

Training the Top Guns

SPARTA, Inc. – Lake Forest, CA, United States



Flight training at SPARTA Inc.

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Stan Harmon, R&D Program Manager

Stan Harmon has been using SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards since 1998, first as a fighter pilot, then as an air combat instructor, and now as R&D program manager in the advanced systems technology operation at SPARTA, Inc., a systems engineering and advanced technology company. He knows better than anyone how these three very different jobs can all benefit from using an interactive whiteboard. "All of these situations have many of the same elements," says Harmon. "You want to visualize a large amount of complex information, and frequently a number of people need to get together to see the information and collaborate around it."

In his current role at SPARTA, Harmon develops specialized software for agencies such as the U.S. Air Force, the Missile Defense Agency, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The goal of these Web-based software products is to automate each organization's core processes to increase efficiency and help them visualize their most complex or difficult-to-manage information. These techniques have automated such central processes as mission planning, advanced training, lecture and briefing preparation, program integration, emergency response, real-time contingency management, metrics assessment, task and suspense tracking, and scheduling. In its software applications and in its own offices, SPARTA uses the SMART Board 580 interactive whiteboard, SMART Board for Flat-Panel Displays interactive overlays, and the Sympodium™ L250 interactive lectern after trying out other, less functional technology products.

The best of both worlds

In the air combat briefing rooms, SPARTA first tried using a large monitor in a cabinet wired with a mouse and keyboard, but had to rely on a conventional whiteboard to draw pictures and create notes. Harmon says that since adopting the SMART products, the efficiency of preparing for these briefings has increased by 49 percent. "I used to have to come in an hour early before a flight briefing to draw tactical diagrams and prepare for the lesson. Now, using a SMART Board, I can access digital files and have all the info up and ready in just a few minutes."

A new breed of information technology

Since those first applications, SPARTA has developed a revolutionary brand of information visualization and process-automation, Web-based technologies. They coined the term *Active IT* to describe the nonpassive nature of the software, and its ability to deal with a wide variety of organizational missions. Harmon has found himself all over the country demonstrating these advanced systems to government and military personnel. His preferred hardware to show off the potential of the software is a SMART Board interactive whiteboard. "I've demonstrated these technologies using the SMART Board interactive whiteboard to the air force chief of staff, most wing commanders in Air Combat Command, and almost every general in between," says Harmon. "The direct control I have at the board gives me complete confidence that I can handle any situation without breaking stride, and the extraordinary impact on the audience of physically interacting with the demonstration or presentation lets me deliver high-impact, tailored, on-the-fly presentations in a variety of situations. I can't imagine giving a presentation in any other way."

SMART Technologies

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