

Numonics Corporation **Case Studies**



Whiteboard Assists Police Department in Staying on Top of Safety and Training

By Ellen Kollie

“Safety and training; training and safety: The two go hand in hand in police work,” says David E. Madrak, Professional Standards Officer with Upper Dublin Township Police Department (UDTPD), Montgomery County, Pa. “Having an interactive whiteboard enables us to provide dynamic training which leads to better safety for the officers.”

The interactive whiteboard Madrak purchased is an Intelliboard®, manufactured by Montgomery, Pa.-based Numonics Corp. The Intelliboard is a digital interactive whiteboard that connects with a computer via the USB port and any data projector to greatly improve classroom style instruction. It starts with the ability to control computer applications and computer images on the board, which is done with the Intelliboard’s multimedia pen. The instructor remains in the front of the room while interactive with the applications software on the board in real time. Specifically, all computer functions are accessible with the multimedia pen, such as opening files, running digital video clips, launching websites, or downloading relevant content from the Internet.

An instructor can choose a softkey located on both sides of the board to change the multimedia pen from a mouse to a pen, and write and draw on projected images, annotate in color, highlight, and cut-and-paste images to capture student’s attention and improve their retention. Note-taking software automatically saves the notations, which is ideal for later picking up where a lesson left off or reviewing before a test. Notations can be electronically distributed during or after the session or printed.

The UDTPD’s Intelliboard includes a mobile stand for easy portability. The stand may be used in a classroom where mounting it is not feasible or where temporary installation is preferred. The steel frame is powder coated making it scratch resistant and it includes locking casters for safety.

As Madrak mentioned, safety is a key component of the Fort Washington, Pa.-based UDTPD. The officers receive ongoing training to insure their safety and provide it for the community. They need it to fulfill their charge of protecting life and property within the 13.2-square-mile township, which includes 26,000 people living in 9,174 residences. And that’s where the Intelliboard becomes a real asset.

The department had been using a projector and pull-down screen, along with a dry erase board, for training during roll call. They realized these weren’t the most efficient tools to use. Since Madrak was familiar with interactive whiteboards from his personal education experiences, as well as from the county training facility, he recognized that one interactive whiteboard could replace both the projector/screen combination and the dry erase board. He filled out a purchase request, and it was

approved: “For once in a government operation, it was not that difficult to get what we needed!” he quips.

The department of 40 full-time, sworn police officers is divided into seven-man squads. There is one detective unit and ancillary officers all operating on 12-hour shifts that rotate on a two-week schedule. Each shift begins with roll call. “Roll call and training are two different things,” Madrak explains, “but roll call is usually not our busiest time, so we’re able to get a lot of training done then.”

Roll call lasts anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour. “If we don’t complete everything during roll call,” Madrak notes, “the officers come back sometime during their shift to finish up. Because of its durability we have the ability to use the Intelliboard 24/7, and we do.”

The department uses roll call to review new incidents and changes in ongoing investigations since that squad last worked, as well as to review special details and tactical events. This information is presented via e-mails, bulletins, videos and more, all displayed on the Intelliboard. “The Intelliboard gives us the ability to use features we didn’t have on the projection screen,” says Madrak. “It allows for a dynamic exchange of information and ideas, better preparation for special events, a review of daily events and more.”

Training comes in two categories. The first is administrative, which includes such things as department policies which Madrak does himself. The second is use of force, which includes the tactics involved in police work, such as the best way to enter a building. “We create a lot of our own use of force training,” Madrak says. “It is well regarded by other departments, who frequently ask to borrow our materials.”

Both types of training are often presented via PowerPoint programs. “PowerPoint is good for visual training,” Madrak notes. “Using it on the Intelliboard allows the instructor to be in front of the officers and navigate the program with the multimedia pen.” Similarly, training is presented via video. “This is great because we can pause the video to focus on different points in a single image and annotate or draw on it with different colors,” he says.

In addition to PowerPoint and video, information is often presented using images from Google Earth to prepare for special events, such as high school graduation or a political rally. The image is placed on the Intelliboard, and then positions are indicated by drawing on the image with the multimedia pen, such as Squad A goes here and Squad B goes there. “We save the manipulated image,” says Madrak, “and put it on the computer network so that the remote officers can refer to it from any of the police cars. Sometimes we print the image and hand it out. What’s especially nice is that every officer ends up with the same, consistent image. In the old days, we’d hand out an image on paper and hope that the officers were drawing on their papers exactly what we were pointing to on the projection screen.”

Similar to Google Earth the department subscribes to Pictometry Online (POL), which allows subscribers to quickly and easily access online images with just a username and a password. “It’s specific to our area — the entire county is mapped out for us,” Madrak explains. “We type in any address, and we can see it. Plus, we can backdate the images to 2005.”

Clearly, Madrak enjoys having the Intelliboard as a training tool. However, he’s quick to note that anyone in the department is free to use it and that many staff members have been trained to use it. “As they were being trained,” he recalls, “I could see the light bulb turning on in their eyes: ‘Wow, we can do all that?’”

“The Intelliboard just makes training so much easier,” Madrak continues. “It’s ideal that the trainer is in front of the class with the whiteboard as opposed to behind the class operating the computer. And we use all the simple tools, which gives the Intelliboard its value.”

UDTPD has been so pleased with their improved training that they’re soon going to upgrade their projector for image enhancement on the Intelliboard. “We want to continually upgrade,” says Madrak. “We have to make sure we’re at the top of our game when we train, and the Intelliboard assists us in that process, whether we’re covering first-aid techniques, policy changes or use of force tactics.

“Training and safety are two big things in police work,” Madrak concludes as he began. It’s UDTPD’s attention to these areas that allowed them to successfully respond to 23,548 incidents in 2010 — with a little help from the Intelliboard.