

FX Duos get Carter and Carter really motoring

Turning out advanced technicians with Hitachi

Carter and Carter Group Plc is the UK's leading supplier of training to the motor trade. But a major contract from Europe's largest retailer forced a rethink on their training materials.

Carter and Carter group Plc is a UK market leader. The Midlands-based firm delivers government-funded apprentice and adult training across a number of sectors, but principally the motor trade. Household names such as Vauxhall, Suzuki, Peugeot and Ford are just some of the company's high-profile clients.

At any one time, the firm has around 15 20,000 learners on its books. And, with 2000 staff, offices in Nottinghamshire and Derby, one in Germany and another in Australia, Carter and Carter is no small concern.

Because the firm runs courses at its own centres, the best training materials are an absolute must. But, for years, Carter and Carter had relied on ordinary dry-wipe whiteboards.

Peter Brochocki, Carter and Carter's Lead Vocational Learning Manager, looks after the Vauxhall, Subaru, Mazda and Suzuki programmes. He says: "We were using an ordinary whiteboard on a big stand. A standalone projector aimed at the whiteboard provided an image on the screen. We were able to show only whatever was on the projector. On the rest of the board, we used ordinary marker pens."

The whiteboard wasn't interactive and wasn't linked to anything. "We used it for training and meetings," says Peter. "We'd put up figures and data and we could show training films from the

laptop. For example, we could show the contents of an engine and explain the four-stroke cycle, but we were limited to whatever was on the laptop."

There were other practical problems, too. If the sun shone into the classroom, seeing the board was tricky. And, if the computer froze, it was a case of 'here endeth the lesson'.

Then, in August 2006, Carter and Carter won a major contract with Pendragon plc, Europe's largest automotive retail network. Instantly recognisable to car buyers through its Stratstone, Evans Halshaw and Chatfields outlets, Pendragon operates over 30 franchises for passenger vehicles, motorcycles, commercials and trucks from nearly 400 retail sites.

"I got involved in the contract

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from March 2007," says Peter. "We were due to start apprentice training for Pendragon's academy in September and it was obvious that our equipment wasn't up to scratch. I'd always wanted an interactive whiteboard and I talked to Theresa from Nottingham Audio-Visual (NAV). They did a presentation on Hitachi's FX Duo and I wanted one. Or preferably two."

The FX Duo is highly versatile. Operable by either pen or finger, it comes with a hard, durable screen not a membrane that's great for multiple users. It even works as a dry-wipe board. In short, the FX Duo combines all the best features of all previous whiteboards, without limitations.

Behind the order that Peter placed was the need for something that would be well-used by the learner: "We get 16-year-old apprentices in here who sit with 12 others for three days on end. It's hard for them to be dictated to for all that time, sitting through the 'twilight zone' without any interaction. It's confusing and tiring."

So, what does Peter like about his two new boards? "They're easy to use. They've got a big screen. They're very reliable and we can safely do a lot of things. The tablet is great." He admits that, having had the boards for only three months, he's still used only about 20% of their capacity:

"We've used the projector and we're getting used to highlighting and using the board for PowerPoint and pictures. Each time we have training from NAV, they introduce something new.

"It's a fantastic tool. Thirty learners can look at an exploded view of an engine. I can say 'Bob, can you point to the crankshaft?' Or 'Joe, can you show me the camshaft?' They take technical things on board much better now, they can move things around, get more involved. Their minds are much more stimulated.

"When 16-year-olds look bored, they need stimulus. Now that things are more interactive, their mindset is on the board all the time. They absorb more from the trainer. Now I can be sure we're turning out more advanced technicians at the end of their training."

You can find out more about Hitachi interactive whiteboards at www.hitachisoft-eu.com

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