concept, there is already a large amount of research showing just how useful huddle rooms can be in an enterprise environment, and the growth in their numbers confirms that they are beneficial on a number of levels.

Huddle rooms have a positive impact on a number of elements crucial to making businesses a success – communication, productivity, team building and decision making to name just a few. To be truly impactful, huddle rooms need to have a level of technology installed but the amount spent on making a huddle room into a collaborative environment is much lower than what is spent on the average boardroom fitout.

Huddle rooms need audio and video capabilities, perhaps interactive whiteboards to enable ideas sharing across disperse teams, and furniture and connectivity that enables plug-and-play operation. Indeed, at the core of an effective huddle space is user experience. User should be able to walk into a room and use the technology within it without any extensive training, and they should get the same experience from every huddle room in the organisation, no matter where in the world they may be working. By aiming for this level of standardisation productivity and efficiency are even further enhanced and there is less pressure AV/IT support teams.

Looking ahead and the number of huddle rooms, and the communication and collaboration technologies within them, only looks set to grow – and much of this will be due to user demand for such spaces thanks to the value they offer.

As huddle room estates become larger it is likely that enterprises will look to managed service suppliers to supply and analyse data such as room utilisation and proactively manage equipment in a room to ensure it is always operating at an optimum level. Not only will this add value to an organisation by highlighting where more rooms are needed and how spaces are currently being utilised, it will also further reduce downtime and ensure an even smoother experience for customers. Huddle room technology simply needs to work all day, every day so the more you can understand how rooms are used, the more you can ensure the technology within them is enabling this. Once this vital piece of the jigsaw is in place, the full potential of a huddle room can truly be realised.



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