



Computacenter saves time and money with SMART's interactive corporate solution

Computacenter is an elite trading partner of Steljes Limited, the recognized distributor for SMART Technologies in the United Kingdom and Ireland. A leading European provider of IT infrastructure services, Computacenter supplies audiovisual hardware, software and interactive technologies to a wide range of customers in the corporate, government and education sectors. Their products include large-format displays, videoconferencing products and SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards. The company reports revenues of more than £2.2 billion (approximately US\$4.4 billion) and employs more than 9,000 people. With offices across Europe and partners around the world, Computacenter uses SMART's interactive corporate solution to communicate effectively with a distributed workforce.

The challenge

Chris Hanson, internal sales director at Computacenter, manages eight branches across the United Kingdom and leads a team of 190 people. In the past, the size of Hanson's team and the distance between branches made face-to-face, department-wide meetings difficult to coordinate. Hanson and his employees found themselves spending more time traveling to meetings than working with clients. They were concerned not only about increasing travel expenses, but also about the carbon footprint produced from flying multiple people to various locations.

An IT specialist, Hanson saw the benefits of interactive technology in education. He thought the same technology could be used in the corporate environment. "Every child knows how to use an interactive whiteboard, but adults just don't," says Hanson. "I wanted to see how easy it would be to introduce the SMART Board interactive whiteboard into a business, instead of a school."

Hanson initiated a pilot project with Steljes to see if interactive technology could help solve the common problems associated with running a business across multiple locations.

Case Study

"I have the utmost confidence in the SMART Board and Bridgit solution," says Hanson. "I know it works when I need it to. I can set up meetings without worrying that the technology will let me down."

Chris Hanson, internal sales director at Computacenter

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The corporate solution

The project began in May 2007, using three SMART Board interactive whiteboard systems and SMART's Bridgit™ conferencing software. Two interactive whiteboards were placed at Computacenter's head office in Hatfield – one in Hanson's office, the other in the Customer Relationship Management room. The third was installed at Computacenter's London office.

Since then, the use of SMART products has revolutionized Hanson's ability to chair meetings and interact with his staff both internally and across the United Kingdom. On average, eight people attend each meeting from as many as seven different locations. With SMART's interactive technology, everyone can be connected while travel time, expenses and greenhouse gas emissions are reduced.

SMART's easy-to-use, touch-sensitive interactive whiteboards connect to a computer and a projector through a USB cable. Simply by touching the board, team members can access and control any computer application or multimedia source, including the Internet, CDs and DVDs. They can write over any application in digital ink, edit and save their notes and then e-mail them to a colleague.

The combination of SMART Board interactive whiteboards and Bridgit conferencing software makes it easy for everyone to connect to a conference, even through common firewalls. "It takes less than 20 seconds to create and start a conference with Bridgit software," says Hanson. Employees use the software to connect to meetings in other locations, reducing travel times and costs. They are also able to share desktops so that issues that once took hours to resolve now only take minutes.

"I have the utmost confidence in the SMART Board and Bridgit solution," says Hanson. "I know it works when I need it to. I can set up meetings without worrying that the technology will let me down. While we still use videoconferencing, it is primarily used for introductory meetings. People just seem more intimidated by video, so I use the SMART Board whenever we need to get something done. We have also rolled out a VPN system, enabling our mobile workforce to dial in from home to meetings and participate in discussions," he adds.

Return on investment

During Hanson's first year at Computacenter, he calculated that he spent 17 working weeks and about 40,000 miles (64,374 km) traveling. "I was determined not to spend my life traveling," he says. "Since the start of the pilot project, my average annual mileage has dropped to just 6,000 miles [9,656 km]."

Not only is Hanson traveling 36,000 miles (57,936 km) less, but he has also reduced his travel time to two-and-a-half weeks per year. "After the introduction of the SMART Board, my expenses dropped tenfold. You can imagine what the figures would look like if all employees used the solution."

Looking forward

Across the company, Hanson's new approach to interactive meetings has spread. The benefits have cascaded into other parts of the business, with every department using SMART Board interactive whiteboards for a variety of purposes. In fact, visiting Computacenter customers who have seen the SMART Board interactive whiteboard in use have gone on to purchase the technology.

Computacenter has recognized the benefits interactive technology can bring to an organization with a mobile workforce. Because of the pilot project's popularity, Hanson will need to formalize the program soon. He is convinced that company-wide adoption will deliver sweeping changes in productivity and a substantial decrease in travel time and costs.



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**Chris Hanson, internal sales director
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About SMART

SMART Technologies supplies ICT products that are suitable for interactive display applications and facilitate a more interactive, collaborative environment. Using SMART products, groups can access and share the information they need to meet, teach, train and present. SMART has been issued and maintains a broad portfolio of patents with numerous U.S., Canadian and other patents pending. SMART customers include NASA, Texas Instruments, BMW, Toyota Motors, DaimlerChrysler, Boeing, Lucent Technologies, NTT, the Los Angeles Lakers, Novartis, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Accenture, Procter & Gamble, British Telecom, Disney Imagineering and Harvard University.

SMART is a private company founded in 1987. Employing more than 1,000 people, SMART is headquartered in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, with assembly facilities in Kanata, Ontario and offices in Bonn, Paris, Tokyo, Shanghai, New York City, Chicago and Washington, DC. In 1992, SMART formed a strategic alliance with Intel® Corporation that resulted in Intel's equity ownership in the company. SMART products are sold through dealers across North America and distributors worldwide. For more information, visit www.smarttech.com.

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