

1,000,000 SMART Board Interactive Whiteboards

by Nancy Knowlton

On August 12, 2008 we built and shipped our one millionth SMART Board interactive whiteboard. This was a major milestone for our whole team, and we felt great pride. It brought home to everyone in the company the global role that SMART plays in the evolution of teaching and learning in 21st-century classrooms.

The concept of the SMART Board interactive whiteboard started in 1986 as a simple idea for a whiteboard that connected to and controlled a computer. The product moved through numerous hardware and software development cycles. We added functionality, spruced up the aesthetics, reduced the required assembly time, created specific software to address the needs of teachers and other software to address the needs of business people, and added a series of accessories and complementary products.



Still Leading After All These Years

The most recent data from Futuresource Consulting shows SMART as the hands-down global leader in the interactive whiteboard category. The most recent data for Q3 2008 (i.e., the quarter ending September 30) shows SMART with a 57.4% global share, almost three times the share of our closest competitor.

In Q3 we shipped more than 100,000 SMART Board interactive whiteboards globally, the first time that we have surpassed this level. We have built our systems, organization and infrastructure so that we will be able to scale volumes to address future increases in demand.

Our Customers

The major purchasers of our products have been primary and secondary educators around the world. What typically starts out as a small-scale experiment usually expands into a major adoption, as funding and teacher capability allow. In many instances, it has been technology enthusiasts who have discovered and bought our products. In the U.S. and UK, the two countries with the largest number of interactive whiteboards in their classrooms, we are solidly into the majority (early and late, respectively) of users who are using our products in their classrooms. And our customers keep coming back to buy more of our products for a variety of reasons.

Great Ease of Use

In side-by-side tests (often called shoot-outs), educators comment on the superior ease of use of the SMART Board interactive whiteboard. Teachers can find and use features simply by exploring the Notebook collaborative learning software that is included with the board. They are further able to achieve a level of mastery with the SMART Board interactive whiteboard due to the focus that our development team places on ease of use.

Superb Durability

Another of the key reasons jurisdictions decide to broaden their adoption of the SMART Board interactive whiteboard has been its durability. Many of the boards that we made in the early and mid '90s are still in service today. There are two elements to the durability factor. First, the board uses resistive technology, which is stable. Second, there are no special tools to lose or break.

Integrated Solutions

As we have added complementary products to our offering, we have done so in an integrated fashion. This means that our customers can build on the mastery that they have developed with Notebook collaborative learning software to add interesting new functionality such as questioning through an interactive response system.

Our People

No mention of this milestone would be complete without acknowledging the commitment, passion and vision of the people at SMART. It is the 1,200 people who walk through our doors around the world each day who bring new ways of collaborating and learning to our customers.

Yes, we all have to earn a living, but for us it is much, much more than that. We are on a mission to help our customers achieve their aspirations through the use of our products and solutions. We are only as satisfied with our performance as our customers are.

1,000,000 SMART Boards and Counting

We are far from finished inventing and delivering new products and solutions to education customers worldwide. It is great for us to pass this major milestone, and we take great pride in this accomplishment. But there are far more customers ahead. We're looking at 2,000,000 and then 10,000,000 SMART Board interactive whiteboards, and imagining how teaching and learning today and tomorrow will be forever changed.

Nancy Knowlton is the co-founder and CEO of SMART Technologies, the world's leading supplier of interactive whiteboards. Nancy's husband and SMART co-founder, David Martin, is the inventor of the interactive whiteboard product category. Together they have built a company that is focused on delivering easy-to-use, yet feature-rich collaboration tools, including the SMART Board interactive whiteboard. Nancy can be reached at CEO@smarttech.com.