Conference rooms / Huddle rooms design tips

If you are putting in place a new small to medium conference room or huddle space, you would be wondering how to best design it to have the most efficient collaboration experience. In this document, you will find some useful hints and tips to take into consideration before or while implementing your project.

When putting in place a new collaboration space, you have 2 concepts that will influence your design choice:

- A collaboration space with a traditional wall-mounted screen, videoconferencing system, whiteboard...
- A collaboration space with a Center of Table (CoT) system that includes all the collaboration elements in one unit (screens, videoconferencing system, whiteboards...)

The Center of Table (CoT) design tips
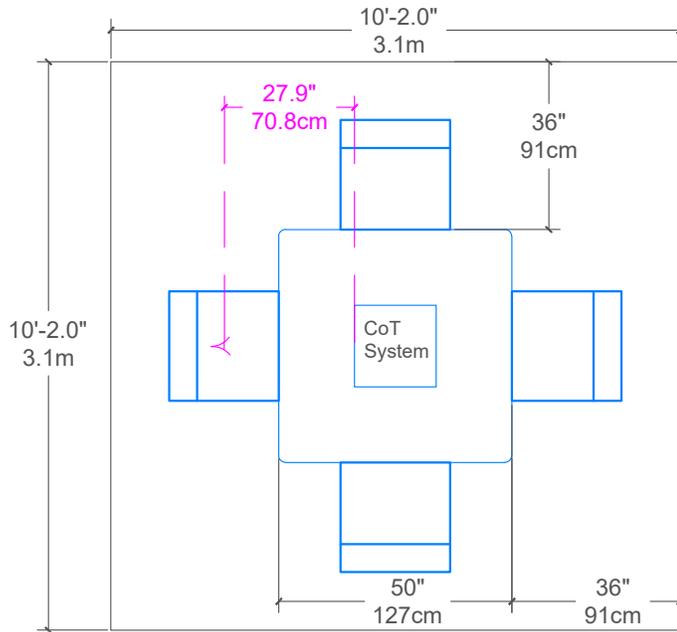
A- Choosing the right table

One of the main elements of your room is the table that you can fit in it. The most common table shapes for a Centre of Table design are: squared, rounded and triangular.

The table shape and dimension you choose, will depend on your available space, the intended potential usage of the room and your taste and style. In a CoT concept, the table usually has a radially symmetrical shape and it is usually recommended to keep a minimum clear space of 35" to 40" (90cm to 100cm) between the table and the room walls. No matter what table shape you choose is, its standard recommended height should be between 29" to 30".
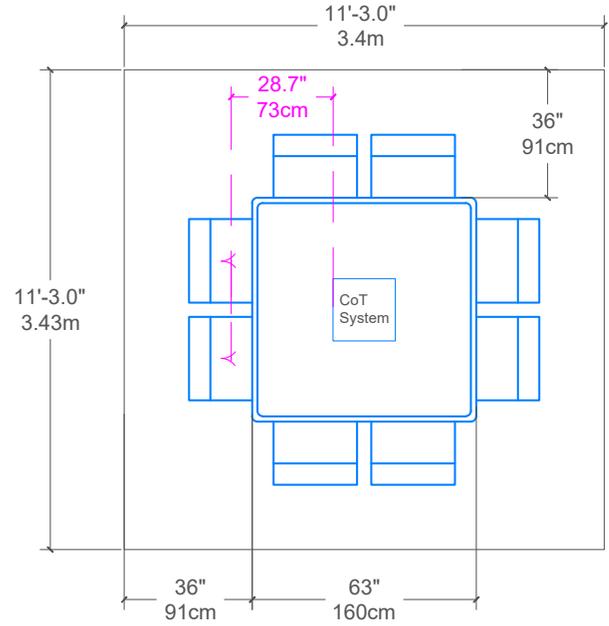
1. The squared table:

Depending on the remaining space you have after keeping the recommended clearance with the walls, you can select a 4 seats table measuring 50" x 50" (127cm x 127cm), or an 8 seats table measuring 63" x 63" (160cm x 160cm). With these recommended table dimensions, each participant will be comfortably seated during meetings.
For a smooth look and feel, it would be preferable to choose a squared table with slightly rounded edges and corners.

A four-sided Center of Table system (with one or two seats on each side) is a perfect fit for square tables. Image-1a and image-1b show the minimum room dimensions needed when using a Center of Table (CoT) system (like the Silex PTE Quattro).

