



## Essex Police

### SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards transforming training and operations for Essex Police

**Holding the attention of a training room full of police officers who would generally prefer to be out there doing the job is never an easy task, particularly when the subject can often include complex legislation.**

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*Sergeant Andy Spink,  
Essex Police Trainer*



#### The challenge

It was one of the challenges that faced Essex Police Sergeant Andy Spink when he became a trainer, and one that the introduction of SMART Board interactive whiteboards has helped him to overcome. "Most police officers I've worked with want to be out there getting on with the job," explains Sergeant Spink, who 'found his niche' as a trainer six years ago after 16 years in operations. "Officers know the value of training, but given the choice between sitting in a training room or being out on division or on a specialist unit, they would always prefer to be getting the job done."

Those 16 years in operational roles provided a good insight into the way many of his fellow officers regarded training. So once Sergeant Spink had qualified as a trainer, he knew that one of the most difficult parts of the job was going to be grabbing the attention of those he was training, and making sure that they got the most out of the courses they were on. "You need to make training sessions relevant to the work that officers are doing, or are going to be doing. Sometimes the content of a course can be quite heavy, particularly when there is complex legislation involved," says Sergeant Spink.

"But if you can relate the training room scenario to something more practical, and get officers more involved in the training, then you know they will learn more from the course."

"That's one of the areas where the SMART Boards have really helped. Because we can link through the whiteboard into the Force's intranet, we have a wide range of resources available to us."

"So, for example, if an officer on a course says "That's all very well in theory, but recently we went out on a call and this happened", we can go into the intranet and call up the computer log of that incident, talk through it, and compare the theoretical with the practical."

"It makes it much easier for those on the course to relate what they are learning to what they need to do when they are out there working."

Training sessions using the SMART Board can also provide a valuable tool for future reference, says Sergeant Spink. "One of the most common responses of officers who have made a mistake is to say "Well, it wasn't my fault, I haven't had the training for that". But with the sessions we run on the interactive whiteboard, we can save the PowerPoint or whichever presentation software we've used – along with all the comments we may have written on the

“People are really starting to understand the advantages of using the SMART Boards – both in training and briefing scenarios – and the amount they are used will continue to increase as people move away from flip charts and wipe boards, and become converts to the new technology.”

**Sergeant Andy Spink,**  
**Essex Police Trainer**

board or added into the presentation during the session – and that gives us a timed and dated record of the training we have delivered. We know who has been present in which session, so by referring to all that information we can say to an officer “Okay, fair enough you haven’t had the right training on that issue”, or alternatively, “Well you were here on that day, and that’s the training we went through, so you should have known what to do”.

“And while officers are learning valuable lessons in the training room, Sergeant Spink believes that, as they become more comfortable using the SMART Boards, trainers themselves are also developing new techniques.”

“Once people have understood the basics of using the SMART Boards and are comfortable with the technology – which is basically the same as using a computer – they also begin to see the potential, which really is amazing. I think some trainers have got so used to photocopying loads of paper and preparing handouts for every session, that it takes them a while to realise the advantages the technology can bring. There’s no need to spend the time or the money standing by the printer or the photocopier, when we can send every session out to officers’ individual e-mail addresses before a session, and then an updated version of it – with any comments that have been added during the training – once the session is over.”

## Gold Command Control Centre

While Sergeant Spink is keen to emphasise the link between the theoretical and the practical for his students, the Essex Police College (EPC) also has a very practical role to play in the county’s policing. The centre, which is based just a few hundred yards from the force’s headquarters, is also the designated Gold Command Control Centre for the county’s most serious incidents.

As part of such an operation, the smaller training rooms would host a range of agencies which may be involved in a major incident – such as the fire service, ambulance and the local authority – while the main lecture theatre would become the conference room, with a separate annexe for the Gold Command team.

All the rooms are equipped with SMART Boards, and EPC technician Dave Gibbs can envisage the increased operational benefits that could soon be available to the force, thanks to the planned introduction of SMART Bridgit™ conferencing software.

“At the moment communications control and the Silver Command Control Centre are based in the force information room at headquarters, while Gold Command would be based here,” explains Dave. “But we also have facilities through the SMART Boards for video conferencing and exchanging information between ourselves and other strategically important sites such as Stansted Airport. So, for example, in a major operation the Bridgit software would be able to link the Gold Command, headquarters and Stansted Airport SMART Boards, in addition to the video conferencing facilities.

“We are still working on ensuring that all our existing software is compatible with the Bridgit software, so we’ve yet to run a full simulation with all three sites linked up. But the main lecture theatre was used as the Gold Command briefing room during the terrorist attacks on London on July 7, and the set up worked very well.” Since then the equipment at EPC has been upgraded, and now includes a rear projection SMART Board; “The change to a rear projection board has been welcomed by a lot of the presenters, as, when they are working through detailed information, there is no shadow across the board,” adds Dave.