

CREATING THE ULTIMATE EXPERIENCE CENTER



How Habitech Transforms Technology Demonstrations with RTI Control



The Challenge

Habitech, the U.K.'s premier distributor to the custom installation channel, faced a common industry challenge: how to effectively demonstrate sophisticated home technology in a way that resonates with end clients. Traditional demo spaces - sterile rooms filled with racks and monitors - failed to help clients visualize how technology would integrate into their own homes.

"We found that people, especially end clients, find it difficult to visualize the room in their own home if they don't like how they feel in the demo space or don't like the look of it," explains Sophie Graham, Marketing and Communications Manager at Habitech. "End clients coming into our showroom more often can't see past that because it's not their primary interest. They're looking for a beautiful room in their home - the full experience."

The Solution

Located in Basingstoke, about an hour west of Heathrow Airport, Habitech embarked on a comprehensive transformation of their facility into a world-class Experience Center. The project began six years ago with the conversion of their training room into the M&K Sound Theatre, working with design partner CinemaTech to create spaces that clients would actually want in their own homes.

The transformation philosophy was simple but powerful: create environments that weren't just technology

demonstrations, but lifestyle inspirations. Each room was designed with authentic interior design elements that clients could immediately connect with and envision in their own spaces.

Key Design Elements

Multiple Theatre Environments

The facility features several distinct spaces, each targeting different client needs and budgets:

- M&K Sound Theatre: A fully redesigned space that transitioned from a sterile training room to an inviting, residential-style cinema.



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- **Wisdom Theatre:** A large-format theatre with art deco design elements, featuring wall lights that cast diamond shapes complementing the Habitech logo.
- **Wisdom Experience Room:** A living room-style space showcasing various audio configurations from soundbars to reference-grade freestanding speakers.
- **Sonance Experience Room:** An immersive audio journey that takes clients from basic smart speakers to full surround sound systems.
- **Invisible Speaker Room:** A sanctuary demonstrating how technology can completely disappear into high-end interior design.



Budget-Conscious Range

The Experience Center caters to projects ranging from £5,000 entry-level media rooms to £350,000 premium installations, ensuring every client finds relevant inspiration.

RTI Integration: The Magic Behind the Experience

RTI control systems serve as the technological backbone enabling Habitech's "magic show" - seamless demonstrations that work flawlessly every time. The integration allows for unprecedented flexibility in showcasing different technology combinations.

Technical Capabilities

Custom Interface Design

Each room features bespoke RTI interfaces created by in-house graphic designer Nancy Tseng. The interfaces mirror each room's design aesthetic, creating visual continuity between the physical space and digital control.

Precision Audio Control

The RTI system provides granular control over individual speakers throughout the facility. Custom pages allow operators to select any combination of speakers, creating

targeted demonstrations that highlight specific audio configurations.

Synchronized Lighting Integration

One of the most impressive features is the integration between RTI control and lighting systems. As different speakers activate during demonstrations, corresponding lighting draws attention to the active components, creating a choreographed experience that would be impossible with other control platforms.

Preset Management

The system stores multiple presets for different equipment combinations, allowing instant recall of specific configurations. A single button press can switch between comparing a Sonos system at £4,000 and an M&K system at £5,000, making A/B demonstrations effortless.

Operational Benefits

"From the minute you press 'start' on our iPad in the RTI control app, everything just works, and it works flawlessly every single time," Graham notes. "There's no way we could have done what that show does in other systems. The ability to create custom pages where we can see every single speaker in the space and choose whatever we want to come on - that doesn't exist in most control systems."

The Client Experience Journey

Habitech has refined their client experience into a carefully orchestrated journey that maximizes engagement and conversion. The sales team pre-qualifies visitors to tailor demonstrations appropriately. Clients with comprehensive



renovation budgets experience the full facility tour, while those with specific needs receive focused demonstrations.

Most experiences begin with the Sonance demonstration - a progression from single smart speakers to immersive surround sound. This foundational experience helps clients understand why distributed audio matters in modern homes. Following the audio demonstration, clients explore aesthetic options through dedicated displays featuring various speaker finishes, Lutron keypad options, fabric samples, and metal

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finishes. This section addresses the critical question: “How do you want it to look in your space?”

Dedicated Lutron displays allow clients to experience different keypad options, finishes, and engraving choices, supported by comprehensive material samples. Clients tour spaces ranging from naturally-lit living rooms that transform into theatres to completely invisible technology installations, ensuring they find design inspiration that matches their lifestyle and aesthetic preferences.

Results and Impact

The Experience Center transformation has delivered measurable results for Habitech and their dealer network:

- Daily end-user visits to the showroom demonstrate consistent client interest.
- Clients frequently request exact replications of demonstrated rooms.
- High conversion rates from initial visits to project commitments.



- Habitech dealers increasingly bring their clients to the Experience Center, using it as a powerful sales tool that showcases possibilities beyond what individual dealers can demonstrate in their own facilities.
- The facility recently won “Best Experience Center” at the CEDIA Awards, validating the approach and design philosophy.

Lessons for the Industry

The Habitech Experience Center demonstrates several principles that other integrators and manufacturers can apply:

1. **Experience Over Technology:** Clients buy experiences, not equipment. Demonstration spaces must inspire emotional connections, not just showcase technical capabilities.
2. **Aesthetic Integration:** High-end clients prioritize design integration. Technology demonstrations must address aesthetic concerns as thoroughly as performance capabilities.
3. **Flexible Control Systems:** Sophisticated demonstrations require equally sophisticated control platforms. RTI's customization capabilities enable experiences that wouldn't be possible with simpler systems.
4. **Budget Inclusivity:** Effective experience centers serve multiple market segments, from entry-level to luxury installations.
5. **Professional Presentation:** Consistent, flawless demonstrations build confidence in both the technology and the professionals presenting it.

Conclusion

The Habitech Experience Center represents the evolution of technology demonstration from simple product showcases to comprehensive lifestyle experiences. By combining thoughtful interior design with sophisticated RTI control integration, they've created a facility that not only demonstrates what's possible but inspires clients to envision those possibilities in their own homes. The success of this approach - validated by industry awards and measurable business results - provides a blueprint for other organizations looking to elevate their client engagement and technology demonstration capabilities. As Graham notes, “We want people to come away feeling like they've got inspiration for the design of the space as well as the audio, video, lighting, and control they want in it.”

In an industry where experience truly is everything, the Habitech Experience Center stands as a testament to the power of combining cutting-edge technology with thoughtful design and flawless execution.



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