Image-1a:
4 seats table 50" x 50" (127cm x 127cm)

Image-1b:
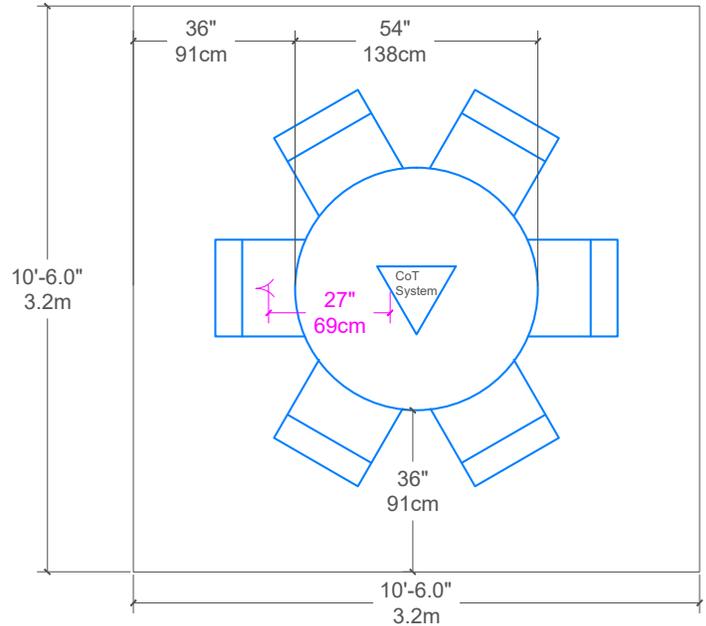*8 seats table 63" x 63" (160cm x 160cm)*

Image-2 below shows a team conducting a meeting around a CoT Silex PTE Quattro.

Image-2: Collaboration around a Silex PTE Quattro

2. the rounded table:

The optimal round table, is one with a 54" (137cm) diameter. It would easily fit 6 persons comfortably seated (after keeping the recommended clearance with the walls). See image-3.

Image-3

A three-sided Center of Table system (with one or two seats on each side) is a perfect fit for up to 6 seats rounded tables. Image-4 below shows a team conducting a meeting around a CoT Silex PTE Trio.

Image-4

3- The triangular table:

The optimal size for a triangular table is 63" (160cm) per side as it can easily fit 6 persons comfortably seated (after keeping the recommended clearance with the walls).
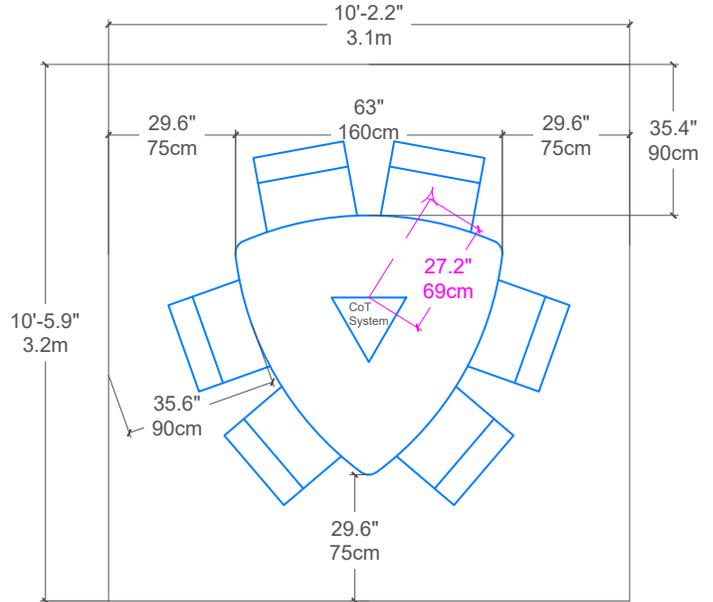

Image-5

A three-sided Center of Table system (with one or two seats on each side) is a perfect fit for up to 6 seats triangular tables. CoT Silex PTE Trio placed in the center of the triangular table would cover each side perfectly.

B- Choosing the right chairs

You should always use adequate meeting chairs for the comfort of the participants. If participants are not seated comfortably, they will quickly lose their focus. The chairs should be height-adjustable, should have a back which is high enough to rest one's back properly and should ideally come with arm rests for a maximum comfort during the meeting.

