Introducing Mezzanine: The Future Of Conference Room Collaboration

Faster decision-making, more effective collaboration, richer communication. Oblong’s Mezzanine™ revolutionizes your conference room, meeting space, or presentation facility by providing multi-user, multi-screen, multi-device capabilities.

The way we do business is rapidly changing. Technologies such as smartphones, mobile devices, and online applications are being increasingly integrated into our workspaces, transforming the way we work with one another. This transformation is paving the way for more effective and efficient collaboration in the workplace. 63% of CEOs surveyed in the 2012 IBM C-Suite Series identified a collaborative environment as a top organizational attribute within their workforce, and more than half plan to improve internal collaboration with their organizations.

Organizations across industries face similar challenges integrating current collaboration solutions with emerging technologies: improving collaboration efforts among team members; developing stronger, more engaging relationships with customers; and supporting enhanced parallel work amongst teams. Most organizations today collaborate in traditional conference rooms, with access to a constrained set of tools: PowerPoint, WebEx, a projector, a connected computer, whiteboards, and paper. The adoption of telepresence adds voice and video to the experience, but these systems fail to keep pace with the emergence of mobile technologies, applications, and optimized work processes.

At the forefront of this trend, Mezzanine is the only collaborative conference room solution on the market that brings together people, screens, devices, applications, and data in a shared workspace. Mezzanine offers exactly what traditional conference and telepresence rooms lack—an effective way to simultaneously engage multiple users and their data. Mezzanine expands on existing technology by providing what we call InfoPresence™—the incorporation of multiple users, multiple devices, and multiple streams of information in the collaboration environment. Using Mezzanine, teams meet more efficiently; customer engagement is maximized; and decisions are made faster.
**MEZZANINE: OVERVIEW**

What differentiates Mezzanine from other collaboration systems is the ease of integrating every participant’s tools—such as laptops, smartphones, tablets, and online applications—into a unified experience. Mezzanine lets multiple users on the same network share content and applications interactively with anyone, at the same time. It is a turnkey solution that combines presentation design and delivery, application sharing, whiteboard capture, and video conferencing, all within a framework of multi-participant control.

Mezzanine’s next generation conference room allows for:

- Multiple users to share content across multiple screens
- Mezzanine to Mezzanine multi-room shared workspace connectivity
- Support for web browsers, smartphones, and tablets (iOS and Android supported)
- Presentation control, on-screen content manipulation, and whiteboard capture via the *wand*—a spatially-aware input device
- Control of connected laptops and their applications in the room via the wand and web browser
- Compatibility with existing videoconferencing and telepresence infrastructure
- Integration with enterprise authentication

![Figure 1. Mezzanine Components](image)

A standard Mezzanine room includes the following components:

**OBLONG PROPRIETARY HARDWARE**

1. Oblong wands that allow participants to move and manipulate content across screens.
2. An Oblong appliance that supports the system.

**COMMODOITY HARDWARE**

3. Three connected screens—called the *triptych*—located at the center of the Mezzanine user experience. The triptych allows users to display and manipulate static image assets and live video feeds in a large shared workspace.
4. Three screens located on a sidewall—called *corkboards*—where users can place static images for easy reference.
5. A video teleconferencing camera located at the base of the triptych.
6. A camera to capture content from a conventional whiteboard.
MEZZANINE: A SEAMLESS MULTI-USER EXPERIENCE

Mezzanine is uniquely designed to create a collaborative, multi-user, and multi-device workspace. Whether you plan to use Mezzanine for a presentation, a meeting, or a work session, the ability to collaborate and communicate effectively is greatly enhanced.

Mezzanine eliminates wasted time and effort typically spent on meeting set-up. With Mezzanine, users simply enter the room and connect their device of choice—whether a laptop, smartphone, or tablet—and get to work. To share data directly from their computers, users connect via a DVI video feed or wirelessly through a lightweight software client called MzReach. To share data from a smartphone or tablet, users connect wirelessly through our mobile application. Up to four DVI connections and four wireless screen sharing connections can be accommodated in a Mezzanine session. Mobile device and web application users may also participate in the session allowing for many users to be a part of the session at the same time.

Once connected, users launch a presentation or work session by creating a new dossier, opening an existing dossier, duplicating a dossier, or calling another Mezzanine room. A dossier works similarly to a folder on your computer; it is a unified collection and viewing portal of participants’ static images and live video streams. Permission controls are also available for users to lock dossiers or make them private.

![Figure 2. Assets in a Mezzanine Dossier](image)

Figure 2 depicts a set of assets within a dossier. To add assets to a dossier, users can upload content through the web application or mobile device; take screenshots with the wand from any area of the triptych; or capture whiteboard content with the wand.

The primary device to control assets within Mezzanine is the wand, though the web application and an iOS or Android device (tablet, smartphone, etc.) can be used as well. Any combination of these devices may be used simultaneously.

Another unique aspect of Mezzanine is reachthrough, which provides the ability to control the cursor on other computers—both Windows and Mac—connected through MzReach. Reachthrough allows users to interact with content on another user’s computer using the wand, for example users can manipulate a 3D model, click through a PowerPoint presentation, or move images around a screen.

