



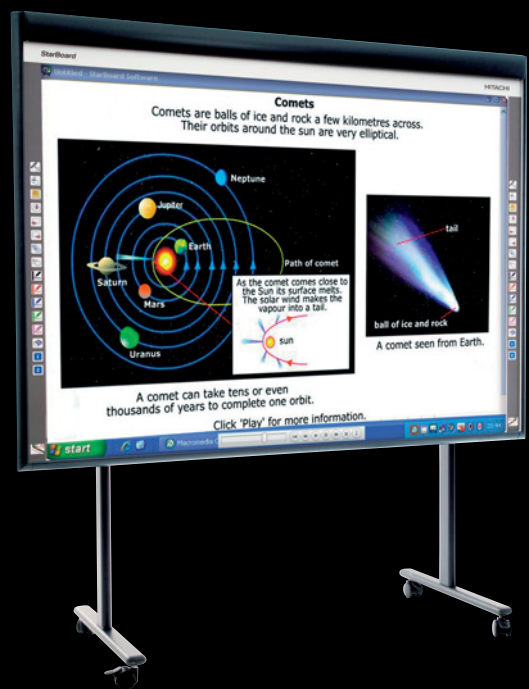
Projector and board combination made Hitachi the short favourite

New College lecturers happy for FX Duo to come between them and their work.

When New College, Stamford decided to upgrade its interactive whiteboards, it soon realised that existing suppliers had been missing a vital trick.

New College, Stamford is a further-education college providing full-time and part-time academic and vocational courses for 2500 14-19 year olds and 1500 adult learners. With a dynamic new Principal, Miles Dibsdall, the Lincolnshire college has broadened its curriculum to meet the needs of the community, and local and national priorities.

In a varied offering, students can now tackle everything from music, dance and drama to nursing, medicine and dentistry. There are further plans afoot to address identified skills gaps, in such areas as retail/distribution services, health and social care, construction, hairdressing, and travel and tourism.



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In its last visit, Ofsted rated the college very highly, with 'very clear vision and dynamic leadership', 'outstanding additional learning support' and 'extremely thorough monitoring of learners' progress'. Governance and financial management also won high praise.

These are exciting times at Stamford, with a multi-million-pound redevelopment under way to create sports academies, motor-vehicle workshops, and TV and radio broadcasting centres.

Facilities were already good, but IT Services Director Lance Eames felt his interactive whiteboards could have been better. His lecturers were using boards from two popular manufacturers. But, despite being household names, neither brand included the benefit of short-throw projectors. With the Stamford lecturers using the boards heavily as distance projectors, Lance felt they were missing a trick.

"With our existing boards, lecturers couldn't stand in front of them to make detailed points," says Lance. "But then, through our regular contractor, Panacea, we heard about Hitachi's new FX Duoboard. The boards weren't even in the country at the time [around September 2007], but they felt we really needed to take a look at them."

One look was all it took. Sold as having every feature of every whiteboard product with no limitations, the Hitachi FX Duoboard is incredibly versatile and can be operated with pen or finger.

The board comes with a hard, durable screen, rather than a membrane. This makes it very resistant to damage and also means it can be used by multiple users. Add the ability to work as a dry-wipe board, too, and it's easy to see why the Duo has attracted such widespread attention from schools and colleges.

These were the headline benefits. But it was a couple of other selling points that attracted the interest of Lance and his team. "Because we use them primarily as distance projectors," he says, "the short throw projection issue was crucial. With our existing boards, lecturers couldn't stand directly in front of the screen.

"Now, with the projector 18 inches from the wall, nothing interferes with the picture. Hitachi also won with their marker pens one of our current boards could be damaged if you used an ordinary-dry-wipe pen. Not so with Hitachi."

Lance was also delighted with the Chameleon Software, a revolutionary idea that enables users to standardise software across every interactive whiteboard whatever the manufacturer for which they have a licence. With no limit on the number of PCs it can be installed on, Chameleon was a vital aid in New College's lesson preparation.

"The Hitachi software can now be used on all our other boards, which means we can present a unified face," says Lance.

Another feature that persuaded Lance to order a dozen FX Duos was one he hopes never to have to use. The Field Replaceable Digitiser makes it unnecessary to send away the whole unit for repairs. Says Lance: "All the workings are in the top bar you simply detach it and send it away. Fortunately, there have been no issues yet."

Other aspects of the FX Duo that made an impression on Lance included the three days' on-site training and the upcoming Training the Trainers course for his technicians. The inbuilt Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) has also been a hit with lecturers, enabling them to store course content, in the form of videos and graphics, onto centralised data sites.

"In fact, the whole package has been great for our technophobic lecturers", says Lance.

You can find out more about Hitachi interactive whiteboards at: www.uk.hitachisoftinteractive.com



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