SMART™

Microsoft Technology Centre
Achieving productivity using SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards

Staff use a SMART Board interactive whiteboard at the Microsoft Technology Centre (MTC) in Reading.

"Using the new solution from SMART Technologies, we have improved the effectiveness and efficiency of our meetings and write-ups. Because of this, we are now able to fit in additional meetings at the MTC. This has helped our sales teams to meet more customers and thereby increase our sales pipeline."

Martyn Davis, Manager MTC

Challenge – To improve the productivity of meetings

Solution – SMART Board interactive whiteboards, SMART Meeting Pro™ Premium software, SMART Bridgit™ conferencing software, ultra-short-throw projectors and multimedia speakers

Benefits – More effective customer meetings, improved utilisation of the Microsoft Technology Centre, and greater collaboration and knowledge sharing with customers

The Microsoft Technology Centre in Reading, Berkshire, hosts hundreds of customers per year – from start-up companies to FTSE 100 companies – to help them understand and improve their business processes.

Depending on the complexity of the problem, the customer meeting could last up to three days with Microsoft's Developer and Platform Evangelist (DPE) team often discussing products that have not been officially released yet. With up to six people involved in these meetings, gathering the information exchanged has often involved using cameras to capture drawings and notes written on the dry-erase boards in the meeting room. In the past, writing up all of the information from the meeting would frequently take up a day or more in time. This also meant that the meeting room itself could not be used during this time, as all the information was still on the dry-erase boards.

Improving meeting efficiency
Microsoft® wanted to improve the productivity and effectiveness of these meetings and decided to install a new meeting room solution from SMART Technologies to achieve these aims. They installed a meeting room system that combines SMART Board interactive whiteboards, SMART Meeting Pro Premium software, SMART Bridgit conferencing software, ultra-short-throw projectors and multimedia speakers.

SMART Board interactive whiteboards combine the simplicity of a whiteboard with the power of a computer. With SMART Meeting Pro Premium software, users can write notes in digital ink over any document, application or website on the interactive whiteboard and save them as a PDF or PPT file. Marked-up pages, revised documents, diagrams, notes and comments can all be captured easily and e-mailed directly to meeting participants. You can also write and save notes directly into applications such as Microsoft Word, Excel® or PowerPoint®, Adobe® Acrobat® and AutoCAD®.

Expanding the sales pipeline
The productivity gains from using the interactive whiteboards are significant. SMART's meeting room solution is enabling Microsoft to work more efficiently. Martyn Davis, Manager MTC Reading at Microsoft, explains, "Before we installed the meeting room solution, we used to spend one full day writing up the notes of a meeting. Now we can accurately record all of the meeting notes automatically on the interactive whiteboard – including all the annotations and notes made during the meeting – which wasn't possible using dry-erase boards. The information is then saved onto a USB stick and given to the customer immediately after the meeting has finished."

Another benefit of the new meeting room solution is that it has greatly improved the utilisation of the MTC. Martyn continues, "Using the new solution from SMART Technologies, we have improved the effectiveness and efficiency of our meetings and write-ups. Because of this we are now able to fit in additional meetings at the MTC. This has helped our sales teams to meet more customers and thereby increase our sales pipeline."

Now when a meeting has finished and the digital notes have been captured, the interactive whiteboard is cleared of all information and applications are closed down, ensuring that confidential information is not left in view. The room is then ready for the next session.

Enriching the customer experience
The new meeting room solution from SMART Technologies has enriched the way in which Microsoft and its customers work together. Previously, the meeting rooms had dry-erase boards, which limited the number of concepts to be introduced and worked on at a time. This also acted as a barrier between the Microsoft architect and the customer.

To overcome this problem, two of the meeting rooms have been equipped with two interactive whiteboards each, creating a multiboarding environment to cater to more complex discussions. Using this configuration, both the customer and a member of the Microsoft team can work on the same diagram while on different interactive whiteboards. They can each describe exactly what they require by writing notes over it, bringing in new notes from other sources or launching web applications.

Customers have told Microsoft that they feel more actively involved in the meeting and that the interactive whiteboards help to break down any barriers to exploring new ideas. David Brown, Architectural Evangelist at Microsoft, comments, "The meeting room solution has encouraged a richer collaboration and knowledge-sharing environment with our customers. It has definitely helped us to have a more in-depth understanding of our customer needs."

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