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Constant Technologies, Inc.

4 Essential Steps to Designing a Command Center That Works



Introduction

The unique nature of creating a mission critical command center means that taking the first step is not necessarily a simple task. It's important to design a command center that works exactly how you need it to, combining function and flexibility with up-to-date design aesthetics.

What types of organizations need a command and control center?

There is no single industry that dominates the need for a command center. These important 24/7 spaces can be seen within applications for military and federal agencies as well as local public safety agencies such as sheriff's offices and fire departments. Private industries require command and control as well, whether it's the technology sector, logistics, or corporations such as financial institutions.

If there is data to be monitored, a command and control center is the best place to do it. Credit card companies need to be able to detect fraud for the customers quickly. Tech providers must maintain consistent network uptime. Public safety professionals need to promptly respond to any critical incident in the community. Whatever the application, a command center is the best place to monitor and respond to alerts.

Best practices: steps for designing a command center

Step 1 – Plan thoroughly

One key to designing a command center that works is making sure that you meticulously plan before construction begins. An important part of planning is asking the right questions ahead of time.

Some of these questions to ask before setting up a command center include:

- What are your staffing plans?
 - Will you need to provide staff for 24/7 coverage?
 - How many people will need to be within the operations center at one time?
- What is the key concern of your operations center?
- What sources will you need to display? What equipment needs to be stored?
- How many console desks do you need? How much equipment will each station need to accommodate? Will they be sit-stand or fixed-height?
- Is your command center a standalone hub, or will it need to communicate with other operations centers in different locations?

These are just a few of the questions you should ask as you begin the design process. If you clearly define your mission and goals as well as the details of how you plan to



carry them out, your project is set up for success.

Step 2 – Involve Expert Technology Integration

Command centers often need to incorporate legacy systems while also considering the cutting-edge technology they will need to move forward. Video walls need to be integrated with computer stations and workspaces along with other communication infrastructure. The room design has to incorporate all the technology integration: hardware, software, electrical, space/storage needs, and cable management. An expert AV integrator will consider all these elements and work with your architects, electricians, and other vendors to ensure your command center has all it needs to work 24/7.

How to equip your command and control center

Command centers require a variety of equipment to integrate the technology: video wall screens, processors, control systems, AV racks, etc. It's important to get it right; mission critical environments present challenges that other technology applications simply don't have. The equipment in your command center must be resilient enough to remain operational 24/7. For these high stakes installations to be successful, you need an integrator with specific expertise in the field of mission critical.

Video wall systems in a command center need to be made from the highest quality display technology and designed with redundancy to ensure that systems are always running.

When a technology system is responsible for monitoring important data like public safety information or active threats, the performance demanded is much higher than in any other application. That's why pairing with an expert for integration is so important.

Step 3- Create processes and procedures and train your staff

An integral part of creating your command center is coming up with the right processes and procedures for the daily operations as well as incidents that may occur.

Have an incident response plan ready

Your team should create a detailed action plan for the various types of incidents that may come up. While each critical incident is unique and can't fully be predicted, it helps to have a tried and tested guideline to follow to ensure response moves as smoothly as possible. A basic plan can also be adapted to various scenarios your command center may run into.

Also outline which teams will need to be notified or involved in the case of each potential incident you can possibly expect. Which circumstances will require PR and legal teams? Which ones require extra security personnel in the field? Defining



some of these basic parameters ahead of time ensures your command center works exactly as you need it to in a moment of crisis.

Train your team for command center success

A well-trained team is not only prepared for any incident that arises; it also fosters a sense of pride when a team can truly take ownership of a command center solution. While some of this training should be in-house regarding procedures for incident response, at a basic level your operations center staff should also be well-equipped to use the equipment to its fullest potential.

As part of our integration offerings and control system programming, Constant provides on-site training to key members of your team. Before training begins, the programming department at Constant breaks down the various types of training that will need to be offered. In a typical installation, there is always more than one audience. These audiences include the managers who need to know what the room is capable of, end users who will operate it day to day, those who will use the system only occasionally, and an individual to serve as the on-site point of contact for support and troubleshooting.

The on-site person who will take ownership of the system will be the direct channel to reach Constant should any support issues arise.

Constant trains only a few users — 5 or 6 — at a time to ensure that everyone receives

the attention needed to understand the details of the system. This also allows training over multiple sessions to accommodate different shift schedules or use cases.

Step 4 – Maintain and evolve your command center

Once construction has been completed and all relevant parties have been trained, your command center is ready for use. A command center is not a “set it and forget it” solution — it requires consistent maintenance and review to ensure it’s running as smoothly as possible. Your response models, roles, and number of staff should be reviewed regularly to see if improvements can be made. In mission critical, it’s vital to have an optimized command center, so these installations often change organically as the years go on.

It’s also important to ensure ongoing maintenance of your command center. Although it is optimally designed for consistent use, it’s best to prepare for the unforeseen since running 24/7 may pose some challenges. At Constant, we offer customized service level agreements to meet your needs and budget. Each agreement defines the elements of service covered such as turnaround time and which devices are covered. We also have a Support Operations Center at our headquarters where our service team can track and respond to requests.

After 5-7 years have passed, it’s time to consider swapping out some features to ensure that your command center still



works at the optimal performance. We can help you determine what updates may need to be made based on technology, staffing, and operational goals. Whether it's changes to the audiovisual system, swapping out consoles, or a re-imagining of the space to accommodate growth, Constant can help you with it all.

Designing a command center that works with Constant

Your command center will provide your organization with a number of benefits: streamlined investigative efforts, efficient incident response, and rapid analysis. Constant can help you design a command center that meets all your goals. Our project managers work with you from concept through completion, determining the best solution for the challenges posed by your use case and unique requirements. We walk you through a design process that includes a needs analysis, conceptual layouts, and detailed AV drawings. Once the design details are approved, Constant assists in the installation to ensure that the audiovisual system and console furniture we provide works exactly as designed. Whether you need a video wall system, technology furniture, or both, Constant is ready to help you get started. For a free design and budget consultation, contact us today.

About Constant

Constant Technologies, Inc. is a premier mission critical systems integrator providing customized audiovisual integration of large scale operations center video walls and control center console furniture worldwide. With over three decades of experience, Constant's team has the knowledge and clearance to work with sensitive environments in both the public and private sectors and has implemented turnkey solutions all over the world. Constant designs, installs and services projects of all scopes and sizes to create solutions with the highest levels of security, aesthetics and functionality in mind. Some of Constant's installations include: EOC builds, Network Operations Center design, Fusion Centers, Security Operations Centers, Control Room Design, Social Media Command Centers, and other command and control environments.

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