

05/21/2014

Dr. John Doe
Director of Information Technology
CUNY CIS – 1234 Princeton Avenue
New York, NY 10001
Room. 335

Subject: Smart Boards Issues

Dear Dr. John Doe,

I currently work for the Help Desk at one of CUNY's colleges. It is a fairly new school and one of the things they're big on is having the latest and best available technology, which in most cases is a good thing. With so many options now available to educational institutions, one of the things that seems to be getting phased out are blackboards. In my place of employment every classroom has a state of the art SmartBoard. These SmartBoards are digital touch screen boards that provide the same basic functions of a black & white boards but with more features. It allows you to change colors, highlight text, resize shapes and figures and project your computer desktop on the screen. Now with all these great features one would assume this is a better option. In my short experience with them at least from the Help Desk's point of view there seems to be more cons than there are benefits.

Unlike conventional boards, SmartBoards are a combination of hardware and software. This makes it susceptible to technical issues. Our boards are controlled through a panel we have at a lectern. For whatever reason the board sometimes gets out of sync with this panel and cannot be powered on or off. The board also has calibration issues where if you try to write on it using a special touchscreen marker, it might not line up properly. This rising problem needs a solution because our resources are being wasted constantly trying to fix these expensive boards. The technicians who installed them come back at least once a week and say they "fixed" the issue, which holds no merit. The big problem is with each visit money is being spent & lost. Sometimes classes have to be cancelled or rescheduled due to this. What I've gathered from most of the professors from talking to them is that they dislike the SmartBoard and tend to use the white board we have on the opposite wall of the classroom.

My proposal, which I have made to them is to either discard the SmartBoard all together or get a more reliable product. The school is spending the same amount of money it took to purchase those high end boards in repairs alone. There has been many previous attempts at solutions, for example the Help Desk staff have received training on how to fix minor issues. The maintenance work we do has not reduced the amount of hardware and software issues which occur. The structure of our organization requires we have two staff members working at a time, one is a receptionist and the other is the tech on the floor. If people call asking for desktop support, we might not be able to get to them at a reasonable time due to issues caused by the SmartBoard. I cannot disregard the fact that our organizational structure could be the problem so another solution could possibly be to change our structure and have 3 Help Desk staff members on the floor, this way we are able to increase our customer service. Currently the department is evaluating there options.