

HARRY JOSEPH AND ASSOCIATES, INC.
Box 20993
NEW YORK CITY 10025
v212-244-5900
harry@hja.com

Hushbutton Solves Age-Old Conference Table Problem

Users can now control their own microphones
Privacy ensured
Uncertainty banished
Happiness reigns

'Is this mic on?'

'Can I turn it off myself?'

'How do I know if it's on or off?'

And (at the conference far end), 'Hear that? Now we've got 'em!'

A microphone looks the same whether it's on or off, a worrisome thing to users around a corporate conference table, who need to be absolutely sure their side comments aren't heard by the other end of an audio- or videoconference.

And a user wanting to mute his/her mic for whatever reason—a side consultation, a cellphone call, a sneeze—has until now been out of luck.

Harry Joseph and Associates ride to the rescue with Hushbutton, a handsome lighted switch that fits around a table microphone, leaving no doubt as to the state of the mic.

Hushbutton is a translucent plastic assembly containing four microswitches and a multitude (16 each) of red and green LED's. It can be programmed to do darn near anything, since it sends a simple contact closure when clicked, and lights up red, green or orange in response to commands from a control system, so it can indicate darn near anything, too.

Most audio-visual system integrators will stick with its primary purpose, providing user control of each microphone, impossible until now.

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A typical arrangement is for Hushbutton to light green when the mic is live during a conference and red when muted, with 'white' (actually unlit) the default condition when there is no conference.

Users can easily understand (for instance) that one click mutes their own mic and two clicks mute all mics. To escape the muted state, one click can unmute just that mic and two clicks all the mics.

Or vice versa, since the actual procedure will depend on how the control system is programmed, limited only by the imagination and skills of the system programmer, and the connections to the system—five clicks to summon sushi, if that's the plan.

Though each Hushbutton is made to wrap around a microphone, Hushbutton itself is not an audio device. Rather, it's a control/display device, sending contact closures to a control system, and lighting to show a color as commanded by the control system. It's a lighted switch with a mission.

Therefore, Hushbutton will work with any standard cylindrical table microphone with a body 0.79" (20mm) in diameter. This includes mics by Audio-Technica, beyerdynamic, Clock Audio, Crown and others.

WHAT DOES THE USER SEE?

The translucent white plastic ring has three or four visual states, off, red, green and orange (see photos for off, red and green).

Hushbutton's control output has two states, normally-off and momentary-on. Pressing anywhere on the ring produces a satisfying tactile click caused by the operation of one or more of the four micro-switches; with properly-set system gain structure the click is below the overall noise-floor so can't be heard.

INSTALLATION

Hushbutton requires a 15/16" hole, a bit larger than the 13/16" hole normally required by table microphones, permitting passage of Hushbutton's ribbon cable through the tabletop next to the mic.

Under the table, standard RJ-12 cable (furnished by the integrator) connects each Hushbutton to its custom interface board, one board per eight Hushbuttons. Each interface board accepts a plug-in board (also furnished by the integrator), which varies depending on the control system in use--for AMX systems the plug-in is an AMX AXP-CPI-16; for Crestron it's a Crestron CNPI-16B. The system-specific plug-in then connects and communicates normally with its system controller.

The Hushbutton interface board mounts to the underside of the table with a furnished piece of SnapTrack.

-3-

WHAT ABOUT ORANGE?

A surprisingly good orange color can be achieved by lighting red and green LED's at once. And a recent revision to the Hushbutton ring itself eliminates the need to derate each interface from eight to four rings.

NOT FOR AMATEURS

Hushbutton is far from a stand-alone device. It requires the installation skills of an AV integrator and the software know-how of a skilled programmer. Thus, it is sold only to integrators, never to end-users. Inquiries from end-users are referred to the customer's existing vendor or nearby integrators.

For more information contact Harry Joseph, 212-244-5900, harry@hja.com.

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EDITORS:

This release is available on our website, www.hja.com/words, along with high-resolution (about 300k each file) uncropped 4:3 aspect-ratio JPEG versions of the red, green and white photos on the postcard. Just drag each image onto your desktop.

If you wish to take your own photos we can deliver a demonstration unit for that purpose.