

Villanova School of Business Executive MBA Program

Case Study, Radnor, Pennsylvania, United States



“What’s exciting about the SMART Board interactive whiteboard is that it is not obtrusive, it’s not something you have to work around. It truly supports the conversation for which this room is designed.”

– Doug Dickel, Director of the Executive MBA Program

Technology Helps Effective Managers Become Executive Leaders

A group of thirty people sit in a collaboration room, actively debating a merger, carefully reviewing how this business move will affect every layer of their company.

No, this isn’t a gathering of a company’s executive team. These are students enrolled in the Executive MBA program at the Villanova School of Business – a program designed to help successful managers become effective executive leaders.

In September 2004, the Villanova School of Business decided to create a new main classroom for these students in the Villanova Conference Center. The program needed a room that would facilitate a collaborative learning style by meeting some specific requirements. For example, the teaching faculty needed a lot of whiteboarding space, the technology had to facilitate discussion and provide access to online materials, and students in every part of the room had to be able to see what the teacher was writing.

Director of the program, Doug Dickel, knew he’d found a key component to the room’s

effectiveness when he first saw a SMART Board™ interactive whiteboard. What he didn’t realize was that the product would deliver everything he needed and more.

Visuals with Impact

Dickel says the first problem the interactive whiteboard solved was displaying information so that everyone in the classroom could see.

“Faculty like to point to information on a screen, but a screen in the center of the room wouldn’t be big enough for everyone to see clearly. And if you give faculty two screens, they point to one but not the other, so half the class can’t see what they’re pointing to,” explains Dickel.

The solution was to put the interactive whiteboard, which has a 71” (180.3 cm) screen, in the center, at the front of the room, and re-project the image to two 100” (254 cm) screens on either side of the room. If a professor wants to point something out, she highlights it on the interactive whiteboard, and the same image is simultaneously projected out to the side screens.

Challenge

Create a room that supports a collaborative learning style

SMART Solution

In-Wall Rear Projection SMART Board interactive whiteboard

Result

Classes are more efficient for both students and professors

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The SMART Board interactive whiteboard enhances classroom collaboration and provides faculty with limitless whiteboarding space.

Limitless Whiteboarding Space

Another challenge was providing faculty with a lot of whiteboarding space without putting whiteboards in areas of the classroom where students wouldn't be able to see the notes.

"At the front of the room, the most [dry-erase] whiteboard space we could have is about 16' (5 m), which, for our faculty, is nothing – they could fill that space in maybe two minutes," explains Dickel.

Using the interactive whiteboard's Notebook™ software, professors now have access to limitless whiteboarding space without leaving the front of the room. When a professor fills an electronic whiteboard page he just inserts a new blank page, rather than moving on to the next blank dry-erase board.

A New Way to Collaborate

Dickel says another benefit of the interactive whiteboard is the incredible power it brings to collaborative sessions.

"The objective of the room is that it is a place of conversation, and we don't want anything to get in the way of the conversation," says Dickel. "What's exciting about the SMART Board interactive whiteboard is that it's not obtrusive; it's not something you have to work around. It truly supports the conversation for which this room is designed."

Whether the sessions are large or small, the interactive whiteboard works well. Although the room was designed for large classes of 30 to 35, Dickel says they have also moved smaller meetings of three to five people into it. He says the technology takes care of common meeting problems such as when a designated note-taker doesn't transcribe and distribute notes.

"This way you can just put the notes on the interactive whiteboard and save them. It's a great way to facilitate the conversation, and a great way of taking notes. It's huge, absolutely huge for us."

Student Impact

The advantages didn't end there. Students soon discovered the interactive whiteboard could also enhance learning and free them from taking notes.

"One of the biggest benefits that we hadn't anticipated, but students realized quickly, was that now professors could save their notes and e-mail them out to the class," says Dickel. This frees auditory learners to listen rather than missing part of the conversation as they copy notes.

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One student, who spent a year in the previous classroom and a year in the new room, told Dickel that the interactive whiteboard changed the way he learns. "He said the capability of the SMART Board interactive whiteboard to capture the notes in the handwriting of the faculty member had significantly impacted, in a positive way, his ability to learn."

The student explained that during his entire academic career he took notes as a way to reinforce his learning.

"This student discovered that he no longer had to write the material down himself in

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order to get that reinforcement effect. When he can see the actual PDF of the notes, in the handwriting as it originally appeared on the interactive whiteboard, it is a significant reinforcing technique for his learning,” says Dickel.

With benefits like increased whiteboard space, enhanced collaboration, a way to save class notes and a positive impact on student learning, the faculty and students of Villanova’s Executive MBA program are happy with the results of adding the In-Wall *Rear Projection* SMART Board interactive whiteboard to their new classroom. Dickel says he’s sure the more faculty and staff use this technology, the more benefits they’ll reap.

The Villanova School of Business Executive MBA program is a 21-month program that begins each year in August and meets every other weekend on Friday and Saturday in residency at The Villanova Conference Center in Radnor, Pennsylvania. The objective of the program is to develop and transform emerging executive leaders into effective executive leaders – leaders who make complex decisions that have a significant impact on their organizations and that cross multiple functional areas. For more information about the program, go to emba.villanova.edu.

About SMART

SMART Technologies Inc. is both the industry pioneer and global market leader in easy-to-use interactive whiteboards and group collaboration tools. The award-winning SMART Board interactive whiteboard is the most widely installed product of its kind in the world. It enhances teacher productivity and improves student learning outcomes, and is used in more than 250,000 classrooms spanning more than 75 countries and every Local Authority in the UK. SMART products also include interactive pen displays, interactive digital signage, wireless slates and software. Using SMART products, groups can access and share the information they need to meet, teach, train and present. SMART’s education customers include Oxford University (UK), Barnier Public School (Australia), University of Ottawa (Canada), United World College (Singapore), Stephen-Hawking-Schule Neckargemuend (Germany) and Harvard University (U.S.). SMART Technologies Inc. is represented exclusively in the UK by Steljes Ltd. For more information, visit www.smarttech.com.



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