

CAA, SAG benefit from Cibola meeting design

By GREG REIFSTECK

The days of executives shouting to be heard across crowded meeting tables may become a thing of the past thanks to multimedia design firms like Santa Ana, Calif.-based Cibola Systems.

For a client list of media and showbiz heavy hitters that includes Conde Nast Publications, Creative Artists Agency, the Screen Actors Guild and BBDO, there might still be shouting, but it won't be to see the video screen.

Cibola assesses how companies can streamline their information systems to increase productivity for themselves and their clients — but not with gadgets, gizmos and upgrades alone.

"In a first meeting with executives, I usually don't talk about technology at all," says Cibola prexy Lisa Perrine. "We are very interested in talking about a company's business goals, their cultural issues, what their expectations are before we talk about adjusting anything."

CAA enlisted Cibola's expertise when the company decided to go from using a simple screening room for teleconferencing to creating a sophisticated multimedia lab.

Venice, Calif., architects Pleskow and Rael created an acoustically isolated shiplike structure in which 24 separate CPUs are linked to a state-of-



MORE THAN ARCHITECTURE: Cibola helped media giant Conde Nast create conference spaces with the company's goals in mind.

the-art rear-projection system to make information interaction during meetings run smoother and faster.

While the technology was instrumental, the real aim was more than just creating a showpiece. Such upgrades allow senior members of companies have more time to mentor younger employees, instead of having to deal with accessing lengthy contract and client records.

"There is a recognition right now that it's not just having (technology), but using it," she says, adding that companies are past the point of just hang-

ing all of their technology on the wall.

"People think technology will solve their communication problems. But it's different ways of working together that solve the problem, and then the technology layered on top of it accelerates the effectiveness," she says.

Once a company's goals are outlined, Cibola enlists the services of outside architects, and vendors of hardware and software components that fit the client's particular ergonomic needs. Perrine's philosophy is that properly used elements, such as decor, lighting, comfort

and technology, foster respect between employees and clients, inspire productivity and improve the collaborative process.

Cibola uses a 12-step process that takes into consideration four key goals — trust, energize, engage and model — to spell out how a meeting-space layout can enable effective interaction; a key step toward corporate time-saving.

One of Cibola's largest undertakings in putting its philosophy into practice was for Conde Nast. Cibola helped guide the magazine publisher in consolidating all of its 16 different publications from various Gotham locations under one roof at its present 1 million-square-foot Time Square digs. The trick was promoting collaboration among colleagues while respecting the privacy of semicompetitive publications, as well as creating a common infrastructure that could be extended to branch offices.

"Cibola has a unique ability to understand the culture and usage needs of a user group," says Gary Van Dis, Conde Nast's vice president and corporate creative director. "They really understood the culture of magazine publishing and that we were technically savvy, and on the sales end we like to present with digital laptop presentations, and they helped us meet our needs. They made sure the user felt comfortable in the space and wanted to come back and use it. We found after a year that people almost wore out the system."