



Interactive Whiteboard Champions and Why We Need Them.

Choosing the right Interactive Whiteboard (IWB) can be a daunting process. First there is the contemplation of hardware and software and then the all important decision of where to put them to consider. Once installed, there is the added pressure to see results given the investment. Herein lays the true challenge.

Put simply an IWB is a computer peripheral. It is a meld of a mouse pad and a screen. What it offers is a unique way of interacting with software. The right IWB, from a hardware point of view, should be the most durable (i.e. classroom hardy) and easy to use (i.e. support free) product you can find.

The classroom software that comes with the boards is, in general, all very similar. They each have a very similar set of features; however, the challenge of successful implementation can be thwarted on this point. The question that must be asked here is; what percentage of the teaching staff, at any one school, is technologically confident? What percentage of staff would be able (or prepared) to quickly adopt a new software package for use in the classroom? If you answered above 40% you are in a unique position.

Whatever your answer, it is from this pool of technologically savvy people that you must choose your 'champions'. These are the people that will take the process forward. It is imperative that you identify these people and ensure that they have access to the IWBs. It is also important that your champions be able to meet together regularly (at least once every two weeks). Research indicates that schools that foster a "champions group" stand a far greater chance of successful implementation.

The champions approach can seem counter intuitive. An approach I call the 'scatter and push, push, push' approach has been tried by a number of schools. In this model, IWBs are installed through-out the school and talked up at every possible chance. Unfortunately this approach has most often relegated the IWB to an expensive projector screen.

When choosing your champions you should look for a combination of qualities. As was previously mentioned they should be confident with computers. That does not mean they have to be IT teachers, but they should be willing and able to work their way through a software application. They should also be willing to adopt new teaching practices and engage in PD. IWBs offer great potential with regard to student engagement and learning outcomes. These are accessed through a shift in pedagogy. Finally, they should be willing to share what they have learned through mentoring and presenting at a faculty and a general staff level. Find people with this set of qualities and invest in them.

© Scott Watkins, 2008

(03) 9457 4800

PLEASE NOTE: Under no circumstances can this article be used without acknowledging the author and D.I.B Australia as the source



Audio Visual Systems

Once your champions are up and running the rest of your teaching staff should find themselves being encouraged towards the use of this technology. You will have provided evidence for those teachers on the fence and set-up some resident experts to help the not so confident. However, it is the parents and students will be the greatest advocates.

So when considering IWB for your school, 'who will use them', is probably more important than what IWB you eventually choose. Find teachers with the attributes to unlock the potential and provide them with access and support. Then watch them fly.

© Scott Watkins, 2008

(03) 9457 4800

PLEASE NOTE: Under no circumstances can this article be used without acknowledging the author and D.I.B Australia as the source