

Hitachi's interactive technologies make Aberdeen College the high-tech hub of the city centre



A Vision for the Future

Aberdeen College, Scotland's largest College of Further and Higher education, is equipping its students with the essential presentation and technology skills required in today's competitive global business environment. A walk through the corridors will reveal lecture rooms hooked up to Hitachi's very latest interactive presentation technology. A combination of interactive whiteboards, projectors and EM (electromagnetic) Panels are a feature of 35 rooms, ingeniously connected to provide lecturers with a powerful teaching system that engages students and promotes collaborative learning.

Identifying a Communications Need

Scott Matthew, Multimedia Centre Manager at Aberdeen College, wanted to provide students and lecturers with the best presentation technology that suited the College's requirements and identified a need for an updated communications system. "For some time now technology has been a part of everyday life at the college, enabling students and lecturers to prepare materials and interact with it in the classroom. Our lecture and presentation suite had evolved over the course of several years and, as result, included a mix of technologies which was somewhat uncoordinated and not performing as well as we required." The college decided to review its system and implement a coordinated interactive suite that would improve teaching methods.



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Support and Training - Familiarity is the key

In addition to suitability of the technology, ease of use, installation procedure and the support and training offered by each provider was considered, as well as suitability to the classroom environment, robustness and the quality and usability of the software supplied with the equipment. The College decided to opt for interactive whiteboards that could be used as traditional dry-erase boards or connected to a PC and projector, and used as a highly sophisticated interactive presentation device. After assessing a number of providers, Aberdeen College selected Hitachi's Cambridge Boards and EM Panels as they superseded all criteria specified and were met with unified praise from the College Principal and lecturers.

Medium UK and Edinburgh-based Scotia UK plc were selected as the distributor-reseller partnership to implement the technology and train staff due to their impressive client care records, expertise in the AV sector and history of successful installations in the education sector.

Furnishing each of the classrooms with the same technology was key, as support costs were kept down. "Teaching staff at any college have enormous workloads and need to keep focused on the delivery of high quality lessons", explains Matthew. "It is important that technology doesn't turn into a barrier for them. Hitachi's whiteboards and software are intelligent and easy to use, providing an immediate benefit to lecturers rather than acting as another system that needed to be learnt. Installation was also extremely quick and the day to

day running of the College was not affected thanks to the professional approach of Medium and Scotia."

Lecturers can move freely around the College lecture rooms, plug their laptops into the network, and start teaching immediately. All computer applications used are displayed on the board and any notes made during the lesson can be saved into the lecturers 'favourites' folder. Work can then be shared and emailed to the College website, allowing students instant access to valuable teaching resources.

Benefits

Reducing staff workloads and equipping students with life skills

By linking the lightweight EM Panels to the PCs and whiteboards, lecturers can also conduct lessons without turning their backs on the group - a significant benefit to teaching when trying to engage a group of students in a particular subject. While the lecturer is explaining a point to the class, they can annotate on their EM Panels and it will appear on the interactive screen. Students are then able to add their own annotations on the board, while the lecturer has total control over the lesson "By finding a communications solution that met our specific requirements, we have been able to effectively implement a truly interactive and engaging presentation system and, in turn, equip our students and staff with valuable workforce skills while reducing workloads and improving accessibility to lecture notes and revision aids. Exclaims Matthew. "Our staff have quickly become comfortable with the new system thanks to the training given by Medium. The software is easy to understand and use, and students have also been interacting in a way that was not possible before."

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