



ELECTRO-MEDIA DESIGN LTD.

www.electro-media.com **2014 sales:** \$1.3 million **Headquarters:** Gaithersburg, Md.

Employees: Nine **Specialty:** Audiovisual and acoustical consulting and design



Hospitality Tech-Experts

Electro-Media Design's service has earned it loyal clients that include Marriott and Four Seasons. **BY ALAN DORICH**



Photo courtesy of Marriott Hotels

Electro-Media designed A/V presentation systems and acoustics for the Dallas Renaissance Ballroom.

When hotels need to develop a great, cost-effective design right the first time for their audiovisual event and entertainment spaces, they turn to Electro-Media Design Ltd. instead of mere consultants. "I would characterize us more as hoteliers who are expressing our expertise through innovative designs for hotel event and entertainment venues," Principal Jeff Loether says. "We know how these hotel spaces work, rather than just being technologists who happen to serve the hotel industry."

Based in Gaithersburg, Md., Electro-Media Design provides audiovisual and acoustical consulting and design services for multiple markets, including hotels, healthcare facilities, corporate offices, theaters and auditoriums, and training and meeting rooms. It also supports its clients using the systems through its Operations Management consulting services. Loether founded the company in 1990 as a true independent consulting firm, with no equipment or systems sales.

Previously, Loether worked in electronics as a consultant before coming to Marriott International Inc.'s architecture and engineering group in 1980. Over the next decade, Loether designed and project-managed 170 hotel openings worldwide.

"My job was to make sure the audiovisual systems and acoustics were excellent," he recalls, noting he also created a brand standards document



Jeff Loether

Principal

"We are always our client's advocate."

that Marriott continues to update today. “[Those] are amongst the most comprehensive brand standards of any hotel company.”

Although he left Marriott to form Electro-Media Design in 1990, Loether still supports the hotelier today, along with Fairmont Hotels and Resorts, Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, Loews Hotels, ITC Hotels (India), and the International Association of Conference Centres (IACC), having authored its “Design for Great Technology” standards and best practices book. “We’ve written master design standards and brand standards for many hotel development and management companies,” he says. “I don’t think there is any other consulting firm with that experience.”

Some clients also use Electro-Media Design to audit and negotiate service contracts with outside AV Services vendors, which results in the company managing the RFP process. “We write master contracts that establish win-win working relationships between the hotel facilities, AV service vendors and ultimately the guest,” he says.

Hotel companies and asset managers also hire Electro-Media Design to peer-review designs, Loether says. “We’ve seen design packages from all the other consultants,” he says, noting that the company avoids conflicts of interest. “We are always our client’s advocate.”

These reviews are especially effective with acoustics and noise control. “We practice preventative acoustical design, catching and resolving problems before they get built into the project. It is always far better (and less costly) to prevent noise problems than to try to solve them later.”

Today, “About 70 percent of our work is lodging and hospitality,” Loether says, noting that the company’s work often takes it overseas. “Forty percent

Photo courtesy of Hirsch Bealmer Associates



Electro-Media developed a “ballroom of the future” concept for the J.W. Marriott Esentai Tower in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

of our activity is for international clients and projects.

“We won’t be the cheapest, but we easily save many times our fees in cost-effective designs and improved revenues.”

BRINGING EXPERTISE

With Loether’s experience, Electro-Media knows more about its hotel clients’ operations “than most of the other design consultants that come to the table,” he says. It brought its experience to the new ballroom of the Dallas Renaissance Hotel, a Marriott property.

The design of the ceiling is a hybrid, Loether says. “It provides a clean plane for the eye to see,” he explains. “We coordinate all the infrastructure and systems that are necessary to accommodate both in-house and outside audiovisual production services, so that all of the system elements that would normally penetrate a ceiling surface are hidden in the shadows.

“That concept is one that we’ve been working on and perfecting over the years,” he says, noting that Electro-Media Design implemented similar designs for the St. Regis Hotel on Saadiyat Island, U.A.E., and for a JW Marriott hotel in Kazakhstan.

Electro-Media looked at many factors during the design of the ballroom, including the “show flow,” which consists of the “flow and journey of guests who are arriving into the space, as well as the production activity through the back of the house,” Loether says. “We look at everything from both sides, so we’re not only designing audiovisual systems anymore, but we’re also contributing to the overall function of the [hotel’s] architectural and interior design and infrastructure.”

ON CLOUD 9

Loether is proud of Cloud 9, a dynamic, interactive, immersive, “virtually-themed” food and beverage



Getting the Wow Factor

When Electro-Media Design Ltd. starts an event or entertainment technology project for its clients, it prefers to work with quality spaces, owner Jeff Loether says. "We always tell our clients, "You don't really want to use technology to fix a bad room," he describes.

Instead, "Let's start with a good room," he continues. "Then, when you put the technology in, you'll get the wow factor."

If Electro-Media started with a "bad room," its work could be undermined in the end, Loether explains. For instance, "If you get a room that's too noisy ... [with] sounds from the service corridor, all this noise is distracting to the guests," he says. "Their experience is dramatically diminished."

concept that Electro-Media Design developed as "I-Place" for the ITC Grand Chola Hotel in Chennai, India. Thanks to the venue's integrated displays, its theme can change daily.

If the venue's owners want a sports night, "You could be showing football or soccer on any of these displays," Loether says. "Then, press an icon on a touch panel, and the venue changes to

a fashion show, or automotive theme, or dance club.

"The visual displays, sound, lights, everything responds and changes," he continues. "It is an immersive 4-D multi-sensory stage on which you can show any theme desired."

Additionally, if the hotel wants to have a Twitter night where all the displays show feeds from guests' devices that is possi-

ble, as well. "It creates so many opportunities for flexibility in the future," he says.

LOOKING TO GROW

This summer, Electro-Media Design will celebrate its 25th anniversary. The company also is growing organically but at a slow rate. "We take one new client at a time," Loether says, adding the company aims to improve its clients' return on investment in technology. "We are doing more in the operations and support sides to help our clients operate and optimize the venues that we design."

ELECTRO-MEDIA DESIGN, LTD. (EMD) designed the hybrid ceiling and acoustics for the new ballroom at the Dallas Renaissance Hotel. EMD serves clients worldwide and specializes in hotel meeting and entertainment environments, providing independent, innovative design and consulting services in audiovisual, acoustics and technology systems. EMD is committed to Better Meetings and Better Bottom Lines. For more information, call (301) 355-5050, e-mail mail@electro-media.com or visit www.electro-media.com.

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- Independent Advocates; No Equipment Sales
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- Event, Entertainment, and Presentation Technologies
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- Acoustics, Noise and Vibration Control
- Operations Support for In-house and Outsourced Services
- Brand Standards, Operating Procedures, Innovative Product Development
- 25 Years and Over 800 Hotel Projects Globally

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