C- Placing the camera of your videoconferencing system

In a Centre of Table design, the cameras are placed in the center of the table. Ideally there should be a camera facing each person or each two persons, and it should be located at eyes' level. Placing the cameras in the center of the table solves many of the traditional problems we face when placing the camera on top of a wall-mounted screen and the advantages are the following:

• All participants sitting around the system are at a relatively equal distance from the cameras and therefore they all look the same size - you are not in a scenario where the participants sitting at the farther end of the table look too small and those sitting at the nearer side of the table look too big

- The participants are not captured from too high nor from too low, nor from one side (left or right)

D- Choosing the right screen size depending on the viewing distance

Usually, the minimum recommended viewing distance from a Full HD (1080) screen should be equal to 3 times the height of the screen as shown in image-6 below.
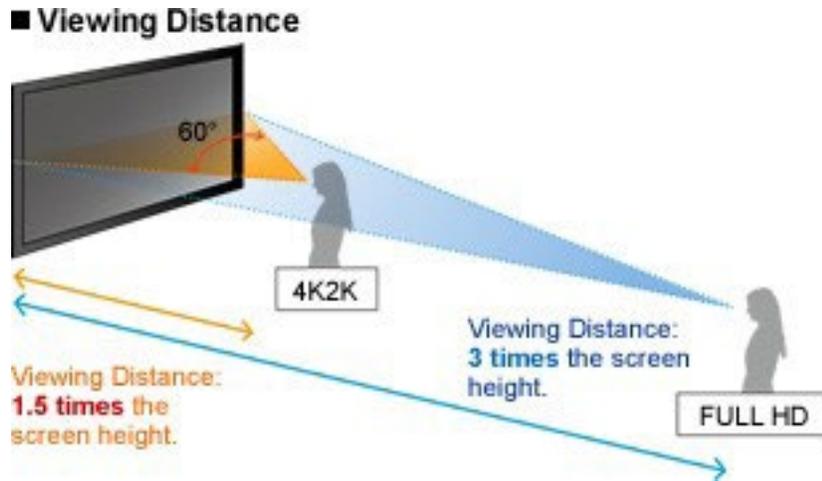

■ **Viewing Distance**

60°

4K2K

Viewing Distance:
3 times the screen
height.

FULL HD

Viewing Distance:
1.5 times the
screen height.

Image-6

This means that, if you are using a 75" FHD screen for example, the height of this screen is 36.7" (93.3cm), so the nearest participants to the screen should be ideally seated at about 110" (280cm) from the screen.

In the case of a center of table system having its screens in the center of the table, we should take the following parameters into consideration:

- Each participant or each two participants should be seated in front of a screen (the system could have 3 screens for up to 6 persons or 4 screens for up to 8 persons)
- The screens should not block the view between the local participants sitting around the table

The optimal screen size for a CoT system that provides the best viewing experience and does not block the view between participants is: 17.5" (this is in fact the maximum screen size used for a laptop). The height of a 17.5" screen being 8.6" (21.8cm), then the optimal viewing distance would be: 25.6" (65cm). Indeed, as per image-1a, 1b and image-3 above, the participants sitting around the system are seated at 26.8" to 28.7" (68cm to 73cm) from the system's screens, from each side, and this is optimal.

Optionally you can have a motorized lift to hide your CoT system in the table when not used (or when use in Audio-only mode).

Benefits of the CoT designs compared to the traditional wall mounted designs:

A- An optimized viewing experience:

As per Thales ratios, a 17.5" screen seen from a 27.6" (70cm) distance approximatively, is equivalent to looking at a 100" screen from around 157.5" (4m) a distance. Practically, this means that people sitting around a Center of Table system enjoy a great viewing experience (just as if they were looking at a 100" screen while seated at only 4m away from it! – see image-7).

In other words, in a traditional wall-mounted screen design, if you choose to install a relatively small screen (55" screen for example - in most of the small to medium meeting spaces the typical screen size used is usually 55") then you cannot match the viewing experience of a CoT system having its screens in the center of the table.
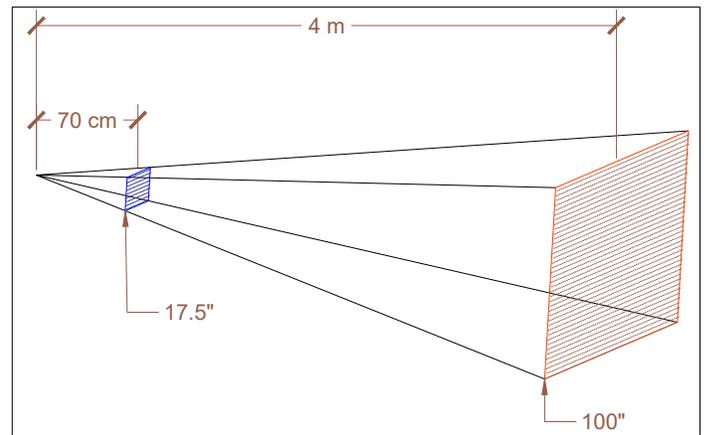

