

How smart tech can help reimagine homeowners' home offices

Home office as becoming a must-have in today's environment. So, this week, John Clancy digs into the trend, discussing the upgrades and new technology homeowners should invest in for a more seamless at-home working experience



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Since early spring, homeowners have been reimagining their living rooms, dining rooms and bedrooms into spaces for working, learning, exercising and socializing. These spaces — which were once just used for relaxation and quality family time — have become multifunctional, leaving homeowners feeling cramped.

As a result, they're looking for ways to upgrade and transform their homes that go beyond hardwood floors, granite countertops and updated appliances. Real

estate experts have found that the home office space is at the top of homebuyers' wish lists as the new “must-have.”

So, I sat down with John Clancy, vice president at Residential at Crestron Electronics — a global leader in workplace technologies and a premium, professionally installed home automation provider — to dig into the home office trend. We also discussed the movement toward upgrades and technology experiences homeowners should invest in to support working from home at full capacity.

Why are home offices becoming so prominent amidst the pandemic?

[A Sears Home Service survey](#) showed that 44 percent of homeowners have become dissatisfied with their home since the pandemic started, and they're feeling trapped. Families need dedicated workspaces. In fact, 37 percent of dissatisfied homeowners expressed that a home office is critical after being cooped up inside for the better part of the year.

Working from home started out as something temporary, but now it's here to stay — at least for a while. While makeshift offices and Zoom call interruptions from kids and pets were acceptable at first, they are wearing on families and affecting productivity.

[Realtor.com](#) recently analyzed some of the new major housing trends amid the pandemic and found a high consumer demand for “Zoom rooms,” which it defined as “a dedicated room or corner of your home that features an aesthetically pleasing background for your videoconference calls.”

Agents and sellers have started adding home [offices and Zoom rooms](#) to their listings as a part of a home's most prominent features, and “experts predict the

dedicated video room trend is likely to persist for buyers beyond COVID-19.”

According to [451 Research](#), nearly 80 percent of employers say they’ve established or have expanded work-from-home policies this year. As this work-from-home and learn-from-home environment continues, the home office remains ever-important. But space isn’t the only factor — families need a setup and technology that can keep them connected and working efficiently.

What elements of a home office are beneficial to owners?

When families started converting spaces into their temporary home offices, they went right to furniture, decoration and traditional office supplies. But homeowners need to think differently now.

Even the way [we set up a desk](#) has changed. We now try to position it to achieve the best lighting for working and video calls. Homeowners are realizing the technology they started out with might not be working, leading them to seek out new solutions or make additions to their setup.

Similar to the home office, smart home technology has had a transformative year. Many people installed smart devices for security while they were away at the office, but now they need technology to improve their own home office experience.

Crestron has delivered the traditional smart home experiences for decades, and our platform allows homeowners to adjust it to suit their changing needs. For

example, automated lighting and [shading can set the space](#) for video calls, blocking glare and adjusting to light the room as the sun sets.

What kinds of technologies can help turn a room into a home office space?

Crestron home automation systems are found in thousands of homes, but homeowners might not know that the future of work is in our DNA too. We equip many of the offices remote employees used to work in — or are returning to slowly — with automation and unified communications experiences.

As homes and corporate offices merged, families began constructing their home offices, and this prompted us to use our unified communications expertise to deliver professional-grade solutions to homeowners, which we believe is imperative for remote work success.

Homeowners with a new home office space need to prepare for the size of their space. We've learned call quality is so important for remote working, but not everyone has a great laptop speaker system, and a small desk can become quickly burdened with webcams, microphones and speakers.

A single solution like the Crestron Flex MM is a speakerphone built for standalone Zoom and Microsoft Teams meetings, as well as delivering a high-quality audio experience connected via USB to any laptop or desktop computer, running any online conferencing platform. It's small and sleek to fit in any sized home office.

Homeowners can also add automation and the indicator light system to help separate their work and personal time, which has become a challenge for many families. Outside the office space, the indicator light glows red to let the rest of the family know there is a business call active.

This year, we also created the first smart home conferencing experience, Crestron HomeTime, to bring native Zoom Rooms to the living room so families can launch work meetings, school lectures, or family gatherings directly from the remote they use to control their smart home system.

Instead of a small webcam, HomeTime encapsulates the room so everyone is seen and heard from the wide-angle camera, advanced beamforming microphone, and high-performance speaker, ensuring it works in any sized space.

How can real estate agents help homeowners achieve the at-home workspaces they need?

Real estate professionals are always examining how they can best support potential home buyers and fulfill their needs. Recently, many have started educating themselves about smart home technology to help their clients imagine the experiences they can have in a new home.

It's the same with the home office. Knowing the technology tools that can transform a space from work to play and back again will also help realtors guide families towards finding the right space.

As both college and K-12 education systems continue to rely on hybrid education models, families can expect their students to be at home at least some of the time. By considering remote working and learning technologies, they can ensure that every member of the family is comfortably suited to meet their working and learning needs in their designated home spaces.

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