Mezzanine-To-Mezzanine Collaboration

Mezzanine can also connect with up to three additional Mezzanine rooms to create one seamless collaboration experience between all four rooms. This allows all connected rooms to share the same view and work within one common dossier. Participants in all four Mezzanine rooms can add and manipulate content in the common dossier during a joint work session or presentation. In addition, when Mezzanines are connected, users can stream up to 16 videos simultaneously.¹

¹ The number of videos that can be streamed simultaneously is limited by the available bandwidth. Inactive videos thumbnail after bandwidth limit has been reached.
Within a Mezzanine room, users can:

- Upload and download assets simultaneously from various clients—web app, iOS and Android clients
- Easily display, move, size, and order assets
- Access a central place to view, add, remove, and edit all of the information necessary to complete a task or solve a problem
- Capture whiteboard content with the wand or the mobile application; the content is automatically uploaded into the dossier
- Place static images on the corkboards to use as reference materials
- Create presentations in a unified group setting
- Present decks in a graphically stunning environment
- Enable brainstorming that captures users’ ideas in the moment
- Embed live video feeds into a presentation to create a dynamic meeting, briefing, or sales pitch
- Support fluid interaction with all users’ content
- Control access to a work session with permission controls and privacy options

MEZZANINE: FROM TELEPRESENCE TO INFOPRESENCE

Until recently no technology available could seamlessly connect multiple people and multiple devices. As depicted in the table below, Mezzanine harnesses current technologies by turning video conferencing or telepresence into InfoPresence. Where other solutions fall short, Mezzanine provides a comprehensive solution to multi-user data and video collaboration.
The graph below shows how Mezzanine leads its competitors in supporting collaboration. Most data-sharing services limit users to collaborating with one document, file, or screen at a time. Voice/video-focused solutions limit the number of people with whom you can connect and constrain how many users can share data. When compared to other collaboration solutions, no product on the market offers the combination of data efficiency with video and voice effectiveness that Mezzanine provides. Mezzanine breaks through boundaries by supporting upwards of 48 unique contributors, all with multiple devices in a working session across four connected Mezzanine rooms. With Mezzanine, every contributor has the ability to interact with the shared content in the room and contribute to the session from his/her own personal device.

**Table 1: Mezzanine Feature Comparison**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Mezzanine InfoPresence</th>
<th>Video Conference &amp; Telepresence</th>
<th>Traditional Conference Room</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single-user presentation</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-resolution video connection</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-room/remote multi-user access</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-user presentation</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-user data manipulation</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation from portable devices</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital capture of non-digital assets</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamic content control</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: The Mezzanine InfoPresence Advantage
MEZZANINE: BUSINESS BENEFITS

Technology now tops the list of external forces that impact organizations, meaning that beyond all other factors, we can expect technology to be the primary driver of change in the near future.  

Mezzanine offers significant business benefits by:

- Reducing time spent to reach critical decisions and complete complex projects
- Reducing errors, misunderstandings, and communication barriers
- Improving outcomes from critical customer meetings and presentations
- Enhancing cross-functional communication
- Improving the quality of group work outputs
- Reducing travel costs

Meeting Efficiency

One thing we know for sure: meetings aren’t going away. They are integral to how organizations communicate and collaborate internally and externally. Everyone from top executives to junior staff members are meeting and collaborating on a daily basis. Time is a sought-after commodity for employees of all levels in any organization, and time is wasted prior to and at the beginning of a meeting preparing handouts and setting up the A/V system.

With Mezzanine, information is shared instantly and seamlessly within the room, which can reduce the time spent preparing for and participating in meetings by 20% or more. Not only is less time spent in meetings—by using a Mezzanine room, executives and others are able to be more effective with their time. The conventional “one to many” meeting structure that pervades many organizations is replaced with truly collaborative work sessions.

Many Teams, Working Concurrently

Disparate groups and teams within an organization each work on particular tasks that ultimately culminate in the successful production and sale of goods or services. However, difficulties lie in the ability for these disparate groups to understand each other’s tasks and goals, come together in a meaningful way to help explain and understand their particular processes, and determine how those processes factor into the big picture.

Mezzanine provides an entry point that gives users insight into others’ processes, and additionally allows them to work together simultaneously to create successful product launches, close deals, and satisfy internal goals.

Companies across industries, from aerospace engineering to construction to government, stand to benefit greatly by using Mezzanine. With Mezzanine, concurrent work is enhanced by:

- Greater insight into other teams’ activities
- Greater visibility across teams on progress, challenges, and goals
- Strengthened cross-team cohesion and communication
- Increased productivity by sharing applications and working side-by-side
- Reduced decision latencies by sharing and visualizing data in real time

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2 IBM CEO report 2011
Engaging Clients, Increasing Sales

Mezzanine is the solution organizations can use to engage with clients and potential customers in profound ways that have never been seen before. The sales process has historically been a one directional numbers game: the sales representative sells a fixed product to his/her customer without much room for negotiation. This traditional sales and customer relationship, however, is yielding to a new collaborative selling approach where seller and buyer work together to create products and specify services.³

No other conference room solution supports two-way communication with your customer so easily. Mezzanine provides the means for everyone in the work session to seamlessly connect to others and share data, images, web content or documents. By fluidly collaborating, participants can visually demonstrate ideas and thoughts, and are no longer limited to describing static documents and images. Mezzanine provides an environment for all participants to understand each other’s goals, circumstances, and needs. It is easy to draw upon any number of resources—personal devices, the web, or colleagues in other locations—to provide support and answers. All users need to do is turn to Mezzanine and its myriad capabilities to quickly get answers, come to agreements, and close deals.

CONCLUSION

Collaborative environments in the workplace have made significant strides in recent years; there are many options on the market that offer telepresence, the ability to share content, and the option for users to view others’ displays. However, no single solution on the market today provides what Mezzanine does. Its unique suite of offerings creates an environment that reflects and conforms to the way work actually gets done. Mezzanine is the solution that executives seek—it enables faster decision-making, more effective collaboration, and richer communication.

CONTACT US

For additional information or for a demo, please contact our sales team at 213-683-8863 ext. 319 or email us at sales@oblong.com

³ http://www.negotiations.com/articles/collaborative-selling/