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Smart Kapp IQ—Local and Long Distance Collaboration

At this year's Showstoppers event, during CE Week in New York City, I had a fascinating conversation with a number of representatives from Smart Technologies (www.SmartTech.com). With so much new technology on display, this company stood out from the crowd due to the physical sizes of the smartboards that they had on display.

With so many new technology products around me, I was forced to wonder what could possibly make the big whiteboards they had on display innovative. I asked the company representative what makes your SMART kapp iQ significantly different from any whiteboard now in use in almost any school in the country. I received a simple answer that was quite intriguing: "With a Smart Kapp IQ ,it is possible for you to instantly collaborate with up to 250 people at the same time, regardless of their location in the world. "

Smart Technologies made it possible for me to test a Model SPNL 6055 SMART kapp iQ . This column describes what I believe is a big step on the road to a new level of collaboration where you don't have to be in the same room, same building, same town, same city, or even the same country to collaborate with colleagues or students.

Photos 1 and 2: Jessica Nunes

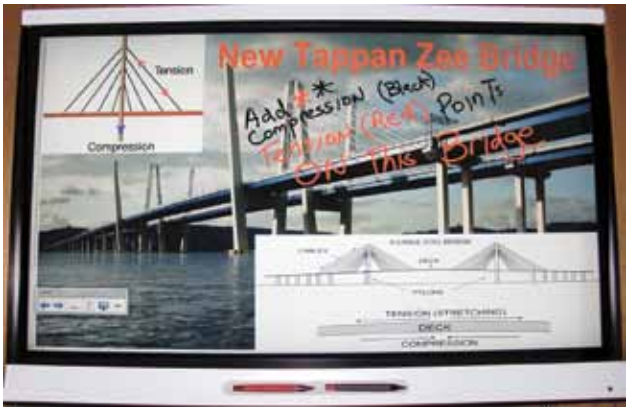

Photo 1—With an HDMI link to your computer, you have a super-sized HD touch screen for presentations and Smart software collaborations.

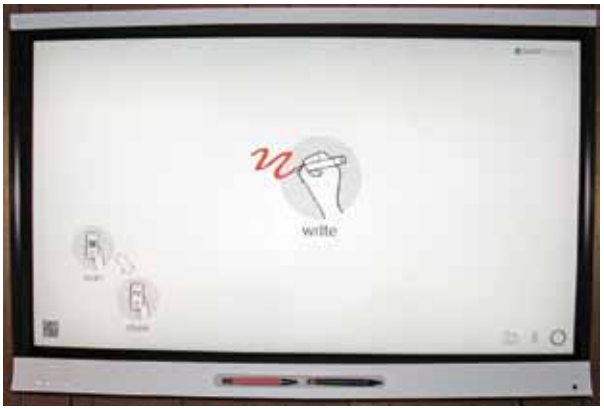

Photo 2—With a Bluetooth connection to your smartphone or tablet, you can have local or long-distance whiteboard collaboration with up to 250 people.

Note that the kapp iQ that I tested (Photos 1 and 2) is actually two different smartboards that share a 55" ultra high definition LED display. In one mode (Photo 1), the display harnesses the power of your computer and your Wi-Fi network for presentations. If you use Smart collaboration software, this display mode includes red and black e-ink so you can write directly on the screen.

In the other mode (Photo 2), the display harnesses the power of your smartphone or tablet through a Bluetooth connection to let you collaborate with up to 250 people locally or internationally. In this mode, you have real-time whiteboard multi-way collaboration not possible in the other mode. With the touch of your finger, you can switch from one mode to the other to harness the capabilities of both modes in your classroom.

The logical way to introduce you to this technology is to first describe the display and then describe what it can do in the two different modes. When attached to a computer using an HDMI cable and also a USB type B cable, you can write or draw on any application in red or black digital ink. (See Photo 1.) To use e-ink in the computer monitor mode, you must have Smart Ink software installed on your computer.

