SMART®

Inspired Collaboration™

CDW Boosts Productivity with the SMART Room System™ for Microsoft® Lync®

CDW conducts architecture design sessions using the SMART Room System™ for Microsoft® Lync®

Ranked as a FORTUNE 500 company, CDW has been a leading provider of technology solutions for business, government, education and healthcare customers throughout the United States and Canada for 30 years. The Microsoft Practice Collaboration Team at CDW works with customers to identify their needs and then a team of experts create an integrated solution to meet the unique requirements of each customer.

John Reckamp is a Microsoft® Field Solution Architect for CDW based in Indianapolis, Indiana. Conducting architecture design sessions with customers is a core element of John's role. He manages a large territory and works with a team of experts who are dispersed throughout the United States. He spends a significant amount of time travelling to and from customer sites and coordinating with the experts that each project requires.

CDW is one of the largest Microsoft resellers in the United States and a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner. "Because of our partnership with Microsoft, we were able to implement the SMART Room System™ for Microsoft® Lync® before it was available to the public. It immediately changed the way we did business by enabling us to conduct architecture design sessions remotely," says John.

The SMART Room System is a turn-key solution that combines touch enabled displays with an HD video camera, microphones and speakers to enable seamless video, audio and data collaboration within Microsoft Lync.

Challenge

CDW's Microsoft Practice Collaboration Team is a geographically dispersed group of technical experts located across the United States who support CDW's more than 250,000 customers with the selection, implementation and management of collaboration technologies. The team wanted to better engage customers and add efficiency to meetings.

Solution

CDW's Indianapolis office implemented the SMART Room System for Microsoft Lync, a turn-key solution that combines touch enabled displays with an HD video camera, microphones and speakers to enable seamless video, audio and data collaboration within Microsoft Lync.

Results

The team was able to increase the engagement and efficiency of meetings and boost productivity.

Increasing efficiency with remote collaboration

Bryan Letcher, an Information Worker Architect, is also part of CDW's Microsoft Practice in the Indianapolis office. As soon as the SMART Room System was implemented, Bryan saw clear advantages. "One of the key benefits was the ability to conduct architecture design sessions remotely without losing the advantages of being there in person," says Bryan.

"The solution was a fit for us because it was fully integrated with Microsoft Lync, and it made drawing and interacting with a digital whiteboard and Microsoft PowerPoint® files a breeze for both local and remote participants. And during the sessions we're able to capture everything and then immediately email our session materials and notes out to our customers, without having to type out a meeting summary or action items," says Bryan.

In John's territory, the furthest customers are several hours away by car. Before the implementation of the SMART Room System, John would typically conduct two or three on-site customer meetings per week. Now that John is able collaborate effectively through remote sessions, he has saved 10 to 14 hours of travel time each week.

Productivity has also increased, as the team is able to accommodate an increased number of customer engagements. John estimates that he is able to meet with 15 to 20 percent more customers. And because the team is able to meet with customers more frequently, they are able to complete projects more quickly.

Accelerating business outcomes with productive meetings

The SMART Room System is configured with two SMART Board® interactive displays. "Once we started using one display to see the room and all meeting participants and the second display for presentation materials and a collaboration space for diagrams, mind maps and meeting notes, it became really powerful," says Bryan.

The ability to connect with customers remotely has enabled the company to shift from all-day meetings on site with customers to meetings that are broken up into shorter sessions over a few days. "When we pull up the previous day's work on the display it feels like we only had a five-minute break," says Bryan.

"The ability to share the content created during these meetings is awesome. Having shorter meetings over a few days lets the information marinate and people tend to ask questions they wouldn't have thought of before. The approach helps people stay fresh," says Bryan.

The SMART Room System is equipped with an HD camera that displays the entire room and gives the feeling of making direct eye contact with all participants. Remote participants can see the entire room without the need to pan, tilt or zoom, which enables everyone to focus on the content of the meeting without distractions.

"With the wide-angle camera, you can read the body language of all remote participants simultaneously. It's a huge business advantage because you can see if someone 'pings' on a certain idea and then you can dive deeper into the subject. This creates opportunity for us to expand the solution that we're developing for a customer to better meet their business needs," says Bryan.

"It made drawing and interacting with a digital whiteboard and Microsoft PowerPoint files a breeze for both local and remote participants."
Bryan Letcher,
Information Worker Architect

Bringing together dispersed teams increases business opportunities

CDW has almost 7,000 employees dispersed throughout the United States and Canada. With the SMART Room System, distance is not a barrier to active collaboration. "We're able to bring technical specialists and experts into sessions at a moment's notice. And because it's so seamless, our customers don't even realize that the attendees are dispersed throughout the country," says Bryan.

This agility has provided a key competitive advantage for the company and grown business opportunities. "Recently a customer approached us with a project that fell into the $20,000 to $40,000 range. Our ability to be flexible and respond quickly led to the expansion of the project into a $400,000 opportunity – and it is because we could do what our competition could not. If the customer wanted to meet on short notice, we could pull in the required resources from anywhere in our company. It gave us a chance to understand their business at a deeper level and show them solutions they hadn't even considered before. The SMART Room System has enabled us to be as flexible as the customer needs us to be," says John.

"When customers hear the pricing and find that it is more cost-effective than traditional conferencing solutions, they become very enthusiastic," says John.

CDW has already experienced increased productivity with the SMART Room System, and Bryan is confident that this is just beginning. He adds, "Within our team, we continue to find more ways that this system can save us time and increase our effectiveness.

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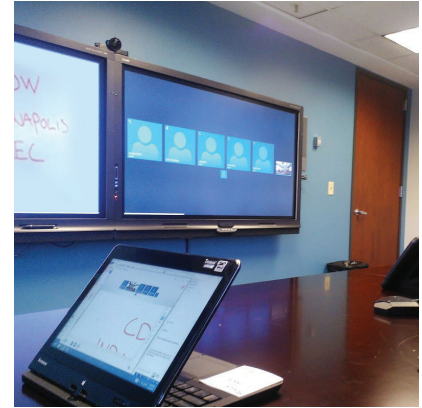
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About SMART

SMART Technologies is a leading provider of collaboration solutions that transform the way the world works and learns. We believe that collaboration and interaction should be easy. As the global leader in interactive whiteboards, we bring more than two decades of collaboration research and development to a broad range of easy-to-use, integrated solutions that free people from their desks and computer screens, so collaborating and learning with digital resources are more natural.

SMART Technologies

3636 Research Road NW
Calgary, AB T2L 1Y1
CANADA
Toll free 1.888.42.SMART (U.S./Canada)
smarttech.com