

The Chalkboard Goes High-Tech

We look at what's hot in presentation technology.

[BY BTE STAFF]

Boardrooms, offices, and classrooms got a facelift about ten years ago, when whiteboards were first launched. The technology made it easier for presentations, meetings, and training to take place, and it eliminated the airborne dust from chalkboards that damaged computers and other equipment. These original entries into the presentation whiteboard category had some challenges of their own, including glare and time-consuming cleaning.

Whiteboards have come a long way since the early nineties, as we've seen with some of the latest entries on the market. We took some strong candidates from the presentation category in-house to test just a few of the options available.

InterWrite MeetingBoard

Founded in 1975, GTCO CalComp pioneered the use of pen-based electromagnetic sensing technology used in their interactive whiteboards and Digitizers. The company manufactures computer input peripherals, with over one million systems installed globally.

FAST FACTS

Product: InterWrite MeetingBoard

Estimated: 50 inch model \$1,595 to \$2,495*

Retail Price: 70 inch model \$1,995 to \$2,995* (reviewed model 50 inch with Bluetooth \$1,995)

*price varies based on optional features installed

Company: GTCO CalComp

Web site: www.gtcocalcomp.com

Phone: 800-344-4723 or 410-381-6688

Prices as of 12/04

GTCO CalComp's InterWrite MeetingBoard (IMB) is a multifunctional presentation tool enabling businesses to communicate with staff, customers, and prospects in-house and remotely with ease.

Hands On

The unit we tested shipped in two cases. Hardware assembly was simple with easy to follow instructions. Once the IMB was assembled we installed the included InterWrite software using the install wizard. In a matter of minutes the unit was up and ready for evaluation.

At first glance, the IMB looks like a well built whiteboard. Coupled with the InterWrite software, the unit provides two modes of operation, Interactive and Whiteboard. Interactive Mode lets you operate any Windows application or access the Internet using a connected projector and PC. Annotate, edit, and highlight with the electronic pens and eraser, included with the system. Whiteboard Mode lets you write on the unit with dry-erase markers within the pens. In both modes, the PC catches your notes stroke for stroke so you can save, print, and email them.

Both modes performed well. For major presentations, the Interactive mode using a connected projector and PC provide a rich environment for presentations limited only by your imagination. The software was easy to understand and work with. Saving each presentation to file for email distribution or printing makes it easy to save your presentation, distribute, or archive for future use.

Specifications

Standard features of the IMB include electromagnetic digitizing technology, which delivers

high resolution 1,000 lines per inch (lpi). InterWrite Software, compatible with Windows 98, 2000, NT, ME, and XP, is standard as part of the unit. Three programmable softkeys simplify using the MeetingBoard by providing instant access to launching a favorite application, Internet site, or file. For computer connection, a 25' serial (RS-232) cable and a 15' Universal Serial Bus (USB) are included. Models with a B designation include a wireless Bluetooth connection. Electronic pens that provide full mouse capability are included, as well as a Pen Tray for storage. A wall mount bracket, standard with the IMB, was installed easily.

Optional accessories include a floor stand on casters, a floor stand shelf, and large casters. A Bluetooth Hub is available as either a PCMCIA card or a USB. A worthwhile feature, the Bluetooth Hub is an antenna that connects to your PC and provides wireless connectivity between the PC and the MeetingBoard (Bluetooth models only), as well as the InterWrite MeetingPad (Model 300 only). Electronic pens are available in black, red, green, and blue.

In Summary

Whether you're presenting to an important client, conducting a training session, or reviewing a design, the IMB is a powerful and easy to use presentation tool. You can write notes and highlight key points on top of your presentation using one of the electronic pens, and interact with your computer while standing at the IMB by using the pen as a mouse. No matter what your profession, if you spend precious time in meetings everyday, this unit will ensure that everyone leaves informed and on the same page.