When you are in the smart whiteboard mode, running off your smartphone or tablet, you use these same two digital ink pens for multi-way graphic communication. What you write on the kapp iQ, or your collaborators write on their smartphones, tablets, or touch screen computers, simultaneously shows up on everyone's screen. (See Photo 3.)

Infrared cameras hidden in the four corners of the beveled edge of the screen, with the help of reflective tape, determine the location of the e-ink pens on the screen. The pens don't have any ink in them at all. Where a pen touches the screen the software places red or black electronic ink. In both modes, you can use the back of these electronic pens as a fine eraser or your entire hand, barely touching the screen, as a supersized eraser.

When in the HDMI computer mode, the full display is a giant touch

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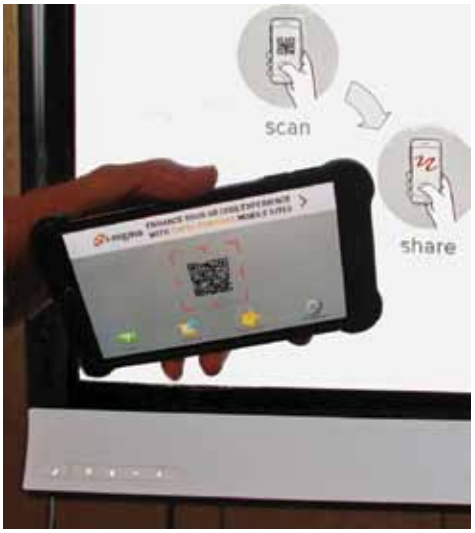
screen that you can use to present anything stored on your computer or accessed from the internet. The kapp iQ collaboration functionality is driven by software packages such as SMART Classroom and SMART Amp. In this mode, while using this software, you have an extremely powerful display that lets you use e-ink to focus student attention. This HD computer monitor mode is limited, however, to your classroom.

When the kapp iQ is in whiteboard mode it connects to the Internet through a Bluetooth connection via your smartphone or tablet and you use the Smart Kapp app for your collaboration. You download this app from the Apple App Store or Google Play. The free version of the app allows you to collaborate with only five people, but the upgrade to the Pro app ($19.95 per year) lets you connect with up to 250 people.

Smart Technologies

Photo 3—Only one person is directly connected to the kapp iQ in whiteboard mode. Everyone else connects through their web browser.



Jessica Nunes

Photo 4—To start a session you capture the QR code at the bottom left of the screen using a QR code reading app on your smartphone or tablet.

After you have downloaded the software, you wirelessly connect to the kapp iQ using a QR code app on your phone or tablet. (See Photo 4.) After you make the connection, you send invitations to your collaborators. Only one person is directly connected to the kapp iQ through the QR code Bluetooth connection. Everyone else, locally or thousands of miles away, is Wi-Fi connected using their web browser.

Photo 3 shows how people can use their smartphone, tablet, or computer to share their thoughts in red or black e-ink. What they draw or write on their devices, even if they are thousands of miles away, will instantly show up on everyone's screen. They can also save snapshots to their own device.

The leader at the kapp iQ can produce snapshots for the group by touching the camera icon at the lower right hand corner of the screen. (See Photo 2.) At the end of the session everyone is asked if they want to download the snapshots created by the leader during the session.

This long-distance form of collaboration, at the present time, has the following weaknesses: All screen snapshots are saved to a smartphone or tablet. The snapshots cannot be electronically re-introduced on the kapp iQ. (An upgrade that is now being beta tested should soon fix this major weakness.) The most significant weakness at present is that collaborations are limited to a whiteboard mode of writing and drawing. In time, we can expect that Smart Technologies will make both modes equally as powerful. Eventually this technology will be an extremely powerful tool for long-distance education.

This Smart Technologies YouTube video shows many of the kapp iQ features that I described here. It also shows how it is possible to use both modes in your classroom to enhance local collaboration: www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnkAzmVTFXU&feature=youtu.be

Recalling the Facts

1. Would you like your teachers to use this kind of technology in your classrooms? Why?
2. Do you see this kind of collaboration as being more useful in some classrooms than in others?
3. In which subjects would it be most useful and which ones least useful? Why? td