



# WELL TRAINED?

Visual effects make a more effective point

BY JANE SMITH

Investors in People has raised the profile of the need for employers to offer their employees ways in which to develop, learn and continue with training. Commercially, successful businesses recognise that a well trained and informed workforce leads to higher productivity, lower turnover of staff and improves their competitive advantage.

For all these reasons we are seeing growth in conference and training room equipment and consumables as companies invest in more high tech, automated and interactive conference and training facilities.

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in the modern training and conference room," says Paul O'Reilly, distribution sales director at Steljes Trade.

The term 'technology' is most often associated with web-based and computer-based training, but technology is also transforming the traditional face-to-face training and conference environment.

And, despite the hype surrounding e-learning, instructor led training remains the predominant delivery choice, with the majority of training programmes still delivered via the classroom.

There are several training technology options to help presenters offer smoother, more interactive training sessions.

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Choices include interactive whiteboards (combining the power of your computer and digital projector with the simplicity of a traditional whiteboard), digital projectors (ideal for showing computer-based presentations), and plasma display panels (which allow you to view a computer image on a larger display than a standard monitor).

Tony Cochrane of TCI told us, "One trend we're definitely witnessing is the increase in electronic screens. Presenters are looking for plug and play, electronically controlled lighting, power for projection and the screen at the touch of a button. We're seeing more and more automation sometimes right through to the blinds."

He went on to say that the extra cost of an electronic screen is insignificant in relation to the cost of the overall project so it really isn't a price sensitive issue.

So what kind of kit will satisfy the trainer and which technologies are right for their requirements?

**• INTERACTIVE WHITEBOARDS**

We all respond better to playing an interactive part in the learning process. Interactive whiteboards allow you to use the power of your computer and digital projector with the simplicity of a traditional whiteboard. This is an ideal solution for group training where a computer alone would be too small and you want the audience to participate.

**• PROJECTORS**

The best way of sharing computer based materials in a training or conference environment. Most new models allow you to switch easily between computer and video

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sources and area easy to set up, install and maintain. Digital projectors are continuing to get lighter brighter and more affordable which is growing the size of the market.

**• SECURITY**

This can be a concern to companies when faced with smaller more portable projectors. "Where there's no need for the projector to be moved, lots of companies are choosing to ceiling mount the projector. A great anti-theft strategy," says Cochrane. Alternatively, O'Reilly suggests that you, "Sell in a 'Peace of Mind' bundle containing, hanging brackets, a Kensington lock, spare lamp, cable, carry case and warranty."

Lockable cabinets are also popular, useful for the projector and all other peripheral equipment.

**• CONFERENCE AND MEETING ROOM FURNITURE**

The type of training you want to carry out will have a bearing on the type of furniture and seating you'll want to buy. Considerations such as whether or not it has to be packed away or moved will influence whether you buy folding tables and stackable chairs. There are also different table shapes available to help you plan different room layouts. Is it classroom style or boardroom style? There's a lot of choice and something to suit most budgets.

**• RAIL SYSTEMS**

These are still popular and very practical in environments where the room is being used for various functions. AV equipment, traditional whiteboards and flipchart pads can be hung from the system and

moved along to rail for convenience and to suit the room layout.

In summarising, O'Reilly comments: "Trainers realise that their training has a serious purpose and they want to offer the optimum learning environment. This spells out a great opportunity for the reseller supplying the kit to support this."

In addition to the kit itself, no conference and training room can operate without all manner of consumable items. From the trainer's point of view they need dry wipe pens, erasers and cleaners, flipchart pads, pens and possibly accessories such as telescopic or laser pointers. From the delegate's point of view, there are the writing pens and pads. There's also the possible need for refreshments: bottled water, glasses and possibly biscuits snacks or mints. ■