Reading College: Use of Apple TV and Large screen TV

Summary

Reading College was keen to bring technology into all parts of the organisation, but some specialist areas have proved to be particularly challenging, such as Construction and Hospitality due to limited space and other technology-hostile environments. In addition, these challenging areas did not readily support the traditional set up of desktop PC and interactive white board. The College required a solution that was robust enough to survive the prevalent dust, heat and moisture whilst still providing the appropriate functionality for learners and flexibility for lecturers. Reading College’s solution was to provide televisions linked to Apple TV boxes, which in turn were linked wirelessly to Apple iPads.

About…

Activate Learning was launched in 2013, and is made up of the following: Reading College, City of Oxford College, Banbury and Bicester College, UTC Reading and UTC Oxford. Reading College has a history of providing further education opportunities to the city that stretches back to 1955. The College has changed names and merged with other education providers as it grew and developed, offering an ever expanding range of exciting new programmes.

The challenge

E-learning and Resources Manager James Keift summarises the challenge as follows: “Some workspaces do not lend themselves to traditional classroom IT set-ups, with desk top PCs and a whiteboard. Construction is a challenge due to dust and the need for safety around machinery, while Catering involves heat and moisture.”

James adds: “In these specialist areas, live demonstrations for the students of quite intricate processes are common, requiring learners to gather round the lecturer. The College wanted to use technology to improve visual learning by providing clearer demonstrations and easy access to information about equipment and processes. The College also wanted to give the lecturer flexibility to have the computer in different locations and not be tied to the front of the class.”
The activity

Reading College introduced Apple TVs in tandem with large-screen televisions into a number of workshops and practical spaces. The investment was as follows:

- Apple TV devices (£99 each)
- A Bracket to hold the TV (£150 each)
- Widescreen TV (£500 each)

In some rooms such as the Kitchen, two or three TVs are connected to a single Apple TV box. The Apple TV box allows live video to be streamed to the TV wirelessly from the iPad and will also play pre-recorded instructional videos.

James justifies this approach: “By using an iPad to project live onto large TV screens around the room, students are able to observe the processes in comfort rather than having to huddle round the demonstrating lecturer. This setup also allows tutors to demonstrate anywhere within the workspace. You can even change the link between Apple TV and iPad to allow processes to be watched from another room.”

“Apple TV was chosen because the College already has an investment in iPads. We know Android devices are available to do the same thing, and we may in the future invest in an Android solution as well. We are also looking at allowing students to link their own devices to the Apple TV boxes, so they can show recordings of activities they may have completed at home or in other parts of the workspace.”
The outcomes

When asked about the outcomes James observes: “The installation of the technology worked as a catalyst. Staff started to develop specific resources to be used on the iPads. In the Construction workshop - where we initially thought that specific construction-focused apps would be used with the TV set up - staff created an image gallery that featured a picture and name of each tool used in the area. This has proved a very useful way of improving the students specialist vocabulary.”

“...In addition, Construction lecturers have also developed a number of short instructional videos on how to use specific tools; and in the Kitchen they followed a similar approach with the production of some videos showing how to carry out processes or to demonstrate techniques.”

According to James, the biggest benefit in the Kitchen has been the ability to stream the iPad screen on to the TV, which has enabled chefs to film and show their demonstrations being done on their preparation bench so that learners don’t have to crowd around. This has meant that all students can see the process more clearly and demonstrations take less time, allowing more teaching time to be accommodated in the Kitchen in any one day.
The impact

In looking to quantify the effectiveness of the project, James acknowledges that it is too soon to provide statistical evidence on the impact the technology. However, student feedback has been recorded which can be summarised as follows:

- Students feel more confident with their use of specialist vocabulary
- In the Kitchen, the students find it easier to follow the chef demonstrations
- Students in both Construction and the Kitchen find it easier to work in their own space because they can watch one of the instructional videos and not rely on the tutor being free to show them a particular technique

James adds: “Students have also started to use their own devices in a more positive way in the class by accessing the developed resources rather than just using Facebook with their friends. This is clearly a case where we can see greater benefits than those originally envisaged. I also know that other parts of the College have now installed this technology in their classrooms and our partner colleges in the Activate group have also added the same systems in their more challenging workspaces.”

The lessons learned

Outlining the lessons learned so far, James observes: “We invested in Apple TV devices as we already had a number of Apple iPads. The equipment just works straight out of the box with minimal set up. We know that similar technology is available to link Android devices and we may decide to add this platform as well in the future, especially if we wish to encourage students to use their own devices more.”

In terms of the impact on staff, James adds: “By providing a solution that allowed technology to be used in these spaces, teaching staff are now looking with fresh eyes at how they can utilise the equipment by creating new resources to develop faster specialist vocabulary though the image gallery and the production of instructional videos. This in turn has brought up a number of unforeseen positive developments such as: the increased use of students’ own devices to record their work; and the facility for students to watch instruction videos on processes rather than needing the lecturer to demonstrate them.”

Useful links

Apple TV Information :  http://store.apple.com/uk

READING COLLEGE :  http://www.reading-college.ac.uk/

West Sussex College :  Ipad and Apple TV :  
http://www.jiscrsc.ac.uk/case-studies/e/west-suffolk-college-e53.aspx

Disclaimer

Disclaimer: Jisc Regional Support Centres work with more than 2,000 UK learning providers helping them to improve performance and efficiency through the use of technology. Case studies may refer to specific products, processes or services. Such references are examples and are not endorsements or recommendations and should not be used for product endorsement purposes.