Image-7

B- Space reduction

As per image-8 below, the size of a traditional room using a relatively small screen of 55" would be 176" (447cm) x 135" (343cm) whereas in the case of a center of table design, the size of the room can start at 135" (343cm) x 135" (343cm), as illustrated in image-1a and 1b above. In that case, the traditional wall-mounted concept requires 30% more space than the CoT concept.
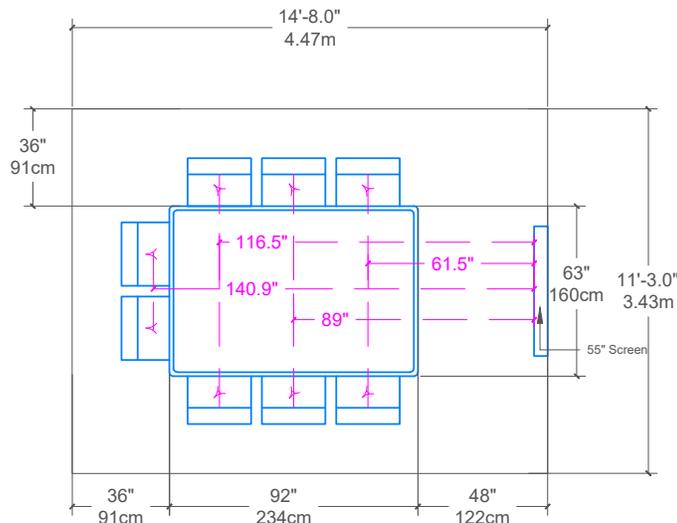

Image-8

If we take the viewing experience into consideration, we would go for a minimum 75" screen size or higher (compared with CoT system, a 75" screen size provides an optimal viewing experience for the first 2 rows in the room, and a less optimized viewing experience for last 2 rows, but can be considered as a good average). If we also take into consideration the minimum recommended viewing distance from the 75" screen (3x the height of the screen) which is 110" (280cm), the traditional room would require 67% more space than the CoT room for the same number of participants. See image-9 below.
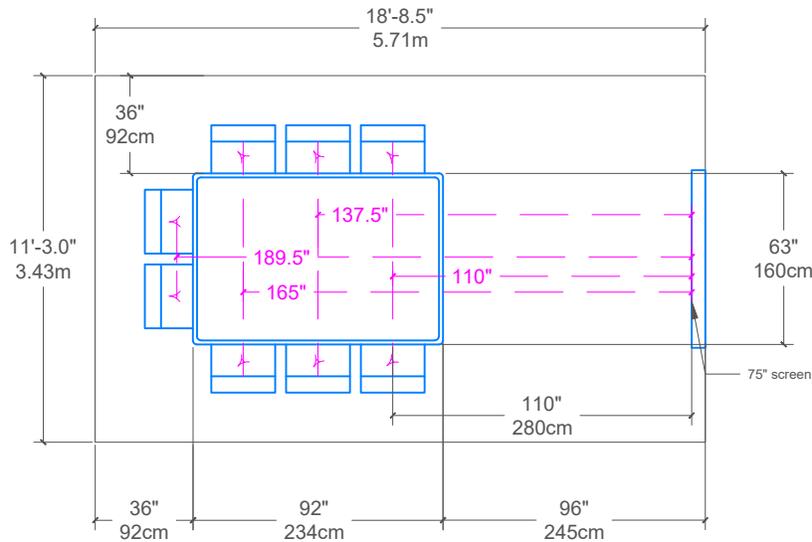

Image-9

C- General benefits of a CoT design

By choosing to implement a CoT concept in your collaboration space, the participants will benefit at different levels. Below is a list of those benefits:

a. A more natural way of collaborating around a table instead of facing a wall
b. Increased intimacy and focus during the meeting
c. Constant eye contact with both local and video participants thanks to the cameras which are located at eye level on each side of the Silex PTE system
d. Local participants don't look small over video
e. Content is displayed in the center of the table (no need to turn your head back and forth to the wall)
f. Your interactive whiteboard is at an arm's length from all sides of the table (no need to leave your seat). The multisided multi-touch screens in the centre of the table make it easy to manipulate from any side
g. Better viewing experience. A 17.5" screen seen at 70cm is equivalent to a 100" screen seen at 4m
h. Better Audio pickup and speaker Coverage from the Center of the Table
i. Minimized neck and back problems (people don't have to twist their neck to look on one side)