



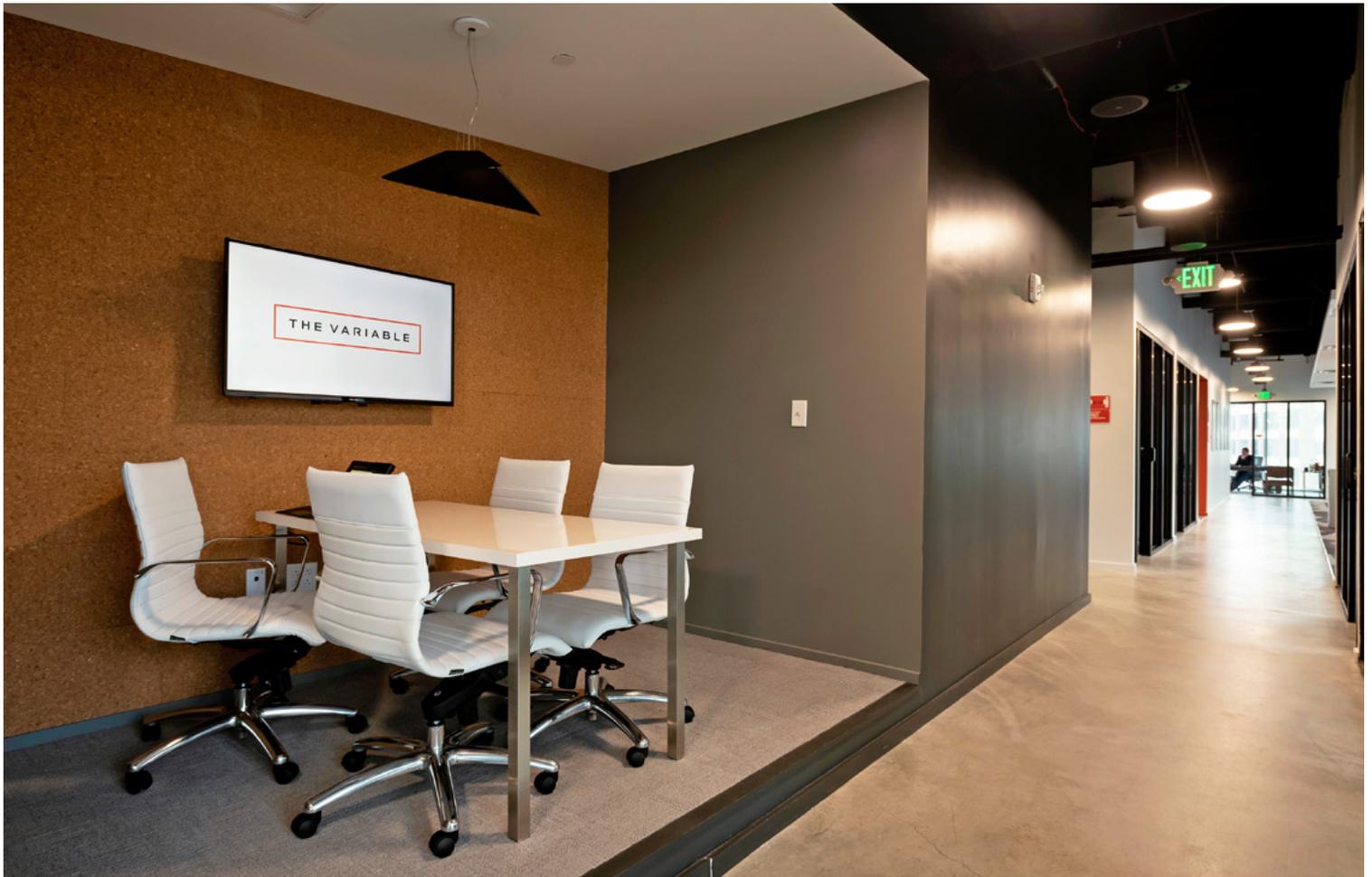
Extron Delivers Superior AV to an Advertising Company's Many Interesting Spaces

“Why did we choose Extron equipment?”
Because I wanted it to work. Extron is one of the very few companies where I have no problem spec'ing a brand new product. They do their due diligence. Their boxes are quiet and small – and do their job.”

Warren Martin
UX Design Engineer
KONTEK

Located in the historic, recently-renovated Bailey Power Plant in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, The Variable is a multiple award-winning global strategic marketing firm. Through the course of growth and success, The Variable's staff had outgrown their previous office location and found themselves elbow to elbow, in desperate need of more space as well as new AV technology. They wanted AV that was far better, more reliable, and easier to use than in their previous location. As Kate Fenstermacher, Associate Director of Operations at The Variable, says, “Having experienced those [AV] issues again and again, we knew the next time we moved that we were going to invest. We were going to do it right. A lot of people get sticker shock when it comes to technology and AV, but we had struggled and made do for so long that everybody agreed it was the right investment to make.” The Variable teamed up with Durham-based AV Integrator, KONTEK Systems, and began planning their move into the new space.

When it came to specifying the AV equipment for the project, Warren Martin, UX Design Engineer at KONTEK said that Extron was the obvious choice. “We chose Extron because I wanted it to work. Extron is one of the very few companies where I have no problem spec'ing a brand new product. They do their due diligence. Their boxes are quiet and small – and do their job.” Still, even with Extron and the other AV brands secured, there were several

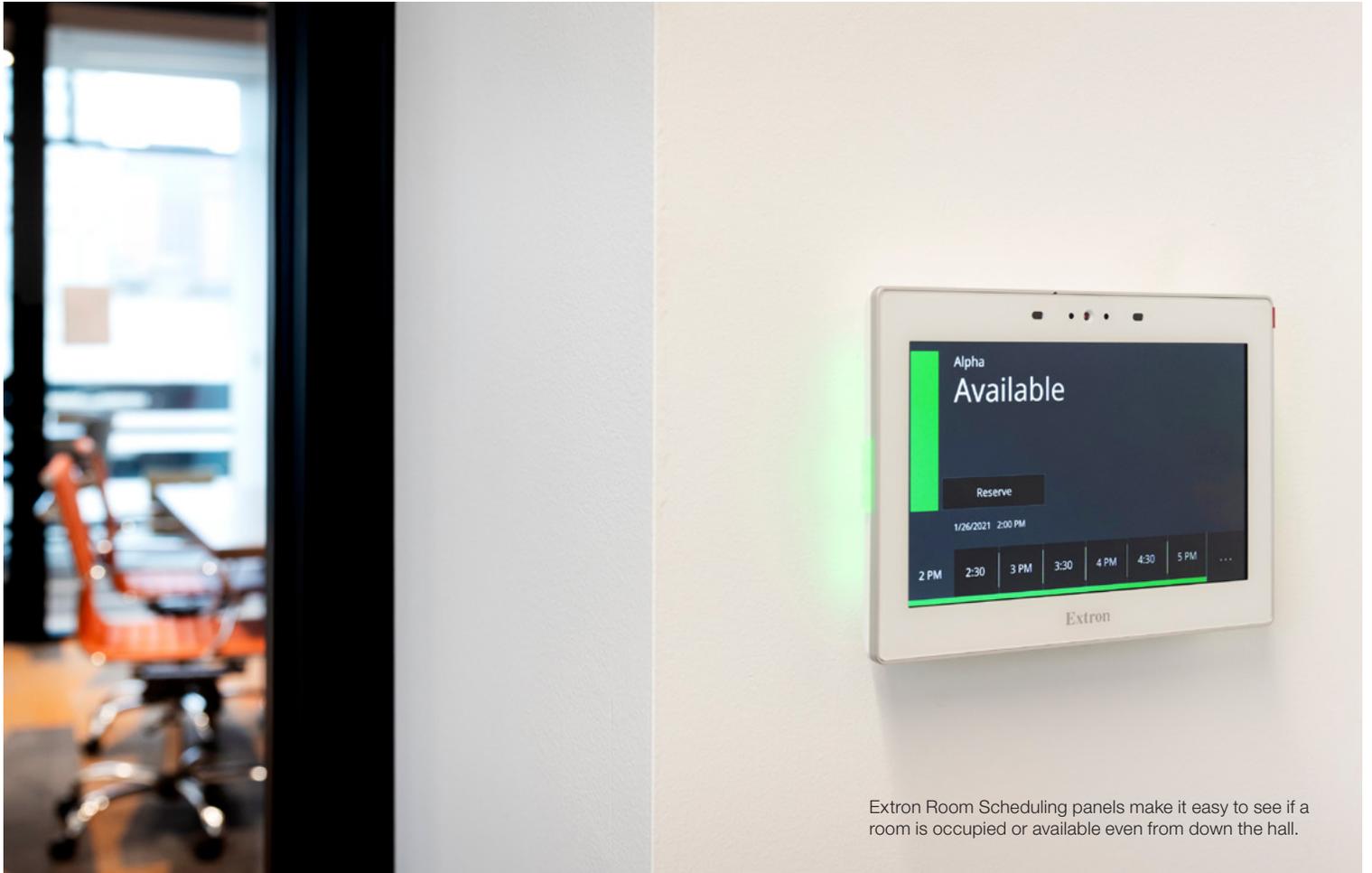


specific requirements that The Variable expected from the components and the system designs. In particular, they wanted to vastly improve their video conferencing capabilities. As Fenstermacher put it, "When we moved into the Bailey Building, video conferencing was huge for us – and this was pre-COVID. Thankfully, we had planned to make sure all our rooms were ready for video conferencing, but especially our main conference room and larger conference rooms. The decisions we made early on allowed us to have those teleconferences seamlessly, and Extron AV in the room helped with all that." The conferencing systems in their old building caused some confusion and frustrations. Working with KONTEK, they were able to smooth out all of these challenges and Extron Pro Series control systems, room scheduling panels, as well as NAV Pro AV over IP systems were all essential to the success of their new AV systems. Continues Fenstermacher, "We know how to operate the [conference room] system, and we don't run into all the challenges we had with our old systems. It's a lot cleaner, as a set-up, than it was before. The functionality is there!"

Challenges

The challenges in outfitting this new space mainly surrounded the timeline and working up against supply shortages as COVID-19 started impacting the project. Keith Vest, Founder and Chairman of The Variable





Extron Room Scheduling panels make it easy to see if a room is occupied or available even from down the hall.

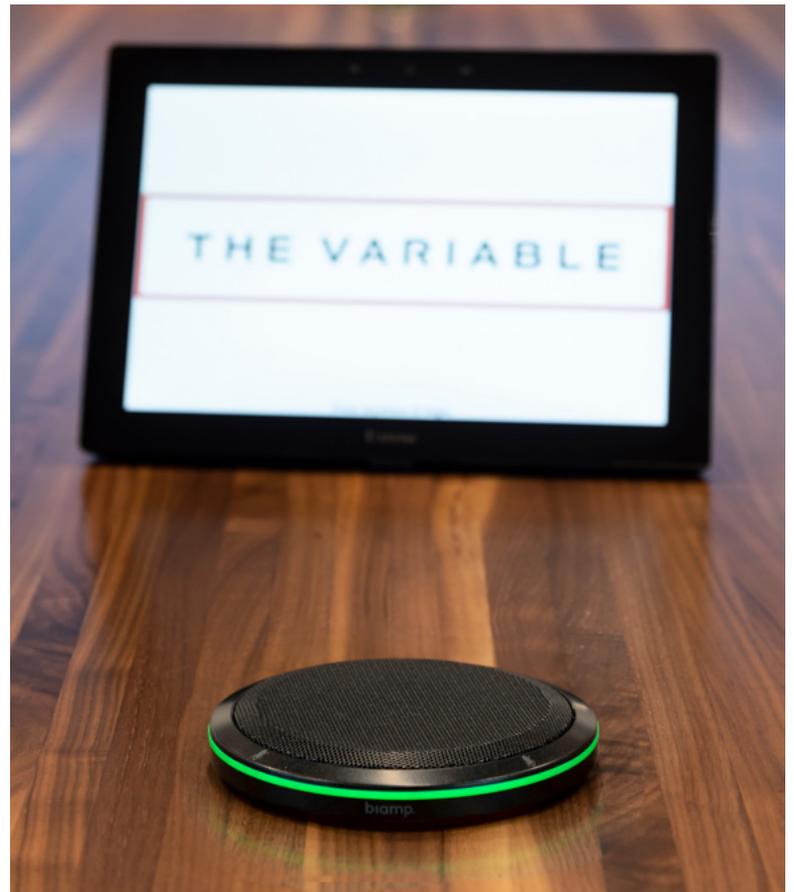


Extron TouchLink Pro touchpanels handsomely adorn conference rooms, offering simple, complete AV control.

described this in more detail, “One of the key takeaways for us was the timing. So much of this project was co-dependent on one another. If something wasn’t done in a certain order, then what followed couldn’t be done.” From their perspective, The Variable was thrown a lot of curveballs that confounded the construction. KONTEK came in fairly late in the game, so the AV decisions needed to be made in short order. Luckily, Extron was an easy choice. Vest continues, “Especially with COVID, and all the tariffs and shipping issues and timing our ordering, sometimes we were forced to make decisions before we wanted to.” Luckily, KONTEK was there to help smooth the waters. “The peace of mind of having great AV, like Extron, certainly helped. They were the first choice and, even in these times, they were available.”

Design Solutions

Looping back to the conference room setups, the new rooms in the Bailey building were outfitted with Extron TouchLink Pro touchpanels. The main conference room had the TLP Pro 1025T 10" tabletop touchpanel and a custom UI, so intuitive that anyone entering the room could immediately use it. As Fenstermacher put it, “Even though we don’t have everyone back in the building yet, if you are working from home and you jump on and see faces in our conference room,







not just everyone with their own little cameras – it’s a small thing, but it makes a big difference.” Between the ease-of-use, and repeatably-reliable performance, Fenstermacher says “These systems have eased the pain of being remote.”

Unique to The Variable’s office space is a large, two floor, tiered seating area that acts as a large venue for presentations, social gatherings, and other activities. The Variable calls it the “Stadium.” As Vest puts it, “We invested a lot of resources, AV, and square footage into the Stadium. We’ve had people come in here as visitors to the agency and they’ve asked, “Can I schedule that for a meeting? Can I reserve that space for my own meeting?” Multiple Extron NAV AV over IP encoders and decoders handle the video streaming tasks within the Stadium. Vest talks about how impressed visitors are with the AV technology

there. They’ve been approached on many occasions about renting the Stadium out for community meetings and special events. “The AV works flawlessly,” Vest says.

Results

So how did the project turn out? According to The Variable, it exceeded expectations. Vest put it best, “Before we moved into this new space, we were constantly trouble-shooting our conference rooms, the projector or the phones. And the aesthetics of those rooms! We had extension cords going from the table to the ceiling! We had a camera sitting on a cardboard box – and you know I’m sure that looked good to the client on the other end. But now, we’ve upped our game. To be able to pop into one of our conference rooms and, with a minimal level of stress, be able to jump on a video call with a client – it’s a breath of fresh air.”

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