



Innovative solution from ONELAN delivers improved communications for cutting edge school



Specialist language college Dame Court Grammar School is a mixed, six form entry Foundation Grammar school of over 1100 students.

With its well-equipped modern buildings and a staff of over 70 the school is in a unique position to offer a varied curriculum and a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The School enjoys the use of spacious modern buildings and is able to provide facilities, which are second to none in the district.

The school is spread over a number of buildings – the East Wing that houses the upper school, the Central Block which is the reception area, and the West Wing where the junior school is situated. School Procurement Manager John Lycett wanted to find a way to synchronise communications across three of the buildings. The existing method of traditional notice

boards had many draw backs. They weren't really looked at and information quickly became out of date or was removed, resulting in a lack of control. John believed the way forward was through the use of technology and had investigated digital signage as a possible way forward.

ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION

John had actually decided on a possible product but the company doing the site survey failed to turn up on several occasions. In the interim period, he saw the innovative Net-Top-Box demonstrated at a seminar. The Net-Top-Box is a web based digital signage

product, made by UK manufacturer ONELAN. The Net-Top-Box takes a variety of different media inputs and allows them to be controlled and displayed seamlessly on any large screen. He approached ONELAN and was put in touch with one of their accredited resellers, Smarter Solutions in Aldermaston, who are trained to demonstrate the product.

The reseller went into the school to do a demonstration. John Lycett ended up delighted that the original supplier had let them down as he could see the ONELAN product was a much more effective solution – and Smarter Solutions a much more reliable and professional supplier.

Smarter Solutions recommended a solution that involved three Net-Top-Boxes – one of which is updated with different communication messages, and the other two replicate the information. The messages are displayed on large LCD screens, one in each of the three buildings. Strategically placed, anybody walking through any of the sites will pass at least one of the screens.

INSTANT BENEFITS

The system has been up and running for a couple of months but has already become an essential communications tool which is used in a multitude of ways. Examples of the information shown include sports day results, entries for a talent show, urgent internal information and a daily programme of events.

John explains why the school has seen the benefits so quickly. “Often when new technology is introduced, it takes a little while to really get to grips with it. I have to be honest, when the screens first went in, the overriding comment from the staff was “What’s the point?”

SIMPLICITY

However, the Net-Top-Box is really simple to use. Its intuitive layout, coupled with the comprehensive training that the reseller delivered for different groups of personnel, meant that our staff picked it up very quickly and could start using it straight away. Our IT department



handle most of the scheduling and our receptionist updates areas such as the scrolling text. As well as our own material, we can link into outside resources such as live news feeds. This is of particular interest to our older pupils – in fact teachers are already commenting that the sixth formers seem better informed about current affairs.

FLEXIBILITY

We’ve created templates with six different zones, each of which can show different media, so it’s really flexible. And opinions have been changed very quickly – most departments in the school have been in touch with the IT department asking for their information to be shown.”

He was also delighted with the quality of the installation. “We are using the latest technology and the installation needed to reflect this. As a ONELAN accredited reseller, Smarter Solutions did a fantastic job of delivering a professional and efficient install with very little disruption to teaching.”

21ST CENTURY COMMUNICATIONS

Such is the success of the installation that Dane Court has had two other schools in the area visit to see the system in operation. Dane Court is proud of its local reputation and John Lycett is delighted that the school is seen to be leading the way in 21st century communication with their students.

Asked to sum up the impact of the system on the school, John commented, “In the 11 years I have been at the school this system has had the biggest single impact of anything I’ve done.”

CONTACTS:

Smarter Solutions
0118 982 3960

John Lycett, Procurement Manager – Dane Court
Grammar School
01843 864941

David Dalzell, Managing Director – Onelan
0118 940 2631



FOR FURTHER DETAILS

CALL
0118 940 2631

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www.onelan.co.uk