

Time & Space

Continental Electrical Construction Company builds unique statement for real estate investment firm

From the naming of its conference rooms — New York, Chicago, Montreal — reflecting the major cities where it does business, to the artifacts and technology in each, **Trizec Properties** is a company acutely aware of its past while reaching toward its future. “When people join our group,” says IT Director Barry Robinson, “we want them to know here’s where we are, here’s where we’ve been and here’s where we’re going.”

For that reason the lobby greets visitors with electronic displays tuned to Trizec presentations and to cable news. The New York room, a small VIP conference area with books and memorabilia of that city, has a large plasma display and audioconferencing capabilities. The Chicago/Montreal Rooms, a combinable presentation and meeting area, serves up large screen projection from multiple sources with enhanced audio from overhead speakers. The Retreat doubles as a lunchroom and employee meeting area. The Training Room is set up for staff training and a possible future production studio.

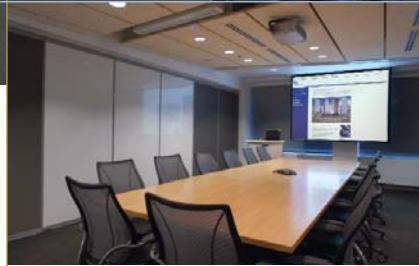
Greeting visitors

Mike Mueller is project manager for the audio/visual group of Continental Electrical Construction Company of Skokie, Illinois. Working on the system design jointly with Dan Grimaldi of Environmental Systems Design in Chicago, he coordinated the integration and installation of the presentation and display systems at Trizec Properties. Mueller’s crew at Continental installed three Sharp LC-32D5U LCD monitors into the recessed section of the main lobby hallway to give a very clean look.

Continental also wall hung a 50” LG MU-50PM10 plasma display at the guest seating area of the lobby. “There are a lot of options for visitors to position themselves while waiting for a meeting,” said Barry Robinson, IT manager for Trizec. “The idea is to have a series of videos telling the Trizec story or about our involvement in the community or a special event.



The Chicago and Montreal rooms combined (above) and used separately (at left)



“The ceiling is made of large 2' x 10' panels, so timely coordination with subcontractors was essential. It wasn’t a ceiling where panels are removable... There was no going back.”

Visitors have an electronic brochure right in front of them.”

Double duty conferencing

Just beyond the lobby area two identical conference rooms, Chicago and Montreal, sit side by side, divided only by a retractable wall. Once opened, the rooms become one large presentation area with dual AV systems, one of which becomes the master. These are multi-purpose presentation rooms, each with a 100” diagonal drop down screen, a ceiling mounted Sanyo PLC-XT11 LCD projector, and JBL ceiling speakers. A Toshiba DVD/VCR player and dedicated computer are built into the room’s custom millwork. Laptop connectivity is built into the table tops. The Sanyo’s 2700 ANSI lumen brightness helps offset light from the room’s wall of windows overlooking the Chicago River.

“There was lots of coordination with this unique ceiling panel choice” says Mueller. “The ceiling is made of large 2' x 10' acoustical panels, so timely coordination with subcontractors on site was essential. It wasn’t like a typical lay in tile ceiling where the panels are removable,” said Mueller. “Cabling had to be in place before the ceiling went up. There was no going back.”

Continental also integrated the Extron MediaLink

switcher and MLC-206 control panel in each conference room to make setup and operation simple and user friendly. By integrating a control panel, “this system is really plug and play,” said Mueller. Presenters can power up the projector, select sources, and control the volume of the presentation at the wall mounted control panel without having to access the credenza.

“We wanted to make it easy for people to come into the conference rooms and communicate,” said Robinson. “They can plug their laptop into the wall or into the floor and make their presentation. The control mechanism on the wall is very intuitive. It’s quite a good design.”

Enjoying the view

A trio of glass walls set off the New York Room, a third and slightly more elegant conference area. To avoid the issue of ambient light from the hallways, Trizec decided to forego a projector and hang a 50” plasma display panel on the front wall. The plasma display is surrounded by custom built cabinetry that holds the DVD/VCR player and other essentials. “It has a lot of the same components that are in the main boardrooms,” said Robinson, “but because the table is fixed, we were able to put a connection for data and AV components right in the middle.” The small pop-up unit allows someone to plug their

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The lobby with three Sharp LCD monitors at left and a 50" LG plasma display in the background.

laptop directly into the embedded connections and make their presentation from where they sit.

Called the Retreat, the employee lunchroom is home to yet another 50" plasma display that can be used for both entertainment and business. The Retreat doubles as a meeting place for 60 or 70 people, more capacity than any of the other three conference rooms. The plasma display has a PC connection for PowerPoint presentations or conference calls using WebEx. A TV tuner allows the selection of local news or sports events. It was the success of this plasma monitor in the Retreat that prompted Trizec to have one hung in the main lobby. "That was where we first saw the potential of the large plasma display," said Robinson. "When we were thinking of how to do the reception area, we said to Continental, let's put one in there as well."

New life for old systems

Trizec's former offices in the Sears Tower had only one room with a/v technology. Still usable at the time of the move, Continental resurrected the system and installed it in the new site's training room. A windowless room with a series of PCs, Trizec hopes someday to use the space as a production studio. "That's if we ever get to the point of recording or projecting our training sessions or an address by the chief executive officer," said Robinson. "The space is soundproof and the lighting is designed for video tape, but we haven't put in the equipment yet." A retractable screen and ceiling mounted projector with PC connections are all the room needs for the time being.

Trizec has added wireless capabilities to all of its employees' laptops so everyone can stay connected. Employees are seeing new possibilities and visitors are not intimidated by technology that is above their comfort level. "Continental was a big help on the selection of displays and audio," said Robinson.

"They were very effective in helping us with the discussion of plasma vs. LCD, how we should configure the components in the main meeting rooms, and what we want to get from the various a/v systems. It was a lot of pieces to think through."

Mueller says Continental is not a typical audio/visual integrator. Continental's Special Systems Division has the technology and experience to provide installation and support services for audio/visual, voice/data and security systems. As a division of a large electrical contractor, Continental's Audio Visual Group has a distinct advantage in many situations. For one thing, Mueller's installation crew often gets a heads up from the parent company regarding construction schedules at any given time. "We can fabricate and integrate a small system by means of a few technicians, and we can tap up to 100 technicians for very large projects," he says. That was one reason the group was chosen to install the sound systems in Chicago's Millennium Park last year.

That kind of flexibility can only help a customer like Trizec Properties. Clearly the move to 10 South has given them a renewed sense of the future. "We're at a different place than we were, both organizationally

and capability-wise," said Robinson. "It's a very positive environment. We're trying to be more self-serve, as well, so people are more comfortable and capable with the technology we have available." Whether they are raising money for Tsunami relief or sparking some other community initiatives, Trizec wants a presence in the community. The a/v technology they now have at their fingertips can help them reach that goal. □



The New York Room

The Training